



## PRIMARY SOURCE READING 13

### “Advice to Nursing Students” and “The Difficulties of Trained Nurses”

The years from 1850 to 1914 brought exciting new career opportunities to many groups. For example, the field of nursing opened to women, largely as a result of the efforts of the British nurse Florence Nightingale. Before Nightingale undertook her reforms, nurses were largely untrained; through her efforts, nursing was raised to a medical profession with high standards.

**Guided Reading** Read the following two articles about nursing to see how a new career developed during the 1800s.

#### “Advice to Nursing Students”

The world, more especially the Hospital world, is in such a hurry, is moving so fast, that it is too easy to slide into bad habits before we are aware. And it is easier still to let our year’s training slip away without forming any real plan of training ourselves.

For, after all, all that any training is to do for us is: to teach us how to train ourselves, how to observe for ourselves, how to think out things for ourselves. Don’t let us allow the first week, the second week, the third week to pass by—I will not say in idleness, but in bustle. Begin, for instance, at once making notes of your cases. From the first moment you see a case, you can observe it. Nay, it is one of the first things a Nurse is strictly called upon to do: to observe her sick. . . .

But give but one-quarter of an hour a *day* to jot down, even in words which no one can understand but yourself, the progress or change of two or three individual cases, not to forget or confuse them. . . . To those who have not much education, I am sure that our kind Home Sister, or the Special Probationer in the same Ward, or nearest in any way, will give help. The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; and “line upon line”—*one* line every day—in the steady, observing, humble Nurse has often won the race over the smarter “genius” in what constitutes real Nursing. But few of us women seriously think of improving our own mind or character *every day*. And this is fatal to our improving in Nursing. . . .

A woman who takes a sentimental view of

Nursing (which she calls “ministering” as if she were an angel) is of course worse than useless. . . .

To be a Nurse *is* to be a Nurse: not to be a Nurse only when we are put to the work we like. If we can’t work when we are put to the work we don’t like—and Patients can’t always be fitted to Nurses—that is behaving like a spoiled child, like a naughty girl: not like a Nurse. If we can do the work we don’t like from a higher motive till we do like it, that is one test of being a real Nurse. . . . For the Patients want according to their wants, and not according to the Nurse’s likes or dislikes. If you wish to be trained to do *all* Nursing well, even what you do not like—trained to perfection in little things—that is Nursing for the sake of Nursing, for the sake of God and of your neighbour. And remember, in little things as in great—No Cross, no Crown.

Nursing is said, most truly said, to be a high calling, an honourable calling. But what does the honour lie in? In working hard during your training to learn and to do all things perfectly. The honour does not lie in putting on Nursing like your uniform, your dress. . . . Honour lies in loving perfection, consistency, and in working hard for it: in being ready to work patiently: ready to say not “How clever I am!” but “I am not yet worthy; and I will live to deserve and work to deserve to be called a Trained Nurse.”

#### “The Difficulties of Trained Nurses”

The wages of a probationer [trainee] at the Birmingham and Midland Counties’ Institution . . . are £12 for the first year and £20 for the remaining 2, with board, lodging, and uniform.



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Probationers must be between 25 and 35. These are the usual terms; but we do not ourselves expect to see nursing widely embraced among women—and especially among gentlewomen—until the terms are improved. A young woman who has to work must begin before 25; a nurse’s life is so arduous that the usual computation allows them 12 years of work, after which time they are incapacitated. Is it a career likely to

tempt a woman of culture, to commence at 25 upon wages which an incompetent serving maid of 18 will not take, and to end her working life—while still in her prime—upon less wages than a head-nurse or a “plain cook” can demand and easily obtain? . . . Surely a well-trained sick-nurse—when we consider the needful qualifications—is worth more than a kitchen-maid.

## INTERPRETING THE READING

**Directions** Use information from the readings to answer the following questions. If necessary, use a separate sheet of paper.

1. What advice did Florence Nightingale give in her article “Advice to Nursing Students”?

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2. According to Florence Nightingale, where did the honor lie in nursing?

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3. Under what circumstances did the author of “The Difficulties of Trained Nurses” expect many more women to become nurses?

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4. Why did most nurses leave the profession after 12 years?

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### Critical Thinking

5. **Analyzing Information** What did Nightingale mean by “No Cross, no Crown”?

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6. **Determining Cause and Effect** Why do you think the profession of nursing was so undervalued at this time?

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