



Florence Nightingale

Florence Nightingale was born on 12 May 1820. Her parents were on holiday in Italy at the time, in a city called Florence. They named their daughter after the city. Florence had an older sister called Parthenope. The girls had lessons from their father. Florence was clever, and liked history and maths.

In Victorian Britain, poor women worked as servants or in factories. Rich girls like Florence were expected to marry and look after a home. Florence wanted to become a nurse but her parents were shocked and were against the idea. During Florence's time, people did not know that disease is caused by germs, and that germs grow best in dirty conditions. Victorian hospitals were dirty and full of germs. Nurses were not respectable. After many arguments her parents finally agreed to let her begin her training to become a nurse. In 1853, she became the manager of a hospital in London, and made many improvements.

In 1854, the Crimean War began - England France and Turkey were fighting against Russia. The government asked Florence to take a group of nurses out to the Crimea to help the wounded soldiers at Scutari hospital. At first, the doctors at Scutari did not want the nurses to go near the wounded soldiers.



So the women organized a kitchen and made tasty soups for the soldiers. Soon, the doctors asked Florence and her nurses to help look after the men. The hospital was overcrowded and filthy. There were not enough beds, so men lay on the floor. They were not washed. There were no proper toilets. Drains were blocked. Rats ran everywhere. The smell was terrible.

Florence worked 20 hours a day cleaning the hospital. She paid workmen to clear the drains. Soon fewer men were dying. Each evening Florence made her rounds of the hospital with a lamp in her hand. She cared for the soldiers and made them feel better.

Back in England, people heard about "The Lady with the Lamp". She became very famous. Florence got sick herself while out in the Crimea, and nearly died. She was determined to stay and help though.

After the war, she kept on working, improving hospitals, opening training schools, and writing books. It is thanks to Florence Nightingale that nurses are now properly trained to care for us all.

She lived until she was ninety years old.

