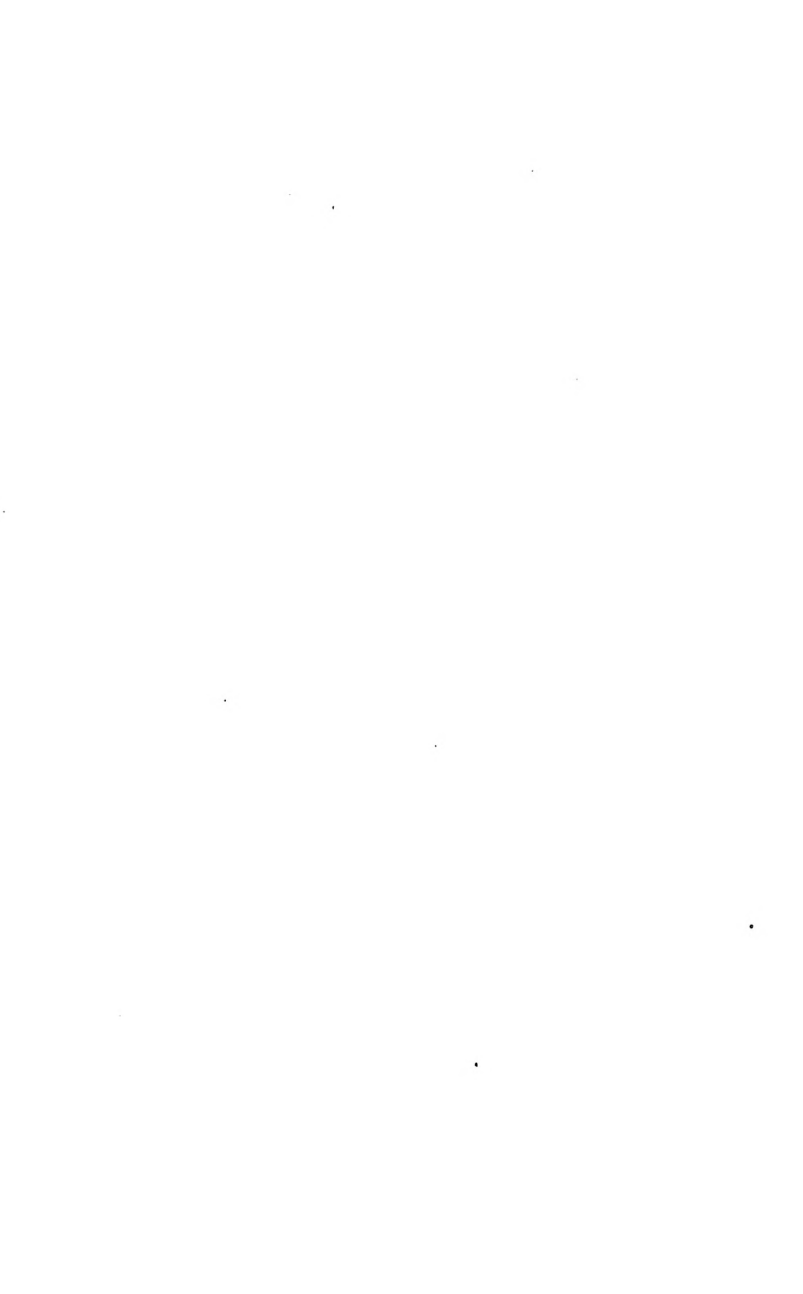




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FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

*A Drama*



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FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE  
*A Drama*

BY  
EDITH GITTINGS REID

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RATE

TO  
SUSAN THAYER  
TODAY IS AS YESTERDAY



## FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

A distinguished mind, clear, eminently practical and thoroughly trained; a driving will, and a heart to use all her powers for humanitarian purposes—such in part, was Florence Nightingale, for whose achievements the world honored the centenary of her birth on May 12, 1920.

“Here am I—send me.” That was the slogan of her life. Her personality stands out in a bright, shadowless light. Her feet were always on the ground; she never attempted the impossible, never made a situation, never overstepped a situation. She met existing circumstances with executive genius and energy, quickly seeing the trend of affairs; she used every available instrument and opportunity to turn the tide her way, to start her ideals on a resistless current. In her composition there was little of the animal nature. Intense and passionate, yes; but intellectually and morally so. For thirty years of her life she entered into a very cloister of work. In early womanhood she hovered about the border of woman’s natural destiny, but she only hovered. The straight flight of her life was early taken and never deviated from.

The temper of the prophets of Israel was hers when she wished to inspire—or denounce. Her religion was mod-

ern; she believed in work and in the Charity that made no discrimination as to creeds. Jew or Gentile, Catholic or Protestant, it was all one to her, provided they were worth while in themselves and met their obligations, for she belonged to the class of the great executives. As she was a leader, she differentiated from the type. Most executives are ruthless; she was not. Most executives want personal recognition; she did not. The selflessness to a cause, that usually goes with the mystic and rarely with the practical person of affairs, was amazingly her attitude. Never could there possibly have been anyone who cared less for what came to her personally. She cared only that things should be done, and rightly done, and permanently done, and to have a reform thoroughly established. She would have swept the stakes into any hands she thought more efficient than her own. She would have cut off her own if by so doing she would have bettered her cause. Humanity never had more tireless servants than those hands, or hands controlled by an abler mind. Skillfully as she made others work, she always took the main burden upon herself.

In most sketches made of her we get a very one-sided portrait, because the different sides of her character are so forceful that each in turn rivets the attention to the exclusion of the others, giving a very false impression, for she was an essentially well-balanced organism. It is difficult to reconcile the combination of a passionate desire to break her box of ointment—the Angel of the

Crimea—and the firm determination to save it—the Sanitary Engineer of the British Army. Her ideals, her aspirations were always ballasted by facts: with scientific accuracy she experimented on a small scale before venturing into any big scheme. The wild fling of the visionary was never hers; therefore no recommendations from Florence Nightingale were ever turned down as impracticable. The transformation she brought about at Scutari seemed miraculous, but it was so only as any great general's work is miraculous.

She wasted nothing that was worth while in herself or in others. She was an aristocrat by birth—she squeezed everything out of that for her cause. She had wealth—that went to the cause. There was no silly fussing over her background. In Strachey's virile sketch we catch the tremendous momentum of her character; we catch her humor, which was the least pleasant thing about her, as it was usually aroused by the foibles of her friends and her opponents. Where Strachey failed was in not recognizing her reactions, and they were always sweet and sound; he also loses the quality of her temper, which was a first-rate one. A splendid temper, ever for reform, never for revenge, red hot to remove evils; flaring a little at stupidity, it burnt out quickly and clarified the air. A fiery steed it was, that she held masterfully in check when action, or restraint from action, seemed wise. That what she did should go over was paramount with her. She very much hated a fool, and

nothing could have seemed to her more foolish than to desire something and to act in a way that would defeat your desires. A very, very big house-cleaning it was that she visualized for the world—and put through! How she put it through showed the height that an executive of parts can reach.

No one knew better than Florence Nightingale that philanthropy not backed by common sense, and military and civil reforms not enforced by laws, were merely passing winds of mercy; but she held for her soldiers a mother's fierce ambition and love, and they knew her tenderness as well as her wisdom. Though there was not a sentimental drop in her body, she so inspired the soldiers at Scutari that they kissed her shadow as she passed. Read of the first six months she spent there and you will not wonder that they did. She gave her life to them.

In her selflessness to a cause she stands with the very great; in her mentality she stands with the very great; in her moral and physical courage she stands with the very great; but in the ability to appreciate those who only stand and wait, she remained outside—uncomprehending. She might, on occasion, have been an angel; she never could have been a saint. She would never have voiced, "What I aspired to be, and was not, comforts me." Never! She looked at the great mystics with veneration, but she was not one of them. She could not help seeing things as they were here on earth. She fitted



every lock with its proper key. Very clear the light about her, no bewildering atmosphere to transform or confuse.

Put your ear to the heart of the world and listen. You catch a throb beating far down the ages; you strain heart and mind to hear it; it comes up the years to you; each generation gathers a deeper note; it grows stronger and stronger, more sustained, more imminent—and breaks into the flooding time spirit. To-day Florence Nightingale's spirit dominates the earth. This is her day, her age, as it certainly was not when, to use her own words, she "entered into work" in the mid-Victorian era. Florence Nightingale was a brave and bracing sight; there were none like her, none at all, in the nineteenth century. But now the world is full of her spiritual children; you will meet them in every hospital, in the homes of the poor and wretched, in the homes of the rich—directing, robbing death of some of its terrors, making life possible for the afflicted. Because of Florence Nightingale and her followers, linked with the physicians, death and disease to-day find skilled opponents. Shakespeare's old age "Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything" is an obsolete figure, and those of four score and ten shall pass out with almost the gesture of youth. There is no greater guild on earth than the one of which she was pioneer and head mistress. She was one who, having put on immortality, remains always mortal.

To make a complete characterization of her I should

not stop here, for she loved statistics, facts, and in her most exalted moments she paused to verify and to correct. So, with many apologies to her for my very great admiration for her, herself, which would have bored her exceedingly; with humility before her for my liking of the laurel and applause, which she so genuinely disliked; I shall attempt to appease her indignant ghost by referring you to the chronological list of her activities given in the index of Sir Edward Cook's "Life of Florence Nightingale."

It is impossible to write an epitaph for her. What she had done ceased to interest her—it was what she was about to do that alone concerned her. Wherever there is work going forward for the afflicted, or for her soldiers, there walks the shade of Florence Nightingale, and it is always advancing from achievement to achievement. "Here am I—send me."

In the play I have been obliged, for the purposes of the stage, to condense certain events in her life into special periods; for instance, the death of Lord Herbert did not follow directly after the last interview with her, but its effect upon her was as I have written it. The famous controversy between Florence Nightingale and Lord Herbert about sending additional nurses to the Crimea took place in letters; but to bring the facts of the case vividly before the audience I have made it take place verbally. In one part only have I allowed my

imagination to invent, namely, in the love scene. The name of the lover is purely fictitious, and the scene only such as might have occurred, given her psychology. That a lover did exist and that such a scene might have occurred is all I may claim. The honors that were showered upon her during the latter portion of her life I have condensed into one ceremonial. I have not given her one honor that she did not receive, and many that she did I have been obliged to omit.

It is a grief to one making a drama of her life not to be able to put on the stage London with its banners flying, its streets crowded, waiting for the heroine of the Crimea—and her slipping quietly to her home, escaping all publicity; it was most characteristic. I can give only a reflected picture of it in her own small room. Her life was crowded with important events, but it is only possible here to focus a few salient points, showing the spirit and motives that dominated this extraordinary woman throughout a life of ninety years, filled with unceasing work.

Baltimore, 1921

## PERSONS OF THE PLAY

MISS FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

MR. NIGHTINGALE, *her father.*

MRS. NIGHTINGALE, *her mother.*

LADY VERNEY (PARTHE), *her sister.*

MR. SIDNEY HERBERT, later LORD HERBERT, *Secretary of War.*

MR. AND MRS. BRACEBRIDGE, *friends of Miss Nightingale.*

LORD STRATFORD, *British Ambassador at Constantinople.*

MAJOR SILLERY, *Commandant of the Hospital and Chief Purveyor at Scutari.*

DUCHESS OF BLANKSHIRE.

DR. SUTHERLAND, *friend and helper of Miss Nightingale.*

MR. ALLEN DURHAM, *in love with Miss Nightingale.*

ALICIA, *the maid.*

HORTON, *the butler.*

Officials, Soldiers, Nurses.

## ACT I

### SCENE I

*Time of the Crimean War, 1854. Drawing Room at Lea Hurst. MRS. NIGHTINGALE is at the tea table; MR. NIGHTINGALE is sitting near her; he puts his cup down.*

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. You have not touched your tea; is it quite wretched?

MR. NIGHTINGALE. No, no. Foreign and domestic troubles. Russell's letters from the Crimea are most upsetting, and I am always uneasy when I feel another bout pending between you and Parthe and Flo.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. Bout! My dear William, what an idea! The Crimean situation—shocking—I grant you that. Englishmen neglecting their wounded! Incredible! What must be the condition in other countries? Florence will be on fire. Work for your country, of course—but from your own platform. Parthe and I will never give up trying to bring our exaggerated Florence back to the society to which she belongs.

MR. NIGHTINGALE. Good Lord deliver us, then!

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. The child is, I think, amiably mad. The trials I have had with her are past telling.

MR. NIGHTINGALE. Be good enough to let them remain at "past telling." I am weary of it all. For twenty years certainly I have been a buffer state between Parthe and Flo and you. Such a clever woman as you are, my dear, should know when you are beaten.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. Beaten! I! Not at all. You don't know me.

MR. NIGHTINGALE. Alas! I do know you, and I also know Florence.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. And knowing me you say I am beaten?

MR. NIGHTINGALE. A person may be beaten and yet never give up; a very wearying situation to the man on the fence.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. If you are the man on the fence, William, I wish you would get off and help us. I shall never give up trying to save Florence.

MR. NIGHTINGALE. That is the difficulty. You want to save Florence from herself, and she thinks she has a self that she wants to save from you, and devote to some big cause. Our platform is too small for her. She wants to step into the arena. [*He takes up a newspaper from a table near by.*] Let me read you Russell's letter. [*Reads*] "It is with feelings of surprise and anger that the public will learn that no sufficient preparations have been made for the proper care of the wounded. Not only are there no dressers and nurses—that might be a defect of system for which no one is to blame—but what

will be said when it is known that there is not even linen to make bandages for the wounded? That even now when the soldiers leave the fetid ship that brings them from the Crimea and are placed in the spacious buildings where we were led to believe that everything was ready which could ease their pain or facilitate their recovery, it is found that the commonest appliances of a workhouse or a sick-ward are wanting." . . . That's Russell's account and he was on the spot. Herbert will feel this keenly. He will take himself to task and he will certainly consult Florence.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. Sidney Herbert is at the bottom of our trouble. He is always weakly agreeing with her.

MR. NIGHTINGALE. He has to. He, you see, does know when he is beaten.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. It was Sidney who introduced her to Elizabeth Fry; who urged her to study at Kaiserwerth and educate herself to be a nurse. She is as determined to hide from the sun as Parthe is happy to shine in it. If Providence had only brought it about that Sidney Herbert and Florence had married, his name, and her position as his wife, would have covered her eccentricities; as it is, she is just an old maid with a crochet—and a vulgar crochet.

MR. NIGHTINGALE. Why have you a grudge against poor Sidney? Florence would have burnt him up. Now, as it is, he has a beautiful, sweet, soft creature of a wife, to whom he may escape when the storm beats high. I

have always been proud of Florence's intellect, but, after all, to put brains into a woman's head is like turning a colt loose in a flower garden—merely destructive.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. How absurd! Florence and a flower garden! I have never been able to get her even to arrange flowers for the drawing room. But colts! that's another matter. At least nine colts out of ten born here and at Embly have been godmothered by Florence.

HORTON [*the old butler, who has come in with hot scones and who seems a privileged character, looks up*]. Ah, ma'am, begging your pardon, but t'wan't only the colts Miss Florence mothered. Every sick thing on the place whimpered for her. God bless Miss Florence, ma'am.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. Quite so, my good Horton, but we want her here with us.

MR. NIGHTINGALE, *warming his hands over the fire, gives a low whistle and smiles cynically*. HORTON *goes out shaking his head*.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. Florence gets her turn of mind from my father, who, poor dear, was always after some hornet's nest. Nothing pleasant ever interested him in the least.

*Enter* LADY VERNEY, *very gay*.

LADY VERNEY. Some tea, mama, some tea. Not a word about the Crimea. It's too awful for words. Are you two dear people worrying over Florence? Don't, it's not worth while. Just let Florence have to sit and



listen meekly to a Board of Managers for a few months and she'll—Shall I tell you what she will do? She will marry Allen.

MR. NIGHTINGALE. She won't, and when she turned him down, as I feel sure she has done, Florence became a nun. Parthe, you are the natural woman, and that gown becomes you.

LADY VERNEY. Oh, but life's delightful! Why, when Providence has given you green pastures, should you pine for dung hills? I think it ungrateful.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. It is, my dear, it is! If God gives us a high position we must take the responsibilities of the position. Florence is throwing away great opportunities. We have more ill persons on our own land than one woman can possibly attend to. I miss her help excessively. The poor on our land look up to her, love her. By helping me, she could have all the charitable philanthropic work she could reasonably desire—but will she?

LADY VERNEY [*interrupting*]. No, mama dear, she won't. Florence wishes to be her own Commander. I wouldn't be Florence's husband for any consideration, unless it could be an arrangement of Queen and Prince Consort. Now Florence and Allen could play those parts well.

MR. NIGHTINGALE. Florence is a noble creature, say what you will; only I, too, wish with you that she could take pleasure in the pleasant things of life.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. We are ducks who have hatched a wild swan.

LADY VERNEY. No, mama, only a big, big goose—and here the dear comes.

*The door opens and FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE comes sweeping into the room; her coat is unbuttoned and falling back from her shoulders; her head is held very high and she is holding a newspaper in her hand, from which she begins to read aloud, with intense emotion.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*with great emotion*]. Shame on England! But she shall not turn to her women in vain. The call for nurses has come. Listen: [*Reads aloud from newspaper in her hand.*] “Why have we not Sisters of Charity? There are able-bodied and tender-hearted English women who would joyfully and with alacrity go out to devote themselves to nursing the sick and wounded, if they could be associated for that purpose, and placed under proper protection.”

MR. and MRS. NIGHTINGALE and LADY VERNEY listen with breathless interest. As FLORENCE finishes reading, she looks from one to the other.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Now you see where my life has been leading. You see why God urged me, even in my childhood, to train myself, to go to Kaiserwerth, to school myself in Paris, to take this place in London. Oh, I thank God that in spite of the driveling idiocy about me I would do as I did. Now I am ready.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. Ready for what?

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Can you ask? The wounded uncared for—did you read the papers this week? The sick dying from neglect; France sending her women, trained, intelligent women——

MRS. NIGHTINGALE [*interrupting*]. Florence, we will send our nurses—but not our daughters.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Our nurses are the vilest of low women—drunken, ignorant creatures; our nurses are co-partners with the grave diggers. I burn with the shame of it! Oh, to think that I have a body that takes time to move! My soul, my heart, my mind, every drop that is in me, is at the service of these poor men that are tortured in order that we should have all this. [*She waves her hand scornfully about the luxurious room.*]

LADY VERNEY. Wait a moment Florence, until I can steady my poor little lace hat against the storm—such a costly little hat it is, too.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*passionately*]. Parthe, I beg of you, do not jest now. Mama, papa, the wounded lie rotting in a conscious death. Some of our badly wounded who were on the ship, a stenching ship, did not see a medical man for a week, though in their torture they caught at the surgeon as he passed—and were shaken off by him. That steadies my heart to act! Mama, it is a hideous tale of mismanagement. Our troops, with the thought of Queen and country, fought like heroes; and when the enemy had done his work they were tossed

over to a worse enemy—their own countrymen. The Sisters of Charity from France are the only light in this black tragedy. Englishmen are dying slowly in stench and filth, and the women of England knit socks, and sing hymns, and say prayers—in rooms like this!

MRS. NIGHTINGALE [*coldly*]. You are very ungrateful to a God who sees fit to give you beautiful things, and sacrilegious to doubt the wisdom of God who sees fit to place one in one position, and one in another.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Sophistry and absurd, mama! The good things that I have I will give with both hands where my heart has gone—to those wounded in battle—wounded for me. I tell you, mama, that though my body has drifted fretfully at its moorings, I am seaworthy. I am straining at anchor to be gone.

MR. NIGHTINGALE. To sail a sea of trouble and disaster, Florence? You are very capable; you are very gifted. Why not be a master builder, if you like that simile, and send thousands to the rescue, rather than be one of the thousands that some less masterful mind than yours must direct?

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. Well said, William! Florence here at home, united with Parthe and me, and with Sidney Herbert's and Allen's help, could direct, get funds, administer. Do you think, Florence, that I would do better to make up beds for my household, cook, scrub, rather than train others to do the work they were born to do?

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Mama, it is futile arguing. You know I do not think anything so silly as that you should cook and scrub; but I do not think God has singled us and our class out because of any inherent worth in ourselves. He who has been so good to us may be merely watching to see how we act when dressed in a little brief authority. If we fail, it may be the cook's turn next. Who knows? Ah me! Mama, where do you find Christ? Do you find Him in the palace of the Cæsars, making merry—in a lotus land of luxury—or in the sunny halls of the protected righteous? [*She flings back her head and looks far off, aloof and alone.*] I know now that the passionate aim of my life is to hear my Master say: "I was sick and ye visited me." [*Then turning to them with a sigh she smiles at them.*] I am going mama. But, dear ones, let me go with your love.

LADY VERNEY *has been weeping.* MR. NIGHTINGALE *taps his fingers on the arm of his chair, looking very unhappy.*

MRS. NIGHTINGALE [*still coldly*]. Your father and Parthe will certainly yield to you; I see that. But I will not, unless I must. Wait till we have talked the matter over with Sidney Herbert—and with Allen. One small matter you ignore, Florence—the Army does not want women nurses—and I must say I think it is very respectable and right-minded of the Army—and that a daughter of mine should thrust herself upon an unwilling Army is incredible, it is simply not done.

LADY VERNEY [*laughing and wiping away her tears*].  
One woman against the entire British Army! Why, Flo,  
you are a veritable little David.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. And you laugh, Parthe?

MR. NIGHTINGALE [*puts his arm about LADY VERNEY  
and looks whimsically at FLORENCE*]. We laugh, mama,  
as we sneeze—because we must—for relief. Thank you  
for laughing, Parthe, I was at the weeping point.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Fortunately, the way is singularly  
clear for me. I have been seeking for my work  
all my life and now with a definite call it comes to me.  
I am fortunate.

*The butler comes with a letter which he hands to*

MISS NIGHTINGALE.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*opening the letter*]. 'Tis from  
Sidney; our letters have crossed; I have already written  
to him. [*Opens the letter and reads with growing in-  
terest. At the close she draws a deep breath and looks  
up.*] He writes that he will be here in a few moments.  
He asks me, urges me, to go.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. Florence, have pity on us, who  
love you for yourself.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. No, no, mama, you love some-  
thing not at all myself. Read what Sidney writes. [*She  
hands the letter to her mother.*] I am trained, papa; I  
feel certain of myself.

MR. NIGHTINGALE. Florence!

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Ah, Sidney thinks you will ob-

ject, but that the magnitude of the work must weigh with you. But he will speak for himself [*looking at the clock*]. He should be with us now.

*The butler comes in and announces MR. HERBERT. As MR. HERBERT enters he looks anxiously at the group about the tea table, and as he sees his letter in MRS. NIGHTINGALE'S hand, he goes quickly to her.*

MR. HERBERT. My dear, dear lady. Do not be angry with me for urging this upon Florence. Your daughter is worth a hundred sons to the Government. She is the only lady in the land to whom in our extremity we turn. She is the only one who could organize, direct, and control this venture. In all England not one other person is her equal. At the War Office her name brought hope. Her Majesty is awaiting the answer that will refute the shame now humiliating all England—that her troops must look to the women of other nationalities for succor.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. Her Majesty?

MR. HERBERT. Yes, the Queen knows that Florence alone has the genius backed by knowledge for the work. Let her go, not only with your consent, but with your approval.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. Under such auspices, she must go with our proud approval.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*hardly hearing them has been intent on her own thoughts. She now turns to SIDNEY HERBERT*]. You say in your letter that the Bracebridges will go with me?

MR. HERBERT. I feel sure of it.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Then say to them to be ready within a week. We should catch the first outgoing steamer.

MR. HERBERT. In a week?

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Yes.

MR. HERBERT. Do you think that could be done?

MISS NIGHTINGALE. It must be done.

MR. HERBERT. My wife said: "Florence will be off for Scutari with her nurses by the next steamer sailing." I believe that you will be. You dear wonder of a woman! God bless you.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. So soon? Our Florence!

LADY VERNEY. Must we let her go so soon, Sidney?

MR. HERBERT. When God puts His stamp upon His envoy, we must obey.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Sidney, that is the right word. His stamp, not His yoke. I feel light with power.

MR. NIGHTINGALE. It is a strange world. I am proud of my woman child, but a woman in harness is un-English.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*her face breaking into laughter, puts her hand teasingly under her father's chin and looks merrily into his eyes*]. Ah, but a lady in harness is most English—and driven with a very tight bit, too. But we must not cross swords now, papa, because I must quickly put each one of you into harness if I am to keep my boast of time enough and to spare in a week's prepara-



tion. Sidney, the call for nurses must go into the papers at once. Will you see to it?

MR. HERBERT. Yes, before I dine to-night it shall have gone to the press.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. Florence has a vision of a woman's love flowing over those red fields of the wounded.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*laughing*]. Mama, mama! my vision is of soap and splints and food and sheets—clean sheets.

MR. HERBERT. Florence is our hope—standing alone in her full equipment, a lady of lineage who knows how to command, a woman of democratic comprehension who knows how to feel, with mental and physical vigor, and, pardon me, Florence, a driving will. This is my picture of you, pioneer of trained nurses!

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Yes, yes, all very pretty, but we cannot waste time or words now. Please, please, be off, Sidney—the notices—the Bracebridges. Oh, who is this?

HORTON *announces* MR. DURHAM. *There is a general look of embarrassment.* MISS NIGHTINGALE *moves a little impatiently.* MR. HERBERT *becomes grave.* *A tall, distinguished-looking man comes into the room.*

LADY VERNEY [*going to meet him*]. You come at a proud but sad moment for us, Allen. Do you know that our Florence is requested by the Government to take nurses out to Scutari and help relieve the shocking situation there?

MR. DURHAM [*moving with LADY VERNEY towards the others, his eyes fixed upon FLORENCE*]. Yes, I had heard some such gossip in town. Florence must consider us. The war office should take care of its own soldiers.

MR. HERBERT. We are doing our best, and that is to send Florence—better than that, no people could do.

MR. DURHAM. Could you not persuade Mrs. Herbert to go? A married woman would be more fitting—if a woman must be used?

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*haughtily lifts her hand to prevent MR. HERBERT from answering*]. We have no time for the woman question now. At the present moment, married or single, man or woman, is of no consequence—it's merely the right person for the emergency. I hope that I am the right person—I rejoice that they think me so—I am going. [*She moves away from them towards the mantel.*]

LADY VERNEY. Come, Allen, we must bear the burden of Flo's greatness. You are hurting Sidney.

MR. DURHAM *moves over to the table without speaking and takes up a book.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*turns towards them*]. Why do you wait, Sidney? Every moment is of consequence to us now.

MR. HERBERT. I go on the instant. Good-by, dear people—and praise God for our Florence.

MR. DURHAM *looks up and shrugs his shoulders and resumes his book.* MR. HERBERT *goes out.*

MR. NIGHTINGALE [*rising*]. Your opportunity has come, my child, I congratulate you.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*putting her arm about his neck*]. Love me, papa; and forgive me for being so troublesome.

MR. NIGHTINGALE [*in a pretended whisper*]. Don't tell your mother or Parthe, but I'm tremendously proud of you. I feel a little silly and feminine beside you. I shall borrow a lace cap and parasol from Parthe and give you my sword and coat. [*They both laugh.*]

LADY VERNEY. It's all very well for you to joke, papa, but I tremble with fear for Flo—and from the very bottom of my heart I wish she would listen to Allen and be comfortable [*looking towards Mr. DURHAM*]. Allen, put down your book; be generous, and talk it over with Florence.

MR. DURHAM. I had come to beg Florence to consider how we must all suffer if she goes.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. Come, Parthe. Come, William. We will leave Florence to tell Allen herself of the Government's request.

MR. and MRS. NIGHTINGALE and LADY VERNEY go out.

MR. DURHAM [*leaning on the back of the chair and watching FLORENCE intently for a moment as she stands absorbed by the fireplace*]. Well, Florence? You have no welcome for me?

MISS NIGHTINGALE. I have no room for you, Allen; perhaps that is alas for me.

MR. DURHAM [*leaving the chair and going towards*

*her*]. You are not apt to give up what you want—and, my love, my dear, dear love, say what you will, I think you do, a very little, want me.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Have you read the call for nurses in the paper to-day? Government has asked me to take charge of the situation. I leave in a week.

MR. DURHAM [*much moved*]. Yes, but surely, surely, Florence, we together, here at home, could do more than either apart.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Allen, what would you say if the generals of our army stayed at home, saying that the burden and the heat of the day, the risk of death and disease, were sacrifices that only the poor and the ignorant should make? If that were true, then the world is theirs, and we of the aristocracy are merely parasites.

MR. DURHAM [*begging her question*]. Is there anything greater or more for the good of the world than love?

MISS NIGHTINGALE. No, but love and passion are not synonymous. Ah, me, if I went to your arms now?

MR. DURHAM [*holding out his arms*]. Come!

MISS NIGHTINGALE. No, and no. I have chosen my path. I have really always known my path, though at times it was so dark I only stumbled blindly on my feet; but in my heart and brain there never was darkness. "Love," you say? My path is aflame with love, but it is love that gives, and gives, and never takes.

MR. DURHAM. We would give with our four hands instead of two.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. I know your idea of womanhood. It has its attractions for me. I shall be lonely for them and for you—perhaps; but I will not have them or you. For a single moment I have stood with you and desire; now I am telling you that the desire is dead. It was only for a second, the heart-beat of the natural woman, that was all. Take my hand; feel how cool it is; it is steady on the helm of my work. Go, Allen. Marry some lady of leisure.

MR. DURHAM [*indignantly*]. Florence!

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*abstractedly*]. Will you do an errand for me? Take some telegrams and see that they are sent on the instant.

MR. DURHAM. Florence!

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*wearily*]. Have done, Allen. Would a patrol sleep on duty? I will not stop for one second longer to look on life personally from the domestic woman's angle. [*She goes to a desk and writes.*]

MR. DURHAM [*watches her with his head held high and drawn brows*]. Say to your father and mother that I send my apologies for my abrupt leave. I thought love left, when it died, a certain sentiment in women—but apparently not.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*turning hastily around*]. I am sorry, but will you take my telegrams, Allen? And try to think kindly of me?

MR. DURHAM [*holding up his hand*]. I am not your lackey, Florence, beloved. When you come to a sense of

your womanhood, your own and my need, I am your lover. Until then, I bid you good-by; and God's blessing on your undertaking, my dear—my dearest.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Oh Allen! Can't you understand that the world's awry, and that we have no time, and should have no inclination, to stop and smell nose-gays? Forgive me—and take my messages, Allen.

MR. DURHAM [*smiling cynically*]. No, that I will not do. Give them to Herbert.

*He goes out.* MISS NIGHTINGALE *clasps her hands behind her head and watches for a moment the door ALLEN has closed after him.* Enter LADY VERNEY.

LADY VERNEY [*going quickly to MISS NIGHTINGALE, holds out both hands with a protesting gesture*]. Florence, I saw Allen's face as he left. Oh, think twice before you turn him away! Let me call him back.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. No, I choose an impersonal life, and a friendship like Sidney's. We work mind and heart for one purpose. Was ever such friendship as Sidney's and mine? Wait and see what it accomplishes.

LADY VERNEY. Dear Florence, Sidney has a wife, his life is fully rounded—yours will not be. The great impersonal love is not human. Oh, let me call Allen back—he loves you.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*drawing LADY VERNEY to her*]. Do I want him back? No, no. He would have satisfied my intellectual nature, and my passionate nature, but

I have a moral and active nature that requires satisfaction, which I would not find in his life.

LADY VERNEY. Ah, Florence, you would be happy at home, and Allen loves you.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Allen? [*She moves a little away from LADY VERNEY.*] What is his ideal of a woman, really? Something that sits in the corner and purrs and breeds, and shows her claws only where her young is attacked. No! my talons are for the poor, the ill, who have no champion. Allen—little children of my own—sweet English lanes and stupid autocratic English life—I cannot linger with you. “I was sick and ye visited me.” [*She bows her head and puts her hand for a moment over her eyes; then with a light movement of the head she looks up.*] I am human. This dear house, most surely I love it—and my dear people. But, Parthe, [*her face grows terrible in its sternness*], the dead, lying about in heaps like scraps of refuse! One moment—our gallant men; the next—tortured for us and shunted off by us to die in torment. Our War Office lolling in blundering and inertia—unprepared—unprepared. Dear God, I go to my appointed task; and it is my task; I would have no other—I go, I go.

[*Curtain*]

## SCENE II

*Same. Four days later. HORTON, the butler, is seen arranging chairs in rows at one end of the room, at the other end a few comfortable chairs are placed about a table upon which is a vase of flowers, a lamp, etc.*

HORTON [*speaks in great ill humor*]. Why Miss Florence wants a parcel o' jail birds to come 'ere and set in my satin chairs is more'n a Christian can tell.

*Enter LADY VERNEY humming gaily. She looks critically about her.*

LADY VERNEY [*to HORTON*]. Miss Florence will speak a few words to a group of nurses whom she is going to take with her. It's a sad time for us, Horton. [*She goes to the table and moves the books a little to one side. HORTON comes towards her.*]

HORTON. A sad day it is, Lady Verney. When does Miss Florence go?

LADY VERNEY. In three days. All your fault, Horton.

HORTON. Ye'll always make merry, me Lady; but I'd give me eyes to keep Miss Florence 'ome.

LADY VERNEY. So would we all, Horton; but you were always praising her for her nursing when she was a little girl, and now she wants to take the entire world by the ears and turn it into a nurse.



HORTON. A drunken drab of a world it would be, me Lady; for them nurses is a set of 'ussies as only cares for drink and viciousness. I know 'em. When one gets 'old of a man he must choose between getting married or buried. They won't let off from one or t'other.

LADY VERNEY. Miss Florence will take charge of all that, Horton.

HORTON. Very likely she will; there's naught she can't do. Shall I give the women these chairs?

LADY VERNEY [*who is reading a letter*]. Yes, Horton, but speak to them civilly; this lot are gentlewomen; they are to go with Miss Florence into hard, hard work—and danger, too, alas!

*Enter MR. HERBERT; he nods to Horton, who bows respectfully to him and goes out. MR. HERBERT goes to meet LADY VERNEY.*

MR. HERBERT [*laughingly*]. How is it with you, my fair enemy?

LADY VERNEY. Your enemy, indeed! Yours and Florence's toiling slave, you should say.

MR. HERBERT. We shall both be toiling slaves for Florence after she leaves, if we are to get the money and sympathy that she will need to make our experiment a success.

LADY VERNEY. You have really against you an im-movable prejudice on the part of many in authority. Women nursing soldiers is rather startling, you know.

MR. HERBERT. Florence will carry it over.

LADY VERNEY. She will! We are an obstinate family, but Florence is the grindstone upon which all our wills have been worn out. The grindstone remains intact. War Offices may come and War Offices may go, but Florence's little purpose will remain forever—and thrive. I know my sister.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE *comes into the room. She smiles and nods to them in a casual way, and looks at the clock. HORTON comes in and gives her a note, which she opens and reads. She shrugs her shoulders and turns to LADY VERNEY and MR. HERBERT.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE. From Dr. Ordley. He writes that he is sending four women who wish to go with me. He adds that he never asks for characters from these women as no woman with a character would do a nurse's work. Isn't it amazing? [*To HORTON, who has been waiting.*] Well, Horton?

HORTON. A female of sixty brought that note, Miss Florence; she says she's a young haspirant. She's 'ad time to outgrow hanything. Three other females are with her—and I wouldn't trust the plate with hany one of them about the 'ouse.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Bring them here.

HORTON *goes out.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*turning to MR. HERBERT*]. I am keeping a record of the women who have applied. I wish to show exactly the types we have had to select from.

MR. HERBERT. The group you yourself have asked to come to-day are of a good order?

MISS NIGHTINGALE. They are gentlewomen, with a few exceptions.

HORTON *opens the door and ushers in four women. Two are in widow's weeds and seem about forty years old; the other two are somewhat younger, much overdressed and painted. They approach MISS NIGHTINGALE, who turns to receive them. She has her hands folded before her. LADY VERNEY and MR. HERBERT take their seats at the table with pencils and paper to make any necessary notes for MISS NIGHTINGALE.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*looking gravely from one to another of the women*]. Dr. Ordley writes that you wish to go with me to Scutari. [*Turns to the one who seems the most aggressive*] What are your qualifications as a nurse?

WOMAN [*haughtily*]. I'm a widow, ma'am.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*suppressing a smile*]. That's deplorable, but how does that fit you for nursing work?

WOMAN. You'd not ask that if you'd known Jacob Fetig. He were puny for twenty years, and went to his burying with no more fat on 'is bones than a poor man's turkey.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. What other discipline have you had?

WOMAN. None, ma'am.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. You don't meet the requirements. Horton, show Widow Fetig out.

WOMAN [*leaves the room, saying indignantly*]. And I a widow! I nussed a man twenty years, and I won't do, won't I? We'll see.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*turning to the other woman in black*]. What are your qualifications?

WOMAN [*with her head up*]. I'm a widow.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. My good woman, this is not a retiring board for afflicted widows. What do you know about nursing?

WOMAN. I have had nine children, ma'am, and never a well one among them.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Where are they now?

WOMAN. Dead, ma'am; every last one of them. I'm free to go, ma'am.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. I must have some one experienced in keeping people alive, my poor woman. I'm afraid you won't fit my work at all.

WOMAN [*going off in great offense, turns as she reaches the door*]. Bad luck to ye!

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*turning to one of the overdressed women*]. Do you know anything about the care of the sick?

WOMAN. Not a whit, ma'am; but I'm willing to make a try at it. I can get on with anything in trousers—unless it's an old fambly cooler on legs like the one as

showed me into this 'ere room. [*Turns and makes a face at HORTON, who looks fixedly at the ceiling.*]

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*looking sternly at her*]. Horton, show this woman out.

WOMAN [*looking scornfully about her as she goes to the door gives HORTON a nudge*]. Sly old smoulder can. Did I call it a cooler? Are you winking yer eye at me, ye old sinner? [*HORTON steps back in horror as she laughs and goes out.*]

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*to the last of the applicants*]. What fits you for nursing?

WOMAN. I've been a ward nurse now these six years.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Can you dress wounds?

WOMAN [*indignantly*]. I can dress a body as any respectable woman should. But I'll 'ave nothing to do with their nasty wounds. I leaves them to the saw-bones.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*curtly*]. Show the woman out, Horton.

WOMAN [*goes off in a fury; as she reaches the door, she turns and says*]. Ye are keeping the job for the ladies, are ye? Ye think to get a 'usband or two among ye. Shame on ye for getting the better of a poor man on 'is back, with 'is legs up.

HORTON *opens the door to let her out, his face expressing great indignation.*

WOMAN [*looking at him scornfully*]. I'd like to 'ave ye to me 'and, ye old reprobate.

HORTON *follows her out. As the door closes, MR.*

HERBERT *and* LADY VERNEY *look at each other and at* MISS NIGHTINGALE, *and break into laughter.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*merrily*]. Do please write to Dr. Ordley and thank him prettily for this treat he has given us. Now the nurses are coming whom I have chosen myself. You will see the difference.

HORTON [*entering*]. A woman, Miss Florence, as begs she may see you—I can't turn her off; a poor, afflicted creature.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Bring her here.

HORTON *goes out.*

LADY VERNEY. Ah, Florence, it's some poor mother or sweetheart—if you see one they will come by hundreds.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*sadly*]. If I only could see them all—one comfort is that God does.

MR. HERBERT. Let me see the poor woman for you. Florence; it will be part of my work when you are gone.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. No, this one I will see for myself.

HORTON *ushers in a woman rather poorly dressed.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE *goes to meet her; the woman looks helplessly around and then throws herself at* MISS NIGHTINGALE'S *feet.*

WOMAN. Oh, miss, you'll see my son—he's a foxy-looking boy. You'll maybe not like his face till he smiles—oh, oh, miss, if I could only see him smile—'tis a kinder innocent smile, miss. Oh, God, if I could only

see him smile. Will you tell him his mother is breaking her heart to reach him? [*She bows her head sobbing.*]

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*leans down and takes the woman's face between her hands*]. I will be very tender with your boy. Tell me his name.

WOMAN. Brian Dare, miss—and he'll make a brave show, but don't mind him, miss; he's timorous-like in his heart. Only his mother knows how he minded a hurt, and I can't get to him, miss.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Stand up, poor mother! [*The woman gets up wiping her eyes with her shawl.*]

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*putting her hand on her shoulder, looks into her eyes*]. Be brave—have faith, and do your part here—see that Brian has a home to return to. I will search for your dear boy and write you of his smile.

*The woman begins to weep.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Now stop weeping—you need all your strength to keep a house and a mother for your son. Horton, give Mrs. Dare a cup of tea. Her son is fighting for you.

*The woman seizes one of MISS NIGHTINGALE'S hands and kisses it. MISS NIGHTINGALE withdraws her hand and indicates that she must go. MR. HERBERT comes forward and takes the woman's hand; she looks at him with some fear.*

MR. HERBERT [*gently*]. I will take you out for your tea and you will give me your name and together we

will tell the mothers of England of Miss Nightingale.  
[*He leads the woman out.*]

LADY VERNEY [*going to FLORENCE*]. Oh, my dear, how can you bear it?

MISS NIGHTINGALE. How can I bear to wait until a slow boat reaches the wounded men of England? That's what I don't know.

LADY VERNEY. I will work hard for you at home, Florence.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*touches LADY VERNEY lightly on the forehead with her lips*]. I know you will, Parthe.

*Enter HORTON*

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Horton, be sure and look after my pets when I am gone.

*Enter MR. HERBERT.*

HORTON. It will be a sad day for them and for me when you go, Miss Florence. I remember the time you nursed Cap, the shepherd dog——

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*holds up her hands in protest*]. Please, please, Horton. Didn't I ever do anything but care for that dog? [*Turns to LADY VERNEY and MR. HERBERT who both look amused*]. I am as hard beset by that dog as George Washington's memory is by his little hatchet. It's quite too awful. Instead of saying the boy was not untruthful, they tell that tale of the hatchet; and instead of saying that I was not an unkindly little girl, I am made a bore to all other little girls by the tale of Cap.



HORTON [*proudly*]. I tell everyone about it, Miss Florence.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. I am sure you do, Horton. Please don't.

HORTON *shakes his head and goes out.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*gaily*]. Come, Parthe. Come, Sidney. We must be doing. Only three days left.

MR. HERBERT. Do you, by the way, ever sleep?

MISS NIGHTINGALE. No sleep for us now. Come.

LADY VERNEY [*sinking into a chair and looking quizzically at MISS NIGHTINGALE and MR. HERBERT*]. I'm not a widow, ma'am, but I won't do. I'm going to rest. It has not been borne in on me that I am an important factor in the universe.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*reproachfully*]. O Parthe!

MR. HERBERT [*shaking his finger at LADY VERNEY*]. Let us leave her, Florence; she is in a wicked mood.

MISS NIGHTINGALE *kneels down beside her sister and puts her arms around her neck.*

LADY VERNEY [*puts her hand caressingly upon MISS NIGHTINGALE'S cheek and looks up at MR. HERBERT*]. For just one second, Sidney, I will keep her from being an active force; keep her just my very own little sister—who nursed Cap, the dog.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. I'm ashamed of you, Parthe. [*She rises, looks at the clock. HERBERT goes to her side. LADY VERNEY watches them lazily.*]

HERBERT. If only our positions were changed and you

could go to Parliament and I to Scutari! How gladly I would save you the hardships!

MISS NIGHTINGALE. We work as one person, Sidney. I will be with you in Parliament and you with me at Scutari. In England a woman can work only through a man—fortunate indeed it is when their ideals are the same.

LADY VERNEY. A woman work only through a man—oh, Florence, Florence!

MISS NIGHTINGALE. It should not be so, but it is so. I can't go to Parliament—I cannot force reforms except through men.

LADY VERNEY. I assure you that they will do what you tell them to do. Don't worry! [*She rises.*] I must see that HORTON works through me. I must soothe the poor soul before your next lot of women come. I shall be back presently. [*She goes out.*]

MR. HERBERT [*goes near MISS NIGHTINGALE and looks wistfully at her*]. Florence——

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*smilingly*]. Sidney?

MR. HERBERT. How can I let you go? You are sufficient in yourself, but I need the sharpening of my intellect by yours. My ideals were blurred until you brought them to focus. How can I let you go?

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Why, Sidney, my master, what does it matter whether the poles of the earth separate us? We are working together for one purpose. Neither could do without the other.

MR. HERBERT. And yet Allen Durham thinks——

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*interrupting indignantly*]. Allen thinks! What does he think? He thinks of life only as he has been taught to think. He is Primitive Man surrounded by modern conveniences. You and I are not thinking of ourselves.

MR. HERBERT. Allen feels that he is thinking of you—that I am sacrificing you to a Cause.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. But it is my Cause! Allen and his like cannot see how anyone can have a passion for other women's children. They do not see over their own garden walls into the vast world of humanity. I do. You do. There is no greater power on earth than friendship such as ours.

MR. HERBERT. And yet love is greater than friendship, dear Florence.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Sidney, what is our friendship but love, the best of all kinds of love? Together we will make it a redeeming, unselfish force.

MR. HERBERT. I know—I know that is true! But in the changes and chances of this mortal life——

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*interrupting and putting her hand on his shoulder*]. Such beautiful words, Sidney, but I have always thought that they minimized the power of God. For changes put improvements, for chances, opportunities. You have given me my opportunity.

MR. HERBERT [*smiles*]. It is like you, dearest friend, to bid the dreamer arise.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Are you the dreamer? Certainly you keep me from forgetting that without vision the people must perish. You have given me my vision. I know only the tools that will make the vision realized. God means us to work together. We shall know the height of friendship, you and I.

*Enter* LADY VERNEY. *She looks toward* MR. HERBERT *and* MISS NIGHTINGALE.

LADY VERNEY. What have you two been talking about? Sidney looks a bit discouraged and you, Florence, exalted.

MR. HERBERT [*drawing himself up more erectly, gives a sigh and laughs*]. My gay lady, we were talking of love and friendship. You, an adept, might inform us on the subject.

LADY VERNEY. You are both dears—also you are the two very silliest and wisest people I know; but as for me, I am a wee bit sorry for a lover when he loses. Poor Allen!

MR. HERBERT. I understand how he feels.

LADY VERNEY. Oh, do you, Sidney? Why don't you tell him so?

MR. HERBERT. I do not believe that he would like me to.

LADY VERNEY. No? It's very deep of you to see that.

MISS NIGHTINGALE *moves abstractedly to the window*

*and looks out.* LADY VERNEY *watches her for a moment and sees that she is not listening.*

LADY VERNEY [*turning quickly to Mr. HERBERT*]. You have stepped in, Sidney, between Florence and a natural love. You have your wife as well as the Universe. Florence has only the Universe.

MR. HERBERT. Only the Universe? Well, she is big enough for it.

LADY VERNEY. Oh yes, but it seems cold to little me—and fearfully lonely. Allen would have dragged her down from her natural impulses to some personal comfort by the fireside. You send her off through her natural impulses to disease, danger, work, with never, never a fireside to idle beside.

MR. HERBERT [*miserably*]. She shall have my every thought. I will drive heart and mind and body for her. I'll help her to win a crown. [*Dispiritedly.*] I help her win a crown! She would win one without any help. I suppose everyone must be lonely.

LADY VERNEY. Not a bit of it! I'm not lonely. [*Suddenly.*] Forgive me, Sidney. I think you the gentlest, finest man on earth, but I don't think you are Florence's master—and you are making her dependent on you.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*turning round*]. What were you saying?

LADY VERNEY. Sidney is a bit down.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*coming towards them and speaking a little sharply*]. You understand, Sidney, and the War Office understands, that I am to have absolute authority over the nurses.

MR. HERBERT. Quite so.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. And that not one woman goes without my consent—not one is to follow me there unless I send for her. We must make this very critical experiment of women nurses on a small scale at first.

MR. HERBERT. Certainly. It shall be as you wish.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. And I shall expect a large financial backing. We must hurry up the subscriptions.

MR. HERBERT. That shall be done.

LADY VERNEY. What an awful, awful time women do have getting their way through men.

*They laugh.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE. I am going out for a moment—I am expecting my nurses soon, those of my own choosing.

*She goes out, passing MR. and MRS. NIGHTINGALE as they come in.*

LADY VERNEY [*going to meet her mother*]. Isn't it wonderful! Florence has fired all England with enthusiasm. Packages have been coming in all day and they say that the wharf is congested with stores to be sent out. I hope you will have a mild season. There will not be a man in England left with a flannel undervest.

MR. NIGHTINGALE. I will fly to my maiden aunt for protection. I have instructed my man to lock up all my

valuable stock before it gets tagged to be sent to the Crimea.

LADY VERNEY. No hope for you, papa. Flo expects from you a perfectly enormous draft.

MR. HERBERT. A family cannot indulge in anything more expensive than a popular heroine. A beauty like yourself, Parthe—or a race horse—comes lighter.

HORTON *enters*. *The DUCHESS OF BLANKSHIRE, a very large lady, comes in; she has a tuft of feathers in front of her bonnet. She is wearing a silk mantle and is carrying a little dog. She goes rapturously to MRS. NIGHTINGALE smiling, and then turns to the others.*

DUCHESS. My sweet dear, what an incredible thing! The town is ringing with dear Florence's name. I must see her. God is guiding her. She has His blessing. But it all depends on one thing: Has she got the money?

MR. NIGHTINGALE. Now, Duchess, I see where you stand.

DUCHESS. Of course, you do. And Florence must be well chaperoned, too. Tommies! you know how quite shocking they are—she will find that all the women she takes out will want to marry them.

MR. NIGHTINGALE. No! I had never thought of that! And I have always heard that the British soldier marries quite casually as often as he is asked to.

*The DUCHESS looks at him; MRS. NIGHTINGALE looks shocked; LADY VERNEY laughs. Enter FLORENCE*

NIGHTINGALE. *She looks surprised as she sees the*  
DUCHESS.

DUCHESS. My dear child, I have come to give you my blessing, to tell you that you have my prayers.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. But, dear Duchess, I have the prayers of all the poor people in town; from you I want only your pocket book.

DUCHESS [*horrified*]. My purse!

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Certainly, just that. Look! [*She holds out a memorandum book with pencil.*] Now, who will head this subscription with a truly inspiring sum? Come, Duchess!

MR. HERBERT [*goes quickly to MISS NIGHTINGALE and takes the book*]. I claim the right to head the list. [*He writes in the book and returns it to MISS NIGHTINGALE.*]

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*looks at the book*]. Sidney, you really shouldn't. You have a family.

MR. HERBERT *moves away with a little laughing gesture.*

MR. NIGHTINGALE. Give me the list, Florence, but I'll cover Sidney's donation—I won't look at it—I won't be bullied or made ashamed of my mite. [*He writes something down and hands FLORENCE back the book.*]

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*looks up at him*]. Oh, papa, how good you are.

MR. NIGHTINGALE. I will not have it said that I valued my ducats more than my daughter.



MISS NIGHTINGALE. Now, Duchess, show what a woman can do.

DUCHESS. Florence Nightingale, you may bully these men but you shan't bully me. I shall subscribe a very tiny sum to this venture of yours.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*looks humorously at her*]. I suppose you know I am taking this paper, directly I have your subscription, to Lady Bland?

DUCHESS. Florence, you know that woman is my enemy and that I would give a pretty big sum to make her give more—here, hand me the paper. [THE DUCHESS *takes the book and hands it back to FLORENCE who looks at it.*]

MISS NIGHTINGALE. This is really good of you. I knew you had a kind heart.

HORTON [*entering*]. A number of women as says you are expecting them.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Bring them in and give them those chairs [*indicating the chairs at the end of the room*].

HORTON *goes out.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE. These are nurses I was expecting.

DUCHESS. I shall stay and see how my money is going to be spent.

THE DUCHESS, MRS. NIGHTINGALE, MR. NIGHTINGALE, LADY VERNEY and MR. HERBERT *all retire a little into the background.* HORTON *opens the door, and a group of very respectable-looking women come*

*in. Some of them are in the garb of Catholic sisters. They bow to MISS NIGHTINGALE and take the seats HORTON indicates. A Catholic sister takes her place first. A few of the other women show dissatisfaction; one seems to hesitate to sit next to the sister. MISS NIGHTINGALE notices this attitude, and with a little half-sad, half-amused smile moves nearer to the group, giving them an all-including smile of welcome.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*in a pleasant voice*]. Won't you be seated? [*To the Catholic sister.*] Sister Serena, will you take a place near me? [LORD HERBERT quickly places a chair near MISS NIGHTINGALE. *The sister moves quietly forward, bows to MISS NIGHTINGALE, and sits down. The other women, a little shamefacedly, take their places*]. I wish to talk to you very informally. Please interrupt me at any moment with any question you wish to ask.

A WOMAN [*rising*]. I beg pardon, Miss Nightingale, but I thought this a Protestant mission. [*Sits down.*]

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*fiercely*]. Protestant mission! Are the men who are fighting for you only Protestants? Let me inform you that until now there have been no reputable nurses except among the Catholic sisters. It makes not the slightest difference whether one is Jew or Gentile, Catholic or Protestant, provided one has good morals and capable hands. "Judgment is mine, saith the Lord." Leave the Almighty his confessional; you

have nothing whatever to do with your fellow-workers' passports to God. If a Catholic is dying, I will do my utmost to provide him his priest; if a Jew, his rabbi; if a Protestant, his pastor. [*She pauses.*]

ANOTHER WOMAN [*rising*]. Miss Nightingale, I am willing to do any work that is fit for a lady, but I heard someone say that we have to do washing. [*Sits down.*]

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Do washing! Of course you will, and exceedingly nasty washing. Do not idealize what is before you. You will have to scrub floors, wash clothes, and clean beds of vermin, and do whatever you are told to do without complaining. Two things that are imperative for you to have are common sense and unselfishness. An illustrious poet has written:

"Men must work and women must weep  
While the harbor bar is moaning."

Absurd stuff, to which a number of women have taken very kindly. There can be nothing of that order with us. There is a long, hard road before us, but I see a great healing force passing on into the ages, growing greater and stronger until the time shall come when "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying. Neither shall there be any more pain, for former things have passed away." When that time comes, we, of our profession, shall sleep well. Until then, it is work. [*There is silence for a moment and then MISS NIGHTINGALE turns to LORD HERBERT.*] Lord Herbert, our chief, wishes to say God-speed to you.

LORD HERBERT. I look at you women with a full heart. You are pioneers. The experiment of women as army nurses is in your hands. I know that you will succeed for you have in Miss Nightingale a great leader, to whom I ask you to give implicit obedience. Those who follow after you will say, "God bless you!" as I say it now. [*He touches MISS NIGHTINGALE lightly on the shoulder.*] Here is your surety that all will end well in the short, hard to-day and the long, unknown to-morrow. [*He looks at them for a moment in silence.*] God be with you in Scutari!

[*Curtain.*]

## ACT II

### SCENE I

*Scutari. Grounds in front of the Barrack Hospital. The hospital is on high ground, overlooking the Sea of Marmora with Constantinople in the distance. Time: afternoon of November 4, 1854.*

MAJOR SILLERY [*Commander of the Hospital*], LORD STRATFORD [*British Ambassador*], and a number of surgeons, medical men and officers of various ranks, are standing about in front of the hospital entrance. The ground, almost up to the entrance, is covered with wounded men. The stretchers are coming and going. Now and then the stretcher-bearers [*themselves wounded men*] are too weak to carry their burden and drop exhausted to the ground. A pile of dead sewn up in canvas lies in a heap on the ground, waiting for the orderlies to carry them off.

LORD STRATFORD [*laughingly to one of the young surgeons, and looking at his watch*]. Miss Nightingale should be here now, but lady-birds are privileged characters.

MAJOR SILLERY [*looking about with a bothered expression*]. I wish we might have tidied up a bit for the

ladies, but there doesn't seem to be anyone to do the work. That pile of dead there—the ground is never clear of them.

1ST OFFICER. It's not at all bad. The dead have to wait for the living, you know. That's Scripture.

LORD STRATFORD. You young fellows must not wear your hearts on your sleeves; the birds will peck them cruelly.

YOUNG SURGEON [*looking very sulky*]. I am sure, sir, we were doing very well as we were. It seems hard for Government to send out a lot of women for us to look after.

2D SURGEON. It's a beastly shame! Government hasn't enough to do, that's the matter. We were getting on all right. And now—women!

LORD STRATFORD [*laughing*]. Come, come; but if the birds start demoralizing the fit men, let me know. The battles must be fought. [*To MAJOR SILLERY*]. How many wounded have you?

MAJOR SILLERY. There are seventeen hundred and more cases of sick and wounded in this hospital alone, and about a hundred and twenty are cholera cases.

LORD STRATFORD. That should keep the birds busy. Lady Stratford is terribly concerned lest they flirt with the orderlies.

1ST OFFICER. It's all that damned sentimental nonsense Russell oozed out in *The Times*; it started Herbert using his soft brain.

MAJOR SILLERY. Mr. Herbert is a wonderful man, a humanitarian and a man of force.

LORD STRATFORD. Quite so, but a sentimentalist.

1ST OFFICER. What's the row, anyhow? We are doing as we have always done. I hate these new fads. These ambulances, now—rotten affairs. Just pitch a fellow into a cart with some hay at the bottom, and he likes it a lot better. I know, for when I got a hole in my leg in the Peninsula war, I was very grateful for a toss-up in a cart. It was good for me, too, made me exercise to keep the wounded side on top. What do people expect when they go to war?

LORD STRATFORD. Expect! Why lovely birds, to be sure, to sing for them.

1ST OFFICER. The dear ladies, with Herbert as Chairman, want a nice, wordy war. My! how your talker hates to do things!

2D OFFICER. When Herbert sends out his light infantry and the Nightingale Guards, we might suggest that a scratch or two is possible. They may really get hurt, you know. I wager they stipulated that they be returned sound and their morals uncontaminated.

3D OFFICER. Rotten nonsense, I call it. The War Office sleeps late, and they think that war is merely shaking a finger in sweet remonstrance over the lines. Also, they want to unload all their old socks on us; there are about two thousand pairs dumped out on the wharf

and for men, too, who have not as much as one foot to the hundred of them.

2D OFFICER. It's not their old socks but their old maids they want to shove on us. Do you think they will send out one pretty girl? Not on your life! I wager the dead will turn from the scarecrows they'll ship to us.

4TH OFFICER. I hear that Miss Nightingale is very personable.

LORD STRATFORD. I have never met her, but she has birth and wealth; she has power with Government and at Court. I trust she will quickly attach herself to one of you young fellows and that it will end in marriage all around—and a voyage home for the honeymoon.

*The men laugh.*

1ST OFFICER [*turning to another*]. Are we really short of linen, you know? and—ah, soap? We could hardly be short of soap.

2D OFFICER. I don't know. It's none of my business. The blooming beggars don't want to bathe, anyhow.

3D OFFICER. Whose business is it?

4TH OFFICER. The Lord alone knows. What does it matter? Let the men sleep on the ground—it's war. Nothing like offsetting one bad thing by another! You get your balance. Men should be hardened. Ambulances, soap, pap, cots—and women! And we call ourselves Englishmen!



YOUNG SURGEON. Still we ought to have cots, you know; and there's a blasted sewer under the hospital,—it stinks warm nights in the wards. I've seen a well man faint from it. And there's a breezy spot there. I'll be hanged if I'll operate in that part. I called out to some chaps the other night that they would just have to take their papers to Kingdom Come without my signature [*laughs*].

3D OFFICER. Oh, I say, now. That's not square. Whose business is it?

1ST OFFICER. Really, I don't know. You'd have to write to the War Office at home, and that would start a pow-pow from now till doomsday. It's rotten asking questions in England; it leads nowhere.

LORD STRATFORD [*adjusting his glasses*]. Ah, I think I see a flight of birds coming over the hill.

*A group of tired and abashed-looking women are seen coming towards the hospital. There are a few men in attendance. MAJOR SILLERY and LORD STRATFORD go forward to meet them and try to single out MISS NIGHTINGALE. They see MR. and MRS. BRACEBRIDGE, who are a little in advance of the others, and decide MRS. BRACEBRIDGE must be MISS NIGHTINGALE.*

LORD STRATFORD [*aside to MAJOR SILLERY*]. The bird has caught her mate on the voyage over. The dénouement comes even sooner than I anticipated.

*They step forward and bow to MRS. BRACEBRIDGE.*

MAJOR SILLERY. }  
LORD STRATFORD. } Miss Nightingale?

MR. BRACEBRIDGE [*quickly*]. No, Sillery; you should know me. I'm only five years older, you know, than when we last met. Perhaps you find Mrs. Bracebridge too young?

MAJOR SILLERY [*shaking hands with them delightedly*]. I am glad to see you both. [*Turning to LORD STRATFORD.*] These are Mr. and Mrs. Bracebridge, old friends of mine. Bracebridge, our Ambassador, Lord Stratford.

LORD STRATFORD [*bows over MRS. BRACEBRIDGE'S hand and to MR. BRACEBRIDGE*]. We met at Herbert's two years ago. I recall a delightful week there. [*To MRS. BRACEBRIDGE.*] Lady Stratford will be charmed when she hears that you have come. She was terribly concerned that Miss Nightingale might arrive unchaperoned. But, pardon me, where is your lieutenant, Miss Nightingale? [*He looks questioningly at the women in the background.*]

MRS. BRACEBRIDGE [*laughing*]. Say our General, not our Lieutenant, Lord Stratford. She is coming on the instant. She remained behind at the landing to see about some important luggage.

MR. BRACEBRIDGE. We are all under Miss Nightingale's orders. She comes to try this new venture of

women nurses for the army with absolute authority from Government.

LORD STRATFORD [*coldly*]. And you, Bracebridge? Will you remain with us?

MR. BRACEBRIDGE. Yes, I am courtier, secretary, man-of-all-the-work she will permit, to Miss Nightingale. And my wife is quite as willing to slave for her. You will be at once impressed by her.

LORD STRATFORD [*smiles cynically*]. Ah, I am sure. But is that Miss Nightingale I see approaching?

MR. BRACEBRIDGE [*turns*]. Yes.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE *is seen coming slowly up the hill. She looks at the stretcher-bearers and their burdens as they pass, at the wounded men upon the ground, at the general disorder and misery, with keen, attentive eyes. As she approaches the group of nurses and officers, the minor surgeons and officers involuntarily move back to give her audience with MAJOR SILLERY and LORD STRATFORD. MISS NIGHTINGALE looks very quietly at the group with, unconsciously, the manner of a courteous general reviewing a new regiment. LORD STRATFORD recognizes the eye of one used to command, and is impressed in spite of his prejudices. MAJOR SILLERY is a little awed. They both advance to meet her and bow. She looks gravely from one to the other.*

MAJOR SILLERY. I am glad to welcome you, Miss Nightingale. I am Sillery.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*smiles as she gives her hand*]. My Chief. You will find that I understand obedience. I am very really yours to command. [*Turns to LORD STRATFORD.*] I am sure that I am speaking to Lord Stratford, our Ambassador. You will find [*she laughs*] that I know how to beg. There is no limit to one who has been a successful beggar all her life.

LORD STRATFORD. I have come to tell you that I have instructions to give every assistance in my power. Seen for the first time, this must seem a beautiful part of the world to you.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*with a look of displeasure*]. I think God may well be pleased with His part of the world. But [*looking about the ground*], we seem to have made a sorry mess of it.

LORD STRATFORD [*irritably*]. Dear lady, this is war. We are not off shooting in Scotland, you know.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*looking about at the wounded*]. No. The huntsman is careful of his game. [*Turning to MAJOR SILLERY.*] May I take my nurses and put them where they will cause least inconvenience? In a few hours I hope to show you that every one is more comfortable and has less care because we are here.

MAJOR SILLERY. Your work is in your own hands. You will have every assistance from me. [*He looks a little askance at LORD STRATFORD, but continues firmly.*] If you find your work here too severe, I will endeavor

to make it lighter. If you feel that you cannot endure the discomforts I shall let you return to England regretfully—but always with gratitude for the noble impulse that brought you and your nurses out.

LORD STRATFORD *looks horribly bored, puts in his eyeglass and watches the distant horizon.*

YOUNG OFFICER [*aside to another*]. We know now who's General of this hospital. Old Sillery has got tight hold of her apron strings. Isn't he a blithering ass? But my word, hasn't she an eye?

MISS NIGHTINGALE. With your coöperation and the coöperation of these gentlemen, [*she looks at the group of surgeons and officers with a sweet, serious, searching glance that forces the eyes of each one to look into hers*] we shall not fail. It is from lack of coöperation that most plans fall fallow—unless the plans are contrary to the will of God. If necessary, I can draw on private funds.

LORD STRATFORD [*ignoring her hauteur to himself, and impressed by her personality*]. Do not hesitate to call on me; we really have all we need, and there will be no necessity for you to draw upon private funds.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. That is tremendously encouraging. Then, of course, [*to MAJOR SILLERY*] there are plenty of sheets and pillow cases and all the bare necessities for these poor men.

MAJOR SILLERY. I regret to say we haven't a dozen sheets at our disposal; and there are more than seventeen

hundred men. I suppose the idea is that when you can't do for all you had better do for none. We are getting on with literally nothing at all.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*to* LORD STRATFORD]. Yet you say you have all we need.

LORD STRATFORD. This is the first time I have heard all this, Sillery.

MAJOR SILLERY. It's most regrettable. I don't know whose business it is.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*earnestly*]. May I make it mine from now on?

MAJOR SILLERY. With all my heart, yes.

YOUNG OFFICER [*aside to another*]. Now isn't he an ass? It's a good thing he did not say head, for he hasn't any to give.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. With your permission, we will now go into the hospital, dispose ourselves, and take stock of the needs of the wounded. Must these poor fellows remain on the ground?

MAJOR SILLERY. For the moment, yes. We are packed almost to the inch, but a number will die off in the night.

*A messenger comes and hands a note to MAJOR SILLERY. He reads it and looks terribly annoyed.*

MAJOR SILLERY. The *Andes* is here off land with five hundred and forty wounded consigned to this hospital. What we are to do with them, I don't know.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. I will go with you at once into the hospital and we will do our best. Lord Stratford, will you kindly accompany us?

LORD STRATFORD. If you will excuse me——

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Impossible [*and she includes in a glance all the others standing about*]. Lord Stratford, we can not have you reproach us again with the fact that you have not been made aware of this situation. The situation here [*she looks about the courtyard*] is evident. Major Sillery, will you lead the way? Lord Stratford and I will follow. Selina [*to MRS. BRACEBRIDGE*], will you bring in the nurses?

LORD STRATFORD *with much ill humor goes forward with MISS NIGHTINGALE and the others follow.*

YOUNG SURGEON [*who has been watching them as they go under the entrance, turning to another surgeon*]. She got Stratford very cleverly. How he must hate her! For my part I respect her. And old Sillery's hers, mind and soul. He knows a superior officer when he meets one.

ANOTHER SURGEON. She knows her business. She will keep those women in order. With that wonderful eye and manner she ought to be a general.

SURGEON. Hasn't she an eyes and a manner? Did you see her smile at one of those poor devils on a stretcher? I'd rather have her smile than her frown. Heavens! [*he draws closer his cloak*]. It gets damp here as night comes on.

LORD STRATFORD [*comes out of the hospital walking very fast; they all salute.*] Ugh! I never smelt such a stench in my life! [*Goes out.*]

1ST SURGEON. Stratford is in a nasty temper.

2D SURGEON. Miss Nightingale can match it, I'll wager.

1ST SURGEON. No, I think she has a just temper. That's the kind that brings obedience. I shan't mind calling her my Chief.

2D SURGEON. Lord Stratford will laugh and say you are in for a flirtation.

1ST SURGEON. He is not such an ass as that. Miss Nightingale is out of reach in that way. Even Stratford would know that.

*Night becomes darker. One of the nurses comes out, approaches the surgeons, curtsies.*

NURSE. Miss Nightingale begs that you will spare her a few minutes, if convenient; and could you kindly let her have all the orderlies not on important duties.

1ST SURGEON. Very good.

2D SURGEON. I will go fetch the orderlies.

*They both follow the nurse into the hospital.*

WOUNDED SOLDIER [*trying to draw himself into a different position, calls out to another, lying at a little distance*]. Comrade, you of the 12th there—before I get out of sound—will you remember my name? 'Tis Jack Stump from Cambridgeshire. There's an old woman and



a lame lad, and there's a horse—God! wot a horse! Tell the lad I got six wounds, and tell the old woman I'd give Heaven for a bit of ale and a puddin' on the settle by the fire. That horse were—that horse were mine, I tell ye. Do you hear me, you of the 12th. I wants to see him [*he begins to sob*].

2D SOLDIER [*lying near a stretcher*]. I hear you, man. It's queer now. I was thinking of some rabbits, and I've got a wife and I've got a child, but I'm thinking o' them rabbits. What do you make out of that now?

3D SOLDIER [*on the stretcher*]. Damned if I know. I'd like to eat one; my stomach's all right if my leg is off. Say, you there, what's that smell from over yonder?

2D SOLDIER. 'Tis the dead bodies. They'll have to bury them here, sure enough.

AN OLD MAN [*lying on the ground*]. I've been thinking here now these two hours as I'd rather they left me here than put me there [*pointing to the barracks*]. The rats ain't so oncoming here, and it don't stink so heavy. Now the lady's come, we'll get a bit of soup. She's a straightener, she won't stand for no dirt—I knows her sort.

3D SOLDIER [*on stretcher*]. She looked at me. I don't know how she knew I had sent in my papers—but she did.

4TH SOLDIER. If she ain't the Blessed Virgin, she's her twin. She looked at me and I felt holy. I could smell the incense in the old church at home.

5TH SOLDIER. Holy you! I knew I was going to get my food when she looked at me. I smelt food.

YOUNG BOY. She's beautiful, and so cold and still. My fever went when she looked at me.

STRETCHER-BEARER [*who has been killing vermin in his hair*]. Here in the night I know 'taint natural, the way she saw each one of us. Something tells me 'taint natural.

3D SOLDIER [*to the wounded boy*]. 'Tis queer, now. I was sodden cold, and the lady when she looked at me made me feel warm; and you're burning hot and she made you feel cool. As you think of it, 'taint natural.

WOUNDED BOY. It's strange how one minds the night more'n the day. 'Taint cause it's cold. Can't be too cold for me, I'm burning up; but 'tis lonely. Them stars now, they are the darndest lonely things going; and the lady is as far off and cold as them; but I'm not all alone since she looked at me.

OLD SOLDIER. The boy's flighty. He was allus reading poems in the papers before the fever got him. The lady will make things right. I know the look o' her sèrt. She's a straightener, like my missus.

4TH SOLDIER. Blow up, you old ass!—like your missus indeed! She's the Blessed Virgin. When a man's sent in his papers, he knows what's natural—and what's not.

BOY. I feel her coming.

3D SOLDIER. God! There she is in the door! Now is that natural?

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE and MAJOR SILLERY enter and stand in the hospital doorway. She has a lantern swung over her arm. Her figure is more than usually erect, her face very pale, her mouth rather sternly set. As she looks down on the dying and dead and wounded, a wonderful tenderness comes over her face, breaking the line of the mouth into a smile of pitiful tenderness.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. My children, my sons! I am straining them to my heart, but my head shall think clearly for them. So many, so many, already slaughtered,—because we didn't care! In warmth and comfort, we prayed and talked and slept,—while [*she points to the courtyard*] these agonized.

*She goes down into the courtyard. The soldiers have become as silent as the dead and watch her with their souls in their eyes.*

MAJOR SILLERY. Miss Nightingale, go rest. You have already done the work of a genius, but you are human and need rest.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Ah, rest? [*Pointing to a pile of corpses.*] When and how did they rest? And look at this courtyard—the men uncomplaining in their courage, their agony. Look at that boy—so near his end, I hope. Shall I rest while these patient lips are dry for water?

MAJOR SILLERY. Dear Miss Nightingale, there are

hundreds like that. Your cup can reach only a very few. Do you believe in miracles?

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*with a little sad scorn*]. Not over much, my friend. I believe in common sense, backed by common humanity; in forethought; in a sane preparation for what you know is coming. Why should God perform a miracle for those too lazy to use the tools He has given them? I take my heart in my hands and hold it to keep it from breaking all bounds with rage when I think of those men murdered by wilful sloth. Nine deaths out of ten were preventable and you hadn't the means to prevent them. Why? Because everything is everybody's business and nothing is anybody's business. Our soldiers have enlisted to death in the barracks.

MAJOR SILLERY. You wring my heart, Miss Nightingale, but you strengthen my hands. Things will be better now.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Yes, things will be better. We are not powerless. Lord Stratford dare not pretend ignorance now. I held him steadily to a confession of weakness over the most stinking part of the hospital, into which, shame upon him! he had never been before. He tried to escape, but I held him and now he knows how it smells. He said: "Miss Nightingale, this air is unwholesome." I pointed to the hundreds of wounded and dying and said: "They seem to find it so—they are even dying from it"! He answered: "Well, there is no necessity for us to die." I took my tablet and said:

“I will write at once to the War Office that Lord Stratford found the stench of the hospital unsupportable.” At that, he shrugged his shoulders and went, but he knows that he has to reckon with us, for you nobly backed me, whose only cause in life is the comfort and safety of our troops. You feel with me? We work together?

MAJOR SILLERY. With all my heart I feel with you! But I work under you. You are very wonderful.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Merely an old-fashioned good housekeeper, with the habit of order and system—two very ordinary nags. Anyone can drive them. But our house has been built over a sewer; it is filled with vermin and rats; our sick children are packed in rows on the floor without cots, or clothes, or sheets, or food, for them; so we shall have to drive our nags with swiftness and precision. We must have first a lot of carpenters to build outhouses—a laundry before all. With your cause and mine the same I do not despair, even in the face of the tragedy at my feet. [*She looks again broodingly over the ground.*] How dark the night! How silent these poor sufferers!

MAJOR SILLERY. Yes, poor devils! But they will have cause to bless you. I wish I could stay and help you, but I should go and look after the wounded from the *Andes*.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Yes, go. I am glad of your friendship.

MAJOR SILLERY goes out. MISS NIGHTINGALE goes toward a wounded soldier, puts the lantern down beside him and, leaning over, lifts his head a little and touches his lips with some mixture which she carries. He smiles wistfully at her.

WOUNDED SOLDIER. Did him of the 12th tell my lame lad how many wounds I had?

MISS NIGHTINGALE. The little lad will know soon. They are playing at soldiers in the fields of England, and your little lad will be the proudest of the children.

*His breathing grows deeper, now labored. His eyes lose consciousness. MISS NIGHTINGALE places him gently down. She goes to another whose eyes have drawn her to him.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE. What is it, my friend?

SOLDIER. I have five children, ma'am. I was thinking of them, but the pain is cruel.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*takes a tablet from a small bottle and puts it into his mouth*]. That will ease the pain, dear friend. [*She puts her hand under his shirt collar and draws out a crucifix attached to a ribbon and puts it into his hand.*] Christ, so lonely and tortured here, so glorious in Heaven to-day. Your children and I will be drawn upward always by your pain and brave patience. Sleep now, in peace!

*She goes to the wounded boy who has been following her every movement with longing.*

Boy. Mother had something that would have helped my side. [*He puts his hand to his side.*] But I am not a baby. I don't want to trouble you.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*with infinite tenderness takes his head in her hands*]. You are my baby. [*The boy's face breaks into a smile and his head falls back.*]

MISS NIGHTINGALE. It is over with him, poor lad. [*She takes a pair of scissors and cuts a little of his hair. She kisses his forehead lightly. Taking his arm to place it over his breast, she looks at it with burning anger.*] Starvation! Oh, God! how quickly can I act so as to prevent this from happening to another lad?

A SOLDIER [*lying nearby, looks up at her*]. You will not leave us?

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Every night, every night, I will see my sons. That much joy of love I may have. [*Reverently she looks over the ground and into the uplifted faces of the soldiers, who are all straining to see her, to catch a word from her. She says in her clear and beautiful voice, breaking the silence like music*]: "He who loseth his life shall find it," but [*she draws herself up*] but—for those who let them die from shiftlessness—what shall be said?

*Slowly she passes from one to another, the men following her with their eyes. The darkness deepens, until only the glimmer of her lantern is seen.*

[*Curtain.*]

## ACT II

### SCENE II

*Grounds about the hospital. Everything is in great confusion, but there are no wounded lying around. On one side a bit of canvas is stretched on poles; under it is a large washtub, and near that a fire over which hangs a pot for boiling water. On the other side of the hospital are planks and workmen. Materials litter the ground. A number of boxes have been put near the hospital door waiting to be opened. A nurse is working at the tub, an ORDERLY standing near her. A number of orderlies, soldiers, and nurses are passing about.*

NURSE [*who is leaning over the washtub, stands up, wrings out some shirts and throws them over to one side, turns to ORDERLY*]. Unless we have a laundry soon we'll all be dead.

ORDERLY. Trying to do too much, that's the way with the ladies—exactly six shirts a month we had till you ladies came. Now I'm damned if Miss Nightingale don't want every soldier in the Army to have a clean one once a month. It's not reasonable,—gives them quinsy to change so often.



NURSE. Every soldier is to have a clean shirt a *day*. Oh, Lord, I'm tired. Why can't she let us rest a bit? Angel! Oh, yes, I know about angels! And look at the mess on these grounds! All the cleaners in London couldn't straighten it.

ORDERLY. I was just thinking as I'd never seen the damn place so pretty—but you see I'm looking at you.

NURSE. Go along with you! What's pretty in a clothes wringer? [*She gives a scream and jumps on the bench by the tub.*] Look! [*Pointing to a big rat running by.*]

*The ORDERLY seizes a broom and makes a dash for it.*

*A number of other rats go by and orderlies and nurses chase them, some laughing, some frightened.*

*Enter DR. SUTHERLAND and officials.*

DR. SUTHERLAND [*looking at the boxes*]. The cotton and flannel are in these boxes, and the men all suffering for them, and there seems no way to get them opened. Literally, lives will be lost if they are not opened. What can be done? Oh! there is Miss Nightingale.

*MISS NIGHTINGALE is seen coming from the left wing of the hospital; as she walks towards them she is evidently taking note of the grounds.*

*DR. SUTHERLAND and the officials move forward to meet her. She stops and looks questioningly at them.*

DR. SUTHERLAND. We are discussing these boxes; in them are the stores we need, literally to save life, and they can't be opened for at least two weeks. There is such a lot of invisible red tape around them. Too bad, too bad. But there's nothing to be done.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*looks at him in amazement*]. Nothing to be done! The stores here, the wounded there! [*pointing to the hospital*]. Nothing to be done? Open the boxes!

OFFICIAL. Impossible, Madam. Lady Stratford will, I am sure, bring it before Lord Stratford, but it will have to be brought before certainly six others before we have permission to open the boxes.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. You do not dare open those boxes?

OFFICIAL. Impossible, Madam.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. And you, Dr. Sutherland, are willing to see your patients die, so shackled are you by the invisible red tape.

DR. SUTHERLAND. I'm powerless! 'Tis really too bad but law is law.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*stoops and takes up a hatchet lying near her*]. Gentlemen, be good enough to put the responsibility on me. [*She breaks open first one box, then another. To DR. SUTHERLAND.*] I suppose now that the boxes are opened, you will not be afraid to take the contents to your sick? Speak! Are you? If so, I will take them myself.

DR. SUTHERLAND. I'm grateful, Miss Nightingale—and ashamed.

OFFICIAL. Miss Nightingale, I think you have done wrong. Already the authorities feel that you overstepped your right when you engaged two hundred workmen on your own responsibility and paid for them out of your own private purse. Civilians never understand army regulations. We must report these things to headquarters.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. We are warned that eight hundred additional sick and wounded are coming to Scutari. Which is important, that men should live or red tape be observed? Gentlemen, report it to the people of England, and see what they think.

*A woman approaches them in a state of great excitement; she has been crying and is carrying in her hand a nurse's bonnet. They all look at her in surprise.*

NURSE. I came out, ma'am, prepared to submit to everything, to be put upon in every way. But there are some things, ma'am, one won't submit to. Here's this cap, ma'am! [*holding it out as though it might bite her*]. If the good Lord had meant me to wear such a thing He would have made me different. Ugh! And if I'd known, ma'am, about the caps, great as was my desire to come out and nurse at Scutari, I wouldn't have come.

MISS NIGHTINGALE *breaks into a gay laugh, the nurse looks offended.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*looks kindly at her*]. There, there, Nurse Jones, don't feel hurt. We will talk about the caps; but cap or no cap, we couldn't do without you in the wards. I am writing home that I count you one of my best nurses. [*The nurse hangs her head.*] Go, Nurse. I can't talk to you now, because a number of amputations are soon to be gone through. I'm afraid the men mind losing their legs as much as you mind your cap. Of course you don't like that cap, but I want you to help me, Nurse.

JONES. Indeed, ma'am, I'd give my life for you. But I won't wear that cap. [*She goes off wiping her eyes with the cap.* MISS NIGHTINGALE, DR. SUTHERLAND, *and the officials laugh.*]

MISS NIGHTINGALE. A very capable nurse.

DR. SUTHERLAND [*whimsically*]. She indulges in cutting red tape.

MISS NIGHTINGALE *laughs and turns and moves off toward another part of the grounds.*

OFFICIAL. The Nightingale power will come to an end. You know Mr. Herbert is here. He has brought some more women nurses and I think he will remind Miss Nightingale that the War Office exists. He will remind her that she is here to train nurses, not to alter buildings; in short, not to be the Commandant of the hospital.

DR. SUTHERLAND. The War Office had better take heed. The people of England are backing Miss Nightingale. What she did the first day she came seemed a miracle, and since then every day she works a greater one. But she will not like the additional nurses. I would not be in Mr. Herbert's boots for a great deal. He should not have brought additional nurses over until she asked for them.

OFFICIAL. Does she know that Mr. Herbert is here?

DR. SUTHERLAND. No, I must tell her. [*To an orderly.*] Take these boxes to Miss Nightingale's room. She will distribute the contents. [*He turns from the official, who walks off, and he approaches MISS NIGHTINGALE who is speaking with a nurse. MISS NIGHTINGALE looks up as he approaches her.*]

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Have you sent the boxes to my room?

DR. SUTHERLAND. Yes, I gave word to carry them over. Your nurses are becoming very efficient. You have had a difficult task organizing them.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Yes, but fortunately the number I am beginning with is small.

DR. SUTHERLAND [*looks troubled*]. I am afraid you will not be altogether pleased, but the work you did here in a few days has been so great that Mr. Herbert followed almost immediately, bringing with him forty-seven more nurses. He is on his way to speak to you now.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*in amazement*]. Mr. Herbert

here? Impossible—you are mistaken—and in regard to nurses, I have his promise that no nurses are to be sent until I write for them. Most assuredly, I want no more.

DR. SUTHERLAND. That seems wise, but I suppose it was just over-zeal on their part. What you accomplished at once, fired the country.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*white with anger*]. You say that nurses have been sent over? Who could dare take such a step? That it should be Mr. Herbert is absurd.

DR. SUTHERLAND. But Mr. Herbert is here—indeed he is even now coming, as you see for yourself. I hope he will convince you that the nurses will be a benefit. But where to house them, feed them, place them, is a miracle that you only can solve.

DR. SUTHERLAND *bows and goes quickly away as Mr. Herbert comes nearer.* MISS NIGHTINGALE *waits erect, rigid.* MR. HERBERT *waves his hand gaily—his face is full of joy.*

MR. HERBERT. Here I am with forty-seven nurses for you! [*He stops and looks blank as he sees her face.*] Why, Florence!

MISS NIGHTINGALE. And your promise, your written word! “No one can be sent out until we hear from Miss Nightingale that they have been required.” That is what you put in the papers.

MR. HERBERT. But, Florence, I thought that as more

wounded came you would want more nurses. We heard of Balaclava.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Had I the enormous folly at the end of eleven days' experience to require more women, would it not seem that you, as statesman, should have said, "Wait until you see your way better"—but I made no such request.

MR. HERBERT. Florence, think a moment! Perhaps you will see it in a different light.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. I have toiled my way into the confidence of the medical men by keeping my hand on every nurse; now to have forty-seven untrained women scampering about means disaster. Every nerve has been strained to reform shocking abuses. We are making a delicate experiment. At the point of success, you ruin it.

MR. HERBERT. The experiment is as dear to my heart as it is to yours; dearer, for you are concerned in it.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. All women are concerned in it. I hand you my resignation. There can be no divided responsibility.

MR. HERBERT. Florence, I cannot take your resignation, but I can take back all the women I have brought over.

*An OFFICIAL comes towards them. MR. HERBERT looks impatiently at him. MISS NIGHTINGALE looks less haughty, more troubled.*

OFFICIAL [*bowing*]. Mr. Herbert, I am commissioned by Lord Stratford to say that he is not responsible for

the innovations Miss Nightingale has made; and he hopes that the War Office will instruct Miss Nightingale as to the limitations of her power.

MISS NIGHTINGALE *passes her hand over her forehead a little wearily.*

MR. HERBERT [*fiercely*]. Say to Lord Stratford that the War Office puts no limit upon Miss Nightingale's powers. God Himself seems to have made them unlimited.

MISS NIGHTINGALE *raises a protesting hand and looks at MR. HERBERT.*

MR. HERBERT [*continuing*]. Say also to Lord Stratford that I have apologized to Miss Nightingale for bringing over nurses without her permission. She has convinced me that they will only add to her many difficulties.

*The OFFICIAL bows and goes out.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Oh, Sidney, Sidney, you are generous. Forgive my awful temper. Look at me. Do you want to make me weep?

MR. HERBERT. No, Florence; only to make you know how England prizes you, to beg you to suffer our over-zeal patiently. We have done wrong, but——

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*fervently*]. Sidney, there must be no buts in this venture. If it were merely a personal matter we might make mistakes. But it isn't a personal



matter. Look about you. This wretched courtyard is only the least of the disorders here.

MR. HERBERT [*looking about*]. It is very shocking.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. If the rats and vermin had a united purpose they could carry the entire hospital into the War Office—you and I will do it instead.

MR. HERBERT. Shall I take the women back?

MISS NIGHTINGALE. No. I will look them over, sift them out, now that they are here. I will do my best at this end; but you must go home, Sidney, and work there.

MR. HERBERT. You do not want me to see how you must try to keep my meddling from being disastrous.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. I admit as much generosity as that. But you must work in England, and I here; and one day you will bring before Parliament a bill containing the work of our united lives—and the statements we give shall be true, the remedies vital. I live for that day.

MR. HERBERT. That day seems far off.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Not so very far off, I believe; and, Sidney, if you could see the passing of my poor soldiers—oh, so many, so many of them—silent, heroic, uncomplaining, in the face of incredible wrongs! To serve them is my life.

MR. HERBERT. And mine to serve them through you.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*looks searchingly at him*]. Through God, you mean.

MR. HERBERT. Through you.

[*Curtain*]

*A period of six months intervenes between the second and third scenes. MISS NIGHTINGALE has been to the front where she contracted a severe illness, and is now being brought back to Scutari.*

### SCENE III

*Grounds before the Barracks Hospital. Everything is clean and in order. A large tent on the left side of the hospital has been put up with chairs and tables and books for the soldiers' recreation. To the right of the hospital is seen a laundry, and decent-looking men and women are passing to and fro. A number of soldiers on crutches are wandering about. An excited-looking group of officials is standing at the entrance. MAJOR SILLERY has a letter in his hand. The others listen with anxious faces.*

MAJOR SILLERY. How can we tell the men? They think her superhuman—and she is. The news is grave. She has so spent her body on us here and in the Crimea that there will be no resistance left against the disease. The boat bringing her back to us is within sight; her coming will rouse the men. But if they bring her in dead—if they bring her in dead—or too ill to know us,

the men will weep like babes over a mother's dried breasts.

OFFICIAL. We shall all go back to the devil of a mess she found us in. She has put things on a right foundation, but the fools won't keep them there if she goes to earth.

A SURGEON. You don't take enough into consideration, Major Sillery, that the news comes to us very late, and the fact that she is being brought here must mean a convalescence of some order. We catch the word of England's mad grief about her, but at the same time we must realize that she has recovered enough to be moved. She was on the mend unquestionably. What the voyage will do, that of course, is another matter.

MAJOR SILLERY. The men have just heard the news. Ah, see, they, too, have gone mad. What a woman! What a woman!

*An excited crowd collects in the pavilion. Numbers turn their heads away to hide emotion. A SURGEON comes out from the hospital.*

SURGEON. It's hell in the wards. The men have turned their faces to the wall and weep. One man said, "I always kissed her shadow as she passed." The priest said, "Kiss your crucifix," but he only wept. I told them that she was to be brought here, and some of them begged that they might crawl out to the landing and meet her there, and they said if she was dead they would

open their wounds and die too. I tell you it is the very devil—and these men are Englishmen.

MAJOR SILLERY. If she should be translated to heaven before their eyes, they would not be surprised; and for myself, I should not either. No one knows so well as I the order she brought out of chaos in six months' time. No mortal could have done it alone. God was mightily with her.

AN OLD SURGEON. You understand that side, but I know how the men felt. She is the very tenderest creature God ever made.

A YOUNG SURGEON. She could be sharp enough! When some one suggested using the carpenters to build a chapel, my word, but she was angry! She said: "When you see men dying for want of a diet kitchen you suggest a chapel? What would you say to God in that chapel when you had left His children to starve?"

OLD SURGEON. She is a strange being, gentle and strong, with the clearest mind I ever knew.

*Messenger approaches. The crowd gather about the officials, all imploring with their eyes for news.*

MAJOR SILLERY [*turns to the soldiers and speaks with emotion*]. Patients and servants of Florence Nightingale—

A SOLDIER [*from the crowd in a broken voice*]. She called us her children.

MAJOR SILLERY. Children of Florence Nightingale! The ship bringing our dear lady is now near the dock.

She is being brought back ill. She, like you, has been to the battlefields; like you she has suffered and will be brought in on a stretcher to this door where she has met so many of you. None of us is worthy to carry that stretcher when she is brought back to this place which she changed from a pit of degrading death to a merciful home—a true hospital. All of us can testify to the miracle she wrought in six months. What this place was when she came to us you know. What it is to-day, you know. To whom shall I give the honor of carrying her stretcher?

A SOLDIER [*saluting*]. Pardon, sir, but the lady always had a fancy for giving the best to the weakest. We who have done our last fighting, might lift her up. It would be a great last glory for us. [*He salutes and retires.*]

YOUNG BOY [*steps forward and salutes*]. Begging your pardon, sir, but I think she likes us young ones to have the most honor, because she said we had the worst of it as we had not learned patience—begging your pardon, it was something like that. [*He salutes and retires.*]

ANOTHER SOLDIER [*steps forward and salutes*]. Begging your pardon, sir, but I and five others were tossed off by the surgeons as too far gone to be worried over by them, and she took us and nursed us herself—and here we are, all six of us, ready to carry our lady.

MAJOR SILLERY. The honor of carrying Miss Night-

ingale's stretcher shall be given first to the youngest. They will carry it for a short distance, and then it will pass to six other soldiers for a few moments, and so on, until as many as possible have carried it a few steps. When it reaches the hospital entrance, then the hopeless cases may take the stretcher. The same order will be carried out with Miss Nightingale's luggage. We must start for the pier; the boat is in sight. Greet her with the hymn she loves so well.

*The party start in the order of precedence. A number of nurses gather and range themselves on either side of the entrance; with them are the orderlies and the soldiers too badly injured or in too early a stage of convalescence to be allowed off the grounds. There is much talking among them and all seem under a great strain.*

1ST SOLDIER. God! she is coming.

2D SOLDIER. Let us kneel.

1ST SOLDIER. Stand up, man. She's no papist.

2D SOLDIER. Ah, but she never scoffed at the papists, heathen you! She spoke well of all creeds; to do that was simple Christian, she said.

3D SOLDIER. When I was all spent with cold and hunger and vermin, and the surgeons said they were going to cut off my legs, I begged to be let die; and then I looked and saw our lady standing there, white and glorious, holding her hands tight, and her mouth set, for my pain. God! I kept my eyes on her and I was

happy. She stood there through it all breathing almost for me.

*Music is heard, grows louder.*

A SOLDIER. Hush, hush, men! she's coming.

*A crowd slowly approaches. MISS NIGHTINGALE on a stretcher is being carried in advance. The soldiers, nurses, officials, and all stand aside as the hopeless cases lift the stretcher through the hospital entrance. MISS NIGHTINGALE opens her eyes, leans forward and looks at the crowd, first with amazement, then as she sees the soldiers weeping in their fear for her and joy in having her, her face lightens with a great gladness.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*speaking very clearly*]. Why, my soldiers, what have I done that you should be so glad to have me?

1ST SOLDIER. Only saved us body and soul. They ought to have made you a general. If they had, we would be in Sebastopol now.

2D SOLDIER. Nay, man, if her blessed Majesty should die, we'll make her Queen. Sure, but we'd fight for her!

MISS NIGHTINGALE. It's good to be home! It's good to be home! God bless you, my soldiers. But it's I who will fight for you. Ah, how I will fight! I stand at the altar of the murdered men, and while I live I will fight their cause.

[*Curtain*]

## ACT III

### SCENE I

*Drawing room in MR. NIGHTINGALE'S London house.*

HORTON *and a maid are busy arranging flowers. There is a large window through which can be seen flags flying; and every now and then the music of a band is heard as it stops and plays before the house, and a sound of voices as if a crowd were assembling.*  
LADY VERNEY *and MR. and MRS. NIGHTINGALE come in, looking very excited and all talking at once.*

LADY VERNEY. What can be the matter! Where can Florence be? I am so frightened about her.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. We *know* she landed and now the whole town has turned out to meet her—and she is not there.

MR. NIGHTINGALE. The whole town! I should say so, with the Lord Mayor at their head, and just about all the British army; and I don't know where she is. [*He waves his hands in despair.*]

LADY VERNEY. What shall we do?

MR. NIGHTINGALE. I must say it *is* a bit alarming.

HORTON [*entering*]. Lord Herbert.



LORD HERBERT *comes in; he is looking very worn and ill.*

LADY VERNEY [*running to meet him*]. Sidney, where is she?

LORD HERBERT. I don't know. Isn't she here?

LADY VERNEY. No, we've not seen her.—Sidney, where can she be?

LORD HERBERT. What can have happened? The whole city is in an uproar waiting for her. I could hardly make my way here through the crowds. Every soldier's mother, sister, brother, father, are crowding the station just to see her. You can't imagine the excitement and the disappointment.

LADY VERNEY *wrings her hands; MR. NIGHTINGALE gets up and walks up and down the room. A band stops before the house and plays the national anthem. All with one accord go to the windows; as they do so, a door at the far end of the room opens and MISS NIGHTINGALE comes quietly in. She walks with her usual dignity and erect carriage, but very slowly, and she shows the strain that she has been under. She looks about her with smiling eyes; and when she sees the group at the window she clasps her hand over her heart and steals towards them.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE. My people! My dear people! *They turn and rush towards her; LADY VERNEY reaches her first and throws her arms about her.*

MRS. NIGHTINGALE *kisses her*. MR. NIGHTINGALE *pushes them away and, taking her gently by the shoulders, holds her off from him for a moment while he looks searchingly into her face; then he draws her head to his shoulder and leans his face down upon her; he then turns away wiping his eyes*. HORTON *and the maid come in, showing great delight*. LORD HERBERT *stands apart, looking at MISS NIGHTINGALE with wistful, longing devotion. She turns and looks at him and holds out both her hands; he goes to her and takes her hands in his and stoops and kisses them*.

LADY VERNEY. Oh, our Florence! Our Florence! But we must wait till to-night to have you. Hurry, dear heart, to the window; the band is playing for you. Oh, where have you been? Quick! Show yourself at the window and let the people know that you are here.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*putting out her hand to stop her*]. No, no, Parthe dear. I can't—I really can't.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. My child, I'm sure you don't know that the Lord Mayor and the whole town are out to welcome you home from Scutari.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*a little shamefacedly*]. I am afraid I did know; so I just took an unexpected train and crept quietly back here. [*She pauses and listens to the shouts outside.*] Dear me, what a din. London certainly knows how to say "How do you do?"; but it

is really their happiness that the whole business is over and not just a welcome to me. That would be too absurd. [*She laughs.*] Here, Alice, take my coat."

*The maid runs forward and takes her coat; MISS NIGHTINGALE then takes off her bonnet and hands it to the maid, showing her beautiful hair cut close. They all exclaim together.*

LADY VERNEY. Your hair! Your hair! Oh, my poor love!

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. I had forgotten about your poor hair. You have suffered, my child.

MR. NIGHTINGALE [*trying to look unconcerned*]. It looks very jolly, you know, but I must say, my dear, you look as if bed were the place for you.

LORD HERBERT *sinks rather weakly down into a chair near the table.* MISS NIGHTINGALE *goes to him.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Why, Sidney, I'm ashamed of you. Do I look so shockingly?

LORD HERBERT. I can't bear to think that I sent you to all this suffering.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Dear Sidney! I believe your task was harder than mine, and certainly you look as if it had overtaken your strength.

MR. NIGHTINGALE. Both of you need the same prescription, *rest*.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Rest! Sidney and I rest! And now of all times! We can't, we can't wait a day to turn

all that enthusiasm outside into money and into new laws that will give hospitals, nursing schools—all that our soldiers hadn't at Scutari.

MR. NIGHTINGALE. The war is over.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. No, Sidney and I are going to bring it home and make it visible.

LADY VERNEY. Oh, Florence, Florence, to-day—this day of your triumph. Forget all about that—forget ghastly Scutari.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Forget Scutari! Great God!

LADY VERNEY. Yes, Florence, Lord Ellesman says that the hospitals are empty and our army is full of sturdy men because of our Angel of Mercy—that's you, dear; that's you.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*interrupting with a gay laugh*]. Oh, is it? The old idiot! But go on. What is your Angel of Mercy to do? Die? Or fold her wings and be made a fool of?

LADY VERNEY. Never mind. I'm bursting with pride over my angel. Oh, listen to that. [*A band is heard and she runs to the window.*]

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*clasping her hands*]. Sidney, Sidney, listen! That means a hospital.

MR. NIGHTINGALE. Let Sidney alone, Florence; he should go to bed and stay there a month.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Sidney go to bed! He has to make his speech in four days. You've had all my notes, Sidney? Imagine letting all this enthusiasm go up in

smoke! [*Another band is heard.* LADY VERNEY *runs again to the window.*]

LADY VERNEY. It's the Coldstreams. Oh, Florence, come.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*laughingly*]. Not I! But Sidney, with such a public our bill must pass and we'll get a hospital for India, too.

LORD HERBERT. I'll do my best. I wish I had your spirit, Florence.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. This will give you spirit. Such an audience as you will have for your speech! [*Another band is heard.*]

LADY VERNEY. Oh Florence! Florence! The Fusiliers!

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*throwing herself back in her chair, clasps her hands behind her head, and looks quizzically at LADY VERNEY*]. Oh, Parthe, Parthe, are you ten years old?

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. But, Florence, the people are all crying for you. You ought to be proud, you ought to be grateful.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. I am proud, mama, of my troops. I am grateful to God who has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden. It is handmaidens we want, and more handmaidens. And we'll get them, Sidney.

HORTON [*entering*]. The Duchess of Blankshire.

*Enter the* DUCHESS *in a great state of excitement.*

DUCHESS. Florence Nightingale, what do you mean

by hiding yourself in here? The whole country is calling for you.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Oh, no, Duchess, not for me; they're rejoicing over the good things that are coming to our brave soldiers.

DUCHESS. Don't argue now, Florence; come straight to the window with me. After giving all that money I intend to be seen with you.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*sitting down deliberately in a chair*]. Not one soul more do I see, nasty as it sounds, until Sidney's speech is delivered in Parliament. We've got only four days before us and we shall have to work day and night. After that, Duchess, we can argue, and I shall want some more use of your purse. But you haven't said, "How do you do?" to me.

DUCHESS. I think you are behaving outrageously; you, whom all these poor fellows outside are calling an angel.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*laughing*]. Oh, honors are pouring in on me. They've named a war horse for me, too. Dear Duchess, don't be cross with me. I simply can't face all those people out there to-day.

DUCHESS [*impatently*]. William Nightingale, you will just have to put her to bed. We'll say she had a relapse; that's the only way out.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. That will do nicely; only don't say that I have lost my mind, for I want to be convincing when I ask for money for reforms.

DUCHESS [*haughtily*]. It's not at all amusing, Florence. I'm not going to stay and talk to you in your present state of mind. Have them call my carriage. Oh, I forgot I had to leave it because of the crowd—never mind, I'm not going to miss it all even if I have to go on foot.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*with mock repentance*]. I am just a shy little body, and not a great duchess.

DUCHESS. I have nothing to say to you, Florence. [*She goes out with hauteur. All laugh except Mrs. NIGHTINGALE, who looks annoyed.*]

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. Do you really mean, Florence, that ill as you are, you are going to continue working with Sidney on this speech?

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Mama, I must. Unless this speech is made and our bill passed, all we have done is merely a passing breath.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE. But the hospitals are empty; the war is over.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. War over! [*Her face becomes terribly sad.*] Ever since the world began we have said just that. No! In the future, we must be prepared, our hospitals must be ready, our soldiers fit, our nurses trained. Here [*she takes a small package from her pocket*]. This is a bit of grass I gathered at Inkerman dyed with our soldiers' blood. It is my gift to the War Office. Unless they mend their ways, it will cry out against them at the judgment-seat. Here, Sidney,

with this bit of grass, and that mad enthusiasm outside, and my notes—facts, facts, facts that I can give you—your speech will carry the House away.

MR. NIGHTINGALE. Florence, don't drive Sidney too hard.

LORD HERBERT. No, thank God she is driving me. I might in my weariness forget that our soldiers have been treated like slaves. Florence, you do well to reproach me.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*goes to him and puts her hand on his shoulder*]. No, Sidney, not reproach for you. You are the very source of all our inspiration. But you feel, as I do, that neither of us may be ill until your speech is made. Then we'll think about it.

HERBERT and MISS NIGHTINGALE *withdraw somewhat apart*. MRS. NIGHTINGALE *goes slowly to the window*. A band is heard.

LADY VERNEY [*sits down in a chair and buries her face on her hand*]. Oh, Florence, why won't you see them?

HORTON [*entering, speaks excitedly*]. Oh, Miss Florence, the wounded troops from the Crimea are in front of the house and they're begging for a sight of you.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*her face full of excited emotion*]. My wounded soldiers wanting me and I here whole! Oh, I must see them!

*She rushes to the window and throws it open and looks down upon them; then stands with outstretched arms. A great shouting is heard as she is seen, and*



*in a moment the enormous volume of the military salute is heard. LADY VERNEY turns and throws her arms about MRS. NIGHTINGALE. MR. NIGHTINGALE stands proudly watching her. LORD HERBERT stands erect, then suddenly sits down and leans over, his head bowed as in prayer.*

[Curtain]

## ACT III

### SCENE II

*Drawing room in the NIGHTINGALE house in London. A maid is arranging the room. A BOY comes in with two big bags of mail; they seem very heavy and he drops them to the floor, wiping his forehead with his pocket handkerchief.*

BOY [*to the MAID*]. Beauty, I wants to ask you if this 'ere apartment is the Post Office of the City of London? 'Cause if it is, I asks a 'igher wage.

MAID. Ignorance! I suppose you don't know who Miss Florence Nightingale is?

BOY. Don't I, though! The whole world knows that. Queens come to see her, and kings. You bet your eye I know that. And it's proper they should pick out the beauty of London to look after her. But don't you let any of them dressed-up servant monkeys they fetch along with the Royalties make eyes at you. I'll punch their 'eads off if they do.

MAID. Listen to the child! Much good my beauty does me. The Royalties have to come here as plain and quiet as tradespeople; not so much as one footman

would she 'low a queen. Put those bags close to that little table there by the couch, and run off like a good boy.

*The boy puts the bag near the table she indicates, and is about to make some demonstration of distracted affection, when he hears a step; whereupon he kisses his hand to the laughing maid and makes a rapid escape. The MAID goes on with her dusting and LADY VERNEY comes in.*

LADY VERNEY. Alicia, stop your dusting and help me arrange the letters.

*The MAID puts down her duster and begins to help LADY VERNEY to take the mail from the bags. They arrange it in piles as neatly as possible on the little table.*

MAID. I don't see how Miss Florence stands it, ma'am! She so delicate like, too. Each morning I comes in and finds her settin' at that table exactly where she were settin' when I gives her the pile for the night. And she a great lady, too. Where's the use of being a lady, ma'am, if you has to work?

LADY VERNEY [*smiling*]. Where's the use indeed! But [*listening*], I think I hear Dr. Sutherland. Bring him here.

*The MAID goes out. Enter DR. SUTHERLAND.*

LADY VERNEY [*looking up at him with a little nod of welcome*]. What indefatigable friends Florence possesses. Day in and day out you work for her. [*She pauses, looks*

*at him quizzically.*] A little like a door-mat, you poor man! Don't be cross; I'm nothing but a proud feather duster.

DR. SUTHERLAND [*seems in great good spirits*]. Lady Verney, are you as happy as you should be? Miss Nightingale gives Lord Herbert the last items to-day. He makes his final speech in the House to-morrow and our work is done.

LADY VERNEY. And high time it is, too, if he and Florence are going to survive their speech.

DR. SUTHERLAND. The speech in the House to-morrow contains all Miss Nightingale's ideas for the complete reorganization of the War Office. What a moment it will be for her!

LADY VERNEY. My sister will say that it is all Lord Herbert's work, though she has actually written the speech for him, I believe. Ah, well, women have to work through men, and there is no greater or more generous man than Lord Herbert.

DR. SUTHERLAND. A friendship like the one between Lord Herbert and Miss Nightingale is seldom seen in this world. I would call it a passionate, platonic friendship and it makes an irresistible power.

LADY VERNEY [*screws her face up a little dubiously*]. Quite so; they work as one person. She calls him her master, but I suspect he is really her tool.

DR. SUTHERLAND [*gravely*]. The tool is worn out. Thank God, it is the tool that is worn out, and not the

master spirit. We must make Miss Nightingale see how very ill Lord Herbert is.

LADY VERNEY [*anxiously*]. What would happen if he were unable to make his speech to-morrow?

DR. SUTHERLAND. Unless he is able to make it to-morrow or very soon, all our days and nights of labor would come to nothing. This bill—do you know what it means? Nothing short of the entire reform of caring for the British Army in health as well as in sickness.

LADY VERNEY [*wearily*]. Don't I know it! Have I heard of anything else?

DR. SUTHERLAND. I thought when I was helping her at Scutari that her work was miraculous, but it was nothing compared to what she has already put through in this room. [*He looks around him.*]

*The door opens at the far end of the room and MISS NIGHTINGALE comes in; she is exceedingly frail, seeming to carry her erect body entirely by the force of her spirit. Her eyes are steady and somber, the lines of the mouth resolved; she looks at the pile of mail scrutinizingly, almost as though she could see through the wrappers. She glances casually at LADY VERNEY and DR. SUTHERLAND. DR. SUTHERLAND goes forward quickly and helps her to her couch. DR. SUTHERLAND and LADY VERNEY remain standing near her waiting for her to speak.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*with a bright smile* at DR. SUTHERLAND]. Don't let us talk about the speech. I must

just quiet myself with other things until Lord Herbert comes. [*She begins looking over her mail. She opens a note, glances through it and laughs.*] Since that letter of mine to the papers in support of the voluntary movement I have received forty-one offers of marriage. I could have as many husbands as Mahomet's mother, but did woman ever want a lover as much as I want that bill to go through? Never! [*They laugh. She throws the letter aside and opens another.*]

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*glancing over another note*]. Senseless sentimentalist! Poems! Seventy-nine poems in the last month, and in all I figure as an angel. Now what is there in me like an angel?

LADY VERNEY. Nothing at all, my love.

DR. SUTHERLAND [*laughs*]. Angels fold their wings sometimes. Do you ever? And they haven't talons.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*laughs*]. You think that I do not answer my letters sweetly enough; but what will you? When I write civilly, I have a civil answer—and nothing is done. When I write furiously, I have a rude answer—and something is done. And I do want things done. They must be done. I am not sure of the executive ability of angels, even in Heaven; but on earth they are certainly only fit for memorial windows—and tombstones. Really, Parthe, it is very trying to be called an angel when one is absorbed in drains. However, I must flutter my wings for this young poet, as he seems to have

more money than rhythm, and is inclined to part with some of it for our medical school.

LADY VERNEY. Florence, to-morrow you will have a strain you've not known before, the strain of bearing joy. Won't you to-day send Dr. Sutherland away and rest until Sidney Herbert comes? Remember, you have a perishing body.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Rest! Am I not resting? This is a day of triumph for us. Herbert should be here now. Dr. Sutherland, do you take it in that our work is done?

DR. SUTHERLAND [*looking very critically at MISS NIGHTINGALE speaks in semi-serious voice*]. You may live through the day provided you eat one biscuit—or two.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*laughing*]. After my return from the Crimea, you said: "Let me write your epitaph and put you quietly to bed for your friends to nurse and feed and hang poems on your bed post." Ever since I have known you you've been saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant," but not yet has my Lord said that, and until He does, I work, and work, and work, for the British Army, than which there is nothing nobler and more abused on earth. They shall have the best medical schools, the best sanitation, the best physical culture, the best hospitals, that the mind of intelligent and grateful men can devise. They shall be sent to the battle-fields by their country as fit as human care can make them;

and as long as there is breath in their bodies, they shall know intelligent human gratitude. I am so determined on this that I will give up health and joy in life to its accomplishment. Now, need we talk further about it? Why doesn't Sidney Herbert come?

DR. SUTHERLAND [*laughing*]. I care for the cause, too, but I don't want to see you offered up as a sacrifice, even to the British Army. And you are putting great pressure on Lord Herbert, though you must see that he is ill. Miss Nightingale, he is very ill.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Ill! I do see that he is ill; they tell me that he has been so for a long time; yet think of what he has done. No man has ever done so great a piece of work for humanity. To-morrow it will be established. His and my work is on the crest of completion. It will pass on into the great river that flows from the throne of God.

DR. SUTHERLAND. And yet again I say that he is very ill; and the Under-Secretary has great power to block his moves.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. He was ill when he entered the House of Lords, but would he ease himself by giving up the Secretaryship of War? No, he kept on in order that he might put his whole force into establishing his work. After his glorious preparatory work, after beating the Minister, do you think he would let himself be beaten by an Under-Secretary? No, no, Lord Herbert is spent—is ill—but he will put this through. I know him. What



does building schools and hospitals matter if the old system of holding no one responsible remains? Sidney Herbert beaten? Never!

DR. SUTHERLAND. Perhaps you are right. There is nothing more to be done except this speech. You have marshaled your facts until they shine out like lanterns illuminating a black room. Lord Herbert has only to use them to make the situation clear, and that he will do to-morrow.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Yes, and our army will be saved for all time. I, even I, whom you call dead, feel new life running through me. Was there ever such a loyal, dull, heroic animal as the rank and file of our army? Can you not, Dr. Sutherland, see that graveyard on the Bosphorus? The thousands of graves about the glistening white shaft which the Queen raised to her honored troops? Ah, the irony of it! We know how they died, and why—her neglected, murdered troops. We will make a pilgrimage to those graves, not with flowers or palms, but with documents that will ensure the safety from such a death for all the troops who follow after them. Lord Herbert has now all the cards in his hand. He will soon be here. I think I could almost walk from here to Scutari, treading the ocean for very joy.

DR. SUTHERLAND. It would be like you to try it.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Parthe, will you have my dinner sent up, and tell papa and mama I cannot see them to-

night? Oh, why is Sidney late? He must know I am on fire with impatience.

LADY VERNEY [*looking up and listening*]. That may be Sidney now. You two tired dears, don't work too hard. [*Exit.*]

*The maid comes in and announces* LORD HERBERT.

MISS NIGHTINGALE *draws herself up from her couch, her face lighting with enthusiasm.*

DR. SUTHERLAND [*smiling*]. May I, humbly, as your medical adviser, suggest that you sit down?

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*remains standing, smiles at him, and shakes her head*]. Please go.

DR. SUTHERLAND *goes out by one door as LORD HERBERT enters by another. DR. SUTHERLAND pauses for a moment as he leaves, to look at LORD HERBERT with alarmed concern.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*taking a step forward to meet LORD HERBERT, with great joy in her eyes*]. Sidney, the cards are ours. We may sing our song of triumph. We will make our pilgrimage to Scutari. Oh, the foul cancer that broke there shall be for the healing of the nations!

LORD HERBERT *has gone slowly towards her and meets the joy in her eyes with unutterable sadness. As she talks he bows his head. As she finishes he looks up.*

LORD HERBERT. Florence, my poor Florence.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*with deep concern*]. You are

tired, I know, I know, but you have only to make your speech to-morrow and all is done. Oh, I urge you to only one fight more, the best and last. Just one push more! And lean on me, put every burden on me. You will only have to speak—just one little effort more, my friend.

LORD HERBERT. Florence, I cannot make even a gesture. I cannot.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*fiercely*]. Cannot! You, Sidney Herbert, cannot! Ah [*persuasively*], you don't mean it. Sidney, you are tired. See, see, my friend, I am strong. I will do all the labor. Truly, most of it is done. Sit down and rest, and I will tell you what to do. You have found it difficult to speak, I know.

LORD HERBERT. Difficult! It was like addressing sheeted tombstones by torchlight. Florence, look at me. With your frail strength you are beating the dead—I am dead.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*with growing anxiety*]. Sidney, just think quietly of the work that is behind you. You will see how very, very little remains to be done—only the last act.

LORD HERBERT. The last act is over, Florence. I have sent my resignation to the War Office.

MISS NIGHTINGALE'S *hands drop helplessly to her side; she looks at LORD HERBERT with horror, and her words fall slow and labored and as solemn as the toll of a funeral bell.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Cavour's death was a blow to

European liberty, but a greater blow has come when Sidney Herbert is beaten. No man in my day has thrown away so noble a game with all the winning cards in his hand.

LORD HERBERT. It is true! My poor Florence, my poor Florence, I must leave you. I grow weak. [*He holds out his hands for a moment with a pathetic gesture, turns and goes slowly to the door. On reaching the door, he turns again and looks towards her with great pity in his eyes, but she stands like one turned to stone, erect, with her hands still falling, palms outward, by her side, her lips parted, her eyes like the dead. The door closes behind LORD HERBERT. She continues standing motionless. DR. SUTHERLAND comes quietly in.*]

DR. SUTHERLAND [*going towards her*]. Miss Nightingale!

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*starts, clasps her hands, sighs deeply, then speaks wearily*]. Lord Herbert has resigned as Secretary of War. Our work has failed.

DR. SUTHERLAND. Ah, my friend, be content with the work you have both done, it is enormous—it is incredible.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*impatiently*]. What does it matter what I have done? The thing is, what can I do now? I must make friends with the new Secretary of War. Ah [*she puts her hand over her heart as if in pain*], we must induce him to cut out the old red tape. Our work

all to be done over again. Sidney Herbert beaten by an Under-Secretary! Sidney Herbert!

DR. SUTHERLAND. Think of all he has done.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. To fail at the critical moment—what does it matter what you have done before that moment?

*The MAID comes in and lights the lamps.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*to* DR. SUTHERLAND]. Leave the papers with me. I will go over them to-night. They must be revised.

DR. SUTHERLAND. Again let me urge you to rest, or let me stay and work with you.

MISS NIGHTINGALE. No. You are very good, but I shall work better alone. Come to me in the morning. [*She draws the lamp nearer to her and begins working.*]

DR. SUTHERLAND [*looks at her sadly*]. You will put yourself in the grave before Lord Herbert. [*He goes out.*]

MISS NIGHTINGALE *goes steadily on reading, revising, making notes. The lamp grows dimmer. She draws her shawl about her and moves nearer to the light.*

[*Curtain*]

## ACT III

### SCENE III

*The next morning*

MISS NIGHTINGALE *is still sitting in exactly the same position as at the close of the last scene. The lamp is no longer burning. The MAID comes in; she seems accustomed to seeing MISS NIGHTINGALE working at this hour.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*looking up*]. Bring me my tea, Alicia, and tell Lady Verney that I will not see her until luncheon time.

MAID. Begging your pardon, Miss Florence, but Lady Verney said I was to tell you that she must see you after you had your tea and roll.

MISS NIGHTINGALE *moves a little impatiently, goes on working. The MAID leaves the room, returning in a few moments with a cup of tea and a roll. MISS NIGHTINGALE drinks her tea, leaning back on the couch, but all the time keeping her eyes on the papers. As she puts her tray aside and again draws her papers to her, LADY VERNEY comes in.*

LADY VERNEY [*going to her and kneeling beside her speaks in a voice shaken with emotion*]. Florence!

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*looking at her sharply*]. What is it?

LADY VERNEY. My poor Florence!

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Is it Sidney Herbert? Is anything wrong with him?

LADY VERNEY. Florence, he is dead.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*remains perfectly still, looking at her sister*]. No! my God, no!

LADY VERNEY. Oh, my dear, his last words were of you. He said: "Florence, poor Florence! Our joint work unfinished!"

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Are you mad to tell me that? Dead! Sidney Herbert dead! The cup of water for the thirsty broken! The open hands for the starving closed! There is no wisdom, no gentleness in the world, with his voice hushed. My harsh voice racked him in his dying moments, and he had sweetness and pity for me. See, sister, the most despicable creature on earth sits before you—and the noblest is dead. [*Her hands drop in her lap and she seems alone, remote.*]

MR. NIGHTINGALE *comes slowly into the room. He looks with grave apprehension at FLORENCE and questioningly at LADY VERNEY. LADY VERNEY looks at him and shakes her head as if in despair. MISS NIGHTINGALE seems unaware of her father's presence. He goes near her.*

MR. NIGHTINGALE. Florence, I must speak. One of the greatest men in England has been with me this morning. He came as soon as he heard of Sidney's death. He bids me say to you: "Will you let all your work fail? It is you we have depended on, not poor Sidney."

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*looks at him unseeingly, speaks as if to herself*]. How strong I am. How very, very strong this flesh. Others die—I cannot. Sidney, my master—I have your forgiveness, I know. I hear your dear voice say, "Do you not think I know, my Florence?" But I shall never forgive myself. I let my dear master stand dying before me and I would not see.

MR. NIGHTINGALE. We know your loneliness, Florence. His death leaves you dreadfully alone in the midst of your work. [MISS NIGHTINGALE *shudders and puts her hand to her heart.*] We are poor tools after Herbert, but we are your tools, useless without your brain and hands. Sir John McNeil implored me a few moments back to say to you that your work is your life and that you can do it alone. He begged me to say that to a spirit like yours it is even sustaining to be alone.

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*fiercely*]. Blind fool to say that!

LADY VERNEY. Florence, dearest, Sidney was so ill. A few days more or less—what does it matter?

MISS NIGHTINGALE. Obtuse to grief! A few days more or less? Ah, for one little second more of my beloved one's life! Do you know of closed lids—your light shut out? of sealed lips—your inspiration hushed?



Just one little moment more out of all time to say "Forgive me," and to see that answering heavenly sweetness of his smile, and to hear my master say "Have peace!" Oh, I am alone with strangers.

MR. NIGHTINGALE [*with dignity*]. We are not strangers, Florence. And I repeat from my heart the words Sir John McNeil has just said to me, that many more may fall around you, but you are destined to do a great work and you cannot die until it is done. Go on! To you the accidents of mortality ought to be as the falling leaves in autumn.

MISS NIGHTINGALE *makes a little beseeching gesture as if she begged them to be silent. Her eyes fall upon a paper on the table; she picks it up, looks at it with horror.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE. His speech! My God! His speech! [*She lets it fall to the ground.*] His speech unsaid! [*Throwing back her head with a light uplifted movement, she stands erect, as if looking into the future.*] It shall be said! [*Pause.*] Work! work alone, companionless, that is my destiny. The years of joyless work shut me in—I submit. My beloved master, do you hear me? I was wrong, you have not failed. I will live and finish your work. I see you smiling and waiting for me. I will come, bringing your sheaves with me.

[*Curtain*]

## SCENE IV

*Forty years later. MISS NIGHTINGALE'S sitting room in South Street. MISS NIGHTINGALE, a very old woman, is sitting upon her couch propped up by pillows. She is surrounded by a brilliant array of high officials, delegates from almost every nation in the world. Conspicuous are the representatives of the Navy and Army of Great Britain. Members of the Red Cross are present, and a number of trained nurses from various hospitals wearing their uniforms.*

AN OFFICIAL [*bowing before MISS NIGHTINGALE speaks in voice full of emotion*]. The nations of the earth, here represented [*he turns toward the assembly, who have moved a little back of MISS NIGHTINGALE*], speak to you through my voice. But how can words carry the heart-beats of humanity? They ask me to put, with England's, their highest honors at your feet. The Freedom of the City of London has been given you—but what can that mean to one who has the Freedom of the City of God? The chief honor His Majesty has to give, the Order of Merit, he gives you—but what can that mean to one who hears the "Well Done" of her God? But all these, our poor human honors, are yours, in

humility and gratitude for the crooked paths you have made straight, and the tears you have wiped away. I place them at your feet, the feet of Florence Nightingale, [*as he speaks the name of FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE every hand is raised in salute*] who took the soldiers' road, for whom the battle has never ceased, and who, in all the long years, has never had a furlough.

*He places the Order of Merit on her lap, the other medals and papers at her feet. While he is speaking MISS NIGHTINGALE remains leaning on her couch, remote, unattending. As he places the medals and honors before her she looks at them and about at the brilliant company in some bewilderment; then she looks at the spokesman.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*slowly and questioningly*]. Too kind—too kind. What have I done that they should be so kind?

*Music is heard in the distance; men's voices are singing: "The Son of God goes forth to war." MISS NIGHTINGALE leans eagerly forward; her face becomes radiant, alive.*

MISS NIGHTINGALE [*in a clear tone of voice*]. My hymn!

*The veterans from the Crimea come marching in, singing:*

*"They climbed the steep ascent of heaven  
Through peril, toil, and pain;*

*O God, to us may grace be given  
To follow in their train."*

MISS NIGHTINGALE'S face becomes transfigured. She leans further forward, lifting her hand in an attitude of intense expectation; her eyes look off into the far distance.

[Curtain]



