

# A Letter from Florence

The Barracks Hospital  
Scutari  
Turkey

1st December 1854

Dear Mother and Father,

I am writing to let you know of my safe passage to Turkey. I arrived safely on 4th November after a choppy and rather cramped voyage on the ship.

On arrival, my nurses and I were brought straight to The Barracks Hospital where the most awful sight awaited us - Injured men lay dying on the cold, stone floor with their wounds undressed and open to disease. The cold rooms were crawling with rats and the filth from the men and the rodents lay in piles. The stench was like nothing I have ever smelt - worse than 1000 pigs, I am sure. There was not a patch of ground that wasn't taken up by a poor soldier, rocking in agony or shivering silently.

But the worst thing of all was the sound - the screams of pain and fear echoed around the walls. How it still rings in my ears!

I made sure my nurses did not see me upset and immediately found the doctor in charge. He seemed a little annoyed by our presence, but it quickly became clear that there were poor supplies not only of blankets, beds and medicine, but also of food. This I quickly put right and with my nurses, we cleaned and scrubbed the hospital until it shone like a new penny!

Thankfully, the supplies have started to arrive now and we are able to care for our brave soldiers and, in many cases, nurse them back from their wounds. Sadly, there are many that are still dying from disease.

Oh, now I am more certain than ever that this is my calling - this is what God wanted me to do. The days are long and my nights are even longer, but I am happier than I have ever been. The men have taken to calling me 'The Lady of The Lamp' and it gives me great joy that I can bring them some comfort in their pain and suffering.

As I write, the light is beginning to fade and so I shall make my farewells and go on my rounds.

Please know I am well and look forward to seeing you and my dear Pop once again soon.

With love as always,  
**Florence Nightingale**