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1 Upper H St

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"But I do not agree with you about old age. To me it is a time to which to look forward, when I shall be very glad to lay down my oars, & gather up the fragments of all my experience, & wind up those most important matters of reflection and thought which a too busy life prevents my speaking of to myself & to God – which a too practical life prevents my speaking of to others. But then I shall be beyond the reach of fear nor of favour, & my practical life cannot then be spoiled by it, & I shall speak my thoughts openly to the world, as Bunsen, after forty years of silence, has done at length. So I, after forty, perhaps fifty, years shall say to the Church of England, your religion is extinct, your men are unbelieving, your women are superstitious, your litany makes us laugh, your sermons make us cry,. You become every day more impertinent to God. You pray against "plague, pestilence, & famine", when God has been saying more loudly every day this week that those who live ten feet above a pestilential river will die, & those who live forty feet will live."

This excerpt was e-mailed to me by Hugh Small, in response to my request for the source of a quote that appears on p. 129 of his book, *Florence Nightingale. Avenging Angel* (1999; since republished in a revised, 2nd edition). It seems likely that the last sentence is a reference to an extract from the Weekly Report of Births and Deaths for the week ending 19 August, which appeared in the *Times* on 23 August:

"It is on the banks of the polluted Thames, in the lower parts of the London basin, that the people die in large numbers, for on ground not on an average 10 feet above the Trinity high-water mark 1,212 of the deaths from cholera have happened out of 595,119 people, while on the next terrace of 10 feet, and under 40 feet of elevation, 493 in 648,619 have died; and on the higher grounds above St. James's-square and the Strand only 213 have died of cholera out of 1,070,372 inhabitants. The mortality at the three elevations commencing at the lowest has been at the rate of 204, and 76, and 20 to every 100,000 inhabitants" ("Health of London," page 8, column c).

I extend thanks to Hugh Small for locating this reference in the *Times Digital Archive* and sending it to me as an e-mail attachment.

This letter eight-page letter is summarized by Susan Goldie, *A Calendar of the Letters of Florence Nightingale* (1983; since made available online by Small): 3_794, 25/8/54.

Goldie's summation notes that FN informed her sister that she had given notice of her intention to leave the Upper Harley Street institute, but to keep it a secret for now; and FN expressed her view that prostitution was so prevalent because the only socially accepted positions for women were as governesses and in needlework. The summation, understandably short because of space limitations, does not include a reference to the excerpts above.