

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE & TURKEY

The Turkish Nurses Training School in Istanbul is holding special celebrations on May 12 this year, in honour of Florence Nightingale.

As far back as the days of the Armada and the Spanish Wars, Queen Elizabeth was anxious for an alliance with the Turks, but nearly two centuries passed before this alliance became a concrete reality, during the Crimean War.

Although that war now seems dim and distant history, there are still old men in Scutari who remember stories told by their fathers, of the British troops who fought at Balaclava and Sebastopol. At the close of the war, the then reigning Sultan, as a gesture of appreciation, sent a Turkish cannon to Queen Victoria, which today stands shrouded in sandbags on the ramparts of the Tower of London.

Florence Nightingale is, perhaps, the most famous figure of the Crimean War. Through her efforts in Scutari, the lives of thousands of British and Turkish soldiers were saved. Her struggle and triumph over indifference, incompetence and prejudice, first in the Crimea and then in this country, paved the way for the great and splendid nursing services of today.

It is very touching that, at this moment, the nurses of Turkey should have chosen to strengthen the bonds of Anglo-Turkish amity by honouring the memory of Florence Nightingale.