Florence Nightingale : a biography.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

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THIS PHOTOGRAPH SHOWS MISS NIGHTINGALE WEARING A SHAWL AND HOLDING A LETTER, BOTH SENT TO HER BY H.M. QUEEN VICTORIA

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

A Biography

by

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LONDON
GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD
MUSEUM STREET

FIRST PUBLISHED IN GREAT BRITAIN IN 1931

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
UNWIN BROTHERS LTD., WOKING

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

THIS book could not have been written without constant reference to, and some quotation from, the letters and papers published in Sir Edward Cook's excellent two-volume biography of Florence Nightingale. (Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1913.) I am deeply indebted to Messrs. Macmillan for their kind permission to make these references and quotations.

I should add that since the publication of my book in America and while the proofs of this English edition were in the press, Miss I. B. O'Malley's biography of Florence Nightingale, written with the assistance of members of the Nightingale family, has been published. Miss O'Malley's book (which does not go beyond the Crimean War) contains much interesting and hitherto unknown detail but, after reading it with great enjoyment, I do not find that I need alter anything that I have written here. Indeed, the new official biography strengthens my previous impressions and, in particular, emphasizes what a very real struggle it was, at the outset, for Florence Nightingale to free herself from dependence upon ordinary human longings such as to please and be loved by her family and her friends.

I. C. W.

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FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

CHAPTER I

IN THE BEGINNING

A DELIGHTFUL and discerning essay, "A Room of One's Own," by Virginia Woolf, has recently pointed out that one of the greatest obstacles, in the past, to the success of women's work was the psychological atmosphere in which, or rather against which, that work was attempted. Public opinion did not encourage any work for women outside the home circle; and the girl who cherished hopes, or perhaps only vaguely dreamed, of one day pursuing a vocation other than marriage felt all round her a stifling incredulity which took the life out of her hopes or dreams. Yet incredulity is too positive a word: it suggests that the hopes were at any rate recognized, even if not approved of; whereas the misery of the situation lay in this, that outside the dreamer's mind there was no recognition at all of her inmost longings. It is difficult to think of similar situations, though most people no doubt, at some time or other in their lives, have had experience of a situation whose suffocating nature consisted in other people's ignorance of the fact that there was for the sufferer any situation at all. Absence

of recognition in those with whom we live, or even in the world generally, of the one thing, idea or interest to which we are intensely, quiveringly, alive has a devastating effect. Encouragement, or preferably, its less positive form, that attitude of mind which takes ambitions and aspirations for granted, is so valuable because it gives beginners that glimpse, through outside eyes, of the reality of their hopes which enables them to conquer inner diffidence and hesitation.

The climate, to use that expression to describe the attitude of public opinion towards independent life and work for women, has improved enormously. There are still, however, fogs and mists hanging about sheltered and untilled places. Times have changed, but even now, owing to the rapidity of the change, women do not start scratch, as it were, with men in this matter.

The professions are open to them; they no longer have to overcome family and public prejudice to their embarking upon careers and livelihoods, nor have they to persuade themselves that the inner urge is a real one. They are not particularly aware of an urge, in the majority of cases; they decide to get a job and that is all there is to it. Nevertheless, those who go further and aim at something more than a job have still to face surprise, undue attention, compliments, and other manifestations of an attitude not far removed from incredulity, which are handicaps

to the serious worker, though they are often considered advantages by the unserious. Older women with memories and younger ones with imagination can therefore realize what a very real obstacle the climate was, about a hundred years ago, to the girl who had ideals of her own, whether of art, literature or public service.

It was a case of being enclosed in an atmosphere through which she could not break rather than of being under the ban of a prohibition which she dared not disobey. It wasn't so much that her parents forbade her to leave home; the situation was far from being as simple as that. The stage at which a young woman is forbidden to do what she wants to do is much nearer the end of escape than the stage in which it is not necessary to forbid because it is assumed, without its being talked about, that no well-brought-up young woman would want to break away. It is comparatively easy to disobey a prohibition; at any rate, when you disobey it, everyone, including yourself, realizes what you have done. But with an atmosphere that has got into your own lungs, you are not quite sure yourself what you are doing when you try to break through it, and the outside world, looking on, most certainly does not understand.

Except for the inner urge, which caused more pain than pleasure, for there was no holding it sometimes, and, at its worst, it made the girl jumpy and irritable at home and drove her parents to their wits' ends to

think of ways of making her more contented, there was nothing to explain why she was persecuted by these vague longings. There was sometimes every reason, as far as the eye could see, or even anxiety for her welfare could discover, why she should have been perfectly happy and contented. A delightful home; indulgent and public-spirited parents; books, friends, music, social gaieties and, within proper limits, social interests; no sense at all of being cut off from the world or the life of the mind, for there were travels and frequent visits to London, concerts and lectures, and parties where one met all the most interesting people of the day.

Nevertheless, a feeling of futility and of waste of her life oppressed her and the feeling at times grew almost into a sensation of being called by a voice, such as the child Samuel heard after he was put to bed by Eli in the Temple.

Obviously, it was not the parents who called, and had the girl inquired of them, they, like Eli, would have told her not to imagine things, but to lie down again. Everything around her, the attitude of Papa and Mamma, the books and periodicals and newspapers, the example of her girl friends, the remarks of relations and visitors, told her to lie down again. More often than not she obeyed, and time passed and she married and became a mother who told her daughters to lie down again when they were restless,

adding perhaps, if she were an understanding mother, that she had felt like that once, but that when they were married and had homes and families of their own they would forget about it.

But now and again the Voice persisted.

Nowadays we do not think of it as a Voice. We keep the idea of a voice or a call for an impulse which leads us to do what is rare or unusual. Steps which have become matter-of-course ones do not need the invitation of conscience and even in nursing, which Florence Nightingale always looked upon as a religious calling and not as a mere profession, everyday interests play a large part in deciding the choice of the majority of women who train as nurses; and we have come to realize that the satisfaction of doing good work which is common to all serious workers, whatever the nature of their work, is just as reliable an incentive and mainstay as the purely religious motive.

Florence Nightingale was a deeply religious woman. Doing what she did, when she did it, she could not have been otherwise. Without a sense of the direction and support of the highest authority—God—she could never have brought herself to insist on becoming a nurse (an occupation in those days carried on by unskilled and in some cases quite disreputable persons), thereby shocking all the proprieties of people of her own class and standing in society. She was born and bred in a time when self-assertion, if it urged action in unwomanly spheres, had very little chance

of being listened to, even by the woman in whom it was ramping, unless by its vehemence it could contrive to make her believe that it was acting under Heavenly orders. The more powerful the ego—the more successful, of course, were these subconscious tactics. Florence Nightingale's religion was as strong as her personality.

There was in her an insatiable public spirit. She developed into the personification, almost, of public-spiritedness. She stripped her life bare of domesticity and all interests which might hamper her public activities. She went without love, æsthetic joys and the pleasures of ordinary social life, maintaining only, with the strictest economy, family ties and a few others made before she became a public figure. She kept in close touch with a God, but he was a God practically of her own creation. Of no one can it more truly be said that the God whom she worshipped was made in her own image. He had the attributes of the Almighty, but his voice was the voice of Florence Nightingale.

That voice was an exceedingly sensible one. It had more sense in it of the kind that is queerly enough called common, than all the royalties, archbishops, cabinet ministers and civil servants of that time had collectively. Florence Nightingale could have knocked the bottom out of Mr. Bernard Shaw's *Apple Cart*. Viceroys, administrators and officials of every kind were her puppets. She was "in office"

behind the scenes more effectively than any of them.

Public Spirit was in its infancy, in England, in the first half of the last century. The Industrial Age had brought social problems with it to grapple with which there was neither experience, policy nor administrative machinery. A rapidly increasing population overcrowded the industrial towns and districts. Hard times, popular despair, political agitation and unrest made the situation electric with panic and repression. Local and municipal authorities, whose powers and scope were not much wider than they had been in the days of Queen Elizabeth, were about as fitted to tackle the new conditions as mothers' meetings would be, in these times, to deal with modern traffic problems.

The state of public institutions was horrible; pauper inmates of hospitals, prisons, asylums and the new workhouses were kept in a squalour and governed with a callousness that can scarcely be exaggerated. The splendid work of Howard in the eighteenth century and of Mrs. Fry in the early nineteenth century had thrown light on the horrors of prisons and hospitals, but these great humanitarians were far ahead of their times and such social work as there was was almost entirely carried on by religious bodies and Sisterhoods. These, though earnest and devoted, were untrained and could do very little because they had no real authority.

The world was only just beginning to have a conception of its social responsibilities. There was no tradition of a civil conscience as distinct from a religious one. Charity had always ministered to poverty and wretchedness, but Charity had not been connected with any ideal of social progress. People were charitable because it was good for their souls to be so; not because they regarded the welfare of the poor and needy as an end in itself. The Church, the only organized channel of charitable work, in the main only troubled about the souls of its poor members and as it then looked upon times of illness and misfortune as Heaven-sent opportunities for imparting religious doctrine, it was naturally not very interested in bringing about a better material state of things. There is a queer correspondence, referred to in Miss Nutting's and Miss Dock's *History of Nursing*, in connection with a circular letter which early in the last century was addressed by some religious body in England to hospital authorities. The letter is taken up with the importance of regular instructions from hospital chaplains to the nurses in order that these might be armed with suitable texts for the dosing of patients when "self-righteous or despairing, impatient or trifling." Such lack of vision seems extraordinary to us to-day, but it was typical of the old-fashioned religious attitude towards the facts of society, an attitude that with many other useless platitudes and conventions was being slowly swept towards the scrap-

heap by the tremendous pressure of the forces transforming English life. The spirit of unrest was abroad in the land; people were beginning to ask useful questions. Platitudes were giving way by degrees to more enlightened, though still pedantic, theories. Idealism, unpractical because unpractised, was voluble. People, even the best intentioned, *knew* so little about the new conditions, so suddenly, it seemed, sprung up in their midst. Nothing is more noticeable in the literature, even in the newspapers, of those times than the ignorance, particularly among the middle classes, of the common people and their ways of living. As human beings they were unknown factors, except when they rioted or swarmed to present a petition. They were spoken of in genteel circles, with growing apprehension, as "the mob" or "the rabble"; their homes were assumed to be hovels and their habits taken for granted as repulsive. Contact with them was unthinkable. Mrs. Browning's picture of the slums in *Aurora Leigh*, written in the fifties, shows how lurid was the early Victorian middle-class idea of low life. When I read the poem, I thought, at first, that its melodramatic picture of poverty was due to Mrs. Browning's ignorance, shut up as she was so much indoors; but when I remembered that her husband, who went about in the world, read the whole poem before publication and never seems to have criticized its scene painting, I realized that probably no one in Mrs. Browning's circle, good, liberal-minded people

though they were, knew enough about lower class conditions to have noticed how absurdly wide of the mark was the penny-dreadful colouring of her tale.

It was different, of course, in the countryside. There, there had always been familiarity between the landed gentry and the peasantry, but the rise of the middle classes to prosperity went on alongside the industrialization of England, and the economic forces that had made for commercial wealth had made also for the rapid flocking of multitudes to the towns, or wherever work in the factories and mines or on the roads and canals was to be had. Employers of labour no longer had the contact with their "hands" that the old-time master, who lived on his business premises, had had with his apprentices. They now lived in suburban villa residences distant from the ugliness and noise of the works. Newly risen gentility avoided as much as possible the classes on whose almost slave labour its wealth depended and so the underpaid, overworked, vilely housed, and physically neglected "masses" grew and multiplied. Modern democratic life with its close-knit web of social services, its innumerable contacts between all classes, makes it difficult for us to imagine the depths of ignorance that beset philanthropic effort at the beginning of the last century and to realize how exceptionally interested, studious, clear-headed and determined such effort had to be before anything approaching a survey or grasp of social disorders could be reached.

There is not too much of these strong, clear-headed qualities to-day. But there are standards of efficiency in public and private social service which have been set up by the pioneer work of those who, when they started their labours, found no standards at all, but found only a perfunctory officialdom on the outside of public departments, like a smart front door, hiding from the casual observer, complete muddledom within.

And before we leave off considering what a much more difficult task social work of any kind was a hundred years ago than it is to-day, let us think for a moment how much less rarely common sense used to be applied in public matters than it is now. This age, whatever its failings, is much freer than the past was from the rule of stick-in-the-mud conventions and shibboleths. There is a growing tendency to look at facts in the light of modern knowledge and a wider experience than one's own, or one's grandmother's, and not to repeat stale dogmas and old saws. A hundred years ago, rational criticism had only just begun to nibble at the foundations of religious, political, legal, moral and social beliefs; these impressive structures had stood unquestioned for so long that they went on standing in the minds of the majority of people long after some clear heads had exploded them, just as a limb is often felt to be there after it has been cut off.

Among this gathering of venerable superstitions, which had hitherto had the first and last word in most departments of public life, it was not easy for common sense to assert itself, yet when it did, the result was sometimes so astonishing that all the dormant common sense in mankind, outside the institution or profession affected, awoke and called it blessed.

That is what happened by means of Florence Nightingale. She brought a magnificent common sense to bear on the appalling facts which faced her when she went out as Lady-in-Chief to take command of the nursing of the British Army wounded in the Crimea. Her common sense was backed by intense interest in nursing, thorough study and practice of the subject, and, in addition, public opinion was behind her, roused to horror by the accounts of the horrible sufferings of the wounded soldiers. That was the strength of Florence Nightingale's position and she knew it. If there had been no war, she might have worked throughout her long life transforming nursing and reducing the heavy mortality rate and toll of pain in illness, for which bad nursing had hitherto been largely responsible, but her work would not have received quick recognition. She would have succeeded in a small way, as she did when at the start of her career she undertook the management of a nursing home in Harley Street, but she would have had a much harder struggle to overcome public

prejudice and inertia, and general recognition of the vital nature of her campaign might have been delayed for years. The world does not ordinarily take alarm at accounts of prevalent social evils; it is ready to accept the assurances of its governing officials that there is nothing seriously to be alarmed about. In the usual course of events, the powers that be hold their own against any outside criticism. But in war time, there are certain themes the merest touch upon which causes national emotions to rock with hurricane strength and one of these, naturally, is the welfare of the army. To provide comforts for the troops, a nation in time of war will forget all its prejudices, swallow all its convictions, except of course those to do with the necessity of the war. Florence Nightingale, the greatest comfort the British Army had ever known, had, therefore, as far as public opinion was concerned, a "walk over" in her match against professional prejudice.

CHAPTER II

EARLY DAYS

The heights, by great men reached and kept,
Were not attained by sudden flight,
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upwards through the night.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

I

THE poet who wrote *The Lady with the Lamp* wrote also these lines which are very appropriate to the early life of the original of that Lady. Florence Nightingale was thirty-four when the Crimean War began; for ten years before then she had been very definitely "toiling upwards"; for longer than that she had been struggling with a desire to pursue a calling, though in her girlhood she had not known clearly what that calling was to be. That long time of uncertainty and frustration is in sharp contrast with the active period of her life which was marked by as little regard for family obligations as the earlier period had been marked by submission to them. The accepted story is that it took years before Florence Nightingale could get her family to agree to allow her to take up nursing as a profession and this way of putting it does, of course, correspond to some of the facts. But

actually, if she had waited until her family had given their permission she would have never started her training. The truth is that, after years of longing for their sympathy and encouragement, Florence at length decided to do without that sympathy. Her struggle had been much more a struggle within herself than against express prohibition from her father and mother; and when the circumstances are considered in detail I think it will be found that they bear out what I suggest. A subjective difficulty is a much greater one to overcome than an outside obstacle, though because it is also more difficult to dramatize —indeed in the strict sense of that word, one cannot dramatize it at all—writers of "Lives" are apt to underline the outside circumstances and to depict them as more obstructive than they really were. I am not for a moment going to deny that the Nightingale family deplored Florence's ambitions, which seemed to them most unsuitable and contrary to all their ideas and wishes for her happiness; but I want to point out that the fundamental explanation of what happened seems to be this—that it was her own dependence on the family attitude which Florence for years found it impossible to overcome; it was a case of unpropitious climate, to go back to my opening remarks, more than of external opposition; and Florence's eventual disregard of that climate, and not her parents' change of mind, was what started her career. This subjective victory of hers accounts,

I think, for much of her exceptional self-possession and independence of thought and action in after life.

2

She was born in 1820 at the Villa Colombaia in Florence, while her parents, like so many well-to-do English people of that time, were touring on the continent reopened to them by the ending of the long French wars. She was named after her Italian birthplace, her father having evidently a fancy in this direction, for an elder child, Parthenope, born at Naples a year previously, had been called after the old Greek settlement there. Mr. Nightingale was born a Shore of Derbyshire, but when he succeeded to the property of a great-uncle in that county he had taken the name of Nightingale in 1815. I came by chance on an evident reference to him in a delightful *Memoir of a Highland Lady 1797–1830, Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus*, edited by her granddaughter, Lady Strachey. Writing of family affairs in 1815, this Scottish lady says:

"William (her brother) was not with us, he had gone on a tour through the West Highlands with a very nice person, a college friend, an Englishman. He came to Edinburgh as Mr. Shore rather later than was customary, for he was by no means so young as William and others attending the classes, but being rich, having no profession and not college bred, he

thought a term or two under our professors—our university was then deservedly celebrated—would be a profitable way of passing idle time. Just before he and my brother set out in their tandem with their servants, a second large fortune was left to this favoured son of a mercantile race for which, however, he had to take the ridiculous name of Nightingale."

It sounds as if the young Highlanders had teased the nice Englishman about his new name and he may have been a little bashful over it. It used to provide Crimean army officers with great opportunities for facetiousness; many were the rich guffaws over "the Bird" as it brightly occurred to some of them to call Florence Nightingale. Mr. Nightingale evidently soon outgrew any sensitiveness he may have had in this respect for he certainly went out of his way to find uncommon names for his two daughters. "Florence" has, of course, become an everyday name since its rise to the heights of popularity after the Crimean War; but in 1820 it was as unusual a name, for a girl at any rate, as "Parthenope" was, and fortunately perhaps, has remained.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Nightingale were of Whig and Unitarian stock. The intense religious feeling of the time had, however, mastered unitarianism and all other broad-minded forms of belief; even intellectuals who had hitherto been irreligious were affected by the prevailing piety. The great religious reaction in England after the Napoleonic wars was due to many

causes, the return of peace and the absence of the nervous excitement which the wars had provided being one of them. The rise of the uneducated and more sentimental masses into prominence, if not yet power, was another cause, and a third ruling influence —and one perhaps most felt among those who were alive to the pressing need for social reform—was the fear that reform, forced from below without religion, might bring about a repetition of the terrifying French Revolution in England. Morality without religion was in those days, largely because of what had happened in France, looked upon as poisonous—and for long afterwards even those who threw over religious doctrine had such a terrible time of it with their consciences that they have to be counted as no different in religious feeling from believers.

Florence and her sister were therefore brought up in what we should now consider a priggish atmosphere. Children were taught to long for Heaven and one of Florence's favourite poems was Mrs. Hemans's *The Better Land.* It was a time when a great many people, Dr. Arnold among them, genuinely believed that the end of the world was on the point of coming, and "the Last Day," and what the fashionable preacher Irving was prophesying about it, were general subjects of conversation. Florence, like all little girls of her generation, wrote letters about "the little angels in heaven" when babies died and copied out awe-inspiring texts. But occasionally, no doubt, she had

lapses from piety and, according to a note about her childhood which she wrote in 1851, she rather enjoyed being naughty and thought that might have been "because naughtiness was a more interesting state."

3

But though the general atmosphere of piety had prevailed for the time being over the more enlightened religious views in which Mr. and Mrs. Nightingale themselves had been brought up, that enlightenment reasserted itself in the advanced education which Mr. Nightingale took pains to give his daughters. He personally supervised their studies, which included modern and classical languages, constitutional and political history of foreign countries, and mathematics. He was a well-educated man and a good linguist.

Florence was a very industrious and thorough worker and became a learned young woman, more than a match in her classical knowledge for some of her father's distinguished guests. There is a story of a dinner party where Florence sat between a great authority on geology and another noted man:

"She began by drawing Sir Henry out on geology, and charmed him by the boldness and breadth of her views, which were not common then. She accidentally proceeded into regions of Latin and Greek, and then our geologist had to get out of it. She was fresh from Egypt and began talking with W. Smythe

about the inscriptions, etc., where he thought he could do pretty well; but when she began quoting Lepsius, which she had been studying in the original, he was in the same case as Sir Henry. When the ladies left the room, Sir Henry said to Smythe, 'A capital young lady that, if she hadn't floored me with her Latin and Greek.' "

Parthenope, "Pop," or "Parthe," as she was called, was of a less intellectual disposition. The sisters were very unlike one another. Florence was serious, more like a grown-up in thoughtfulness, difficult at times, when treated as a child, given to fits of what she called "dreaming." "Pop" was gay, not studious, though clever and talented, and easier to manage because more of a natural child. They were fond of one another but they often jarred on each other. As they grew up, Pop's attitude towards Florence's vocational yearnings was the same as that of the parents, and her sister's easy, happy acceptance of home life was in a way more of a stumbling-block to Florence's passionate discontent with the same surroundings than was her parents' lack of sympathy.

That was natural. We can more easily understand the way in which our elders disagree with us—the shoe which is pinching us not being a shoe that they have to wear—than we can understand how someone of our own age, wearing exactly the same shoe, can declare it to be perfectly comfortable. Parthenope, because she did not feel the pinch, and Florence,

because she did, often wondered what the other could be made of.

The home, from every point of view, except that of a daughter hungering for independence, was a delightful one. Mr. Nightingale owned two country estates, Lea Hurst in Derbyshire, inherited from the great-uncle whose name he had taken, and Embley, on the borders of the New Forest, in Hampshire, which he afterwards bought. Between these two beautiful places, and London, for part of the season, the family spent the year. There was no dearth of company of any kind, for the Nightingales were well stocked with relations, and, besides, entertained largely, so that the home was often full of visitors, amongst them distinguished literary, scientific and political people. Mr. Nightingale was far from being the ordinary country gentleman. Though enjoying sport and the management of his estates, he had intellectual tastes and was an exceptionally broad-minded and cultured man. Mrs. Nightingale had many social gifts—she was an admirable hostess and housekeeper, interested too in the poor at her gates and a supporter of local charities. Florence wrote of her mother: "She has the genius of order; the genius to organize a parish, to form society. She has obtained by her own exertions the best society in England." In fact the Nightingales were excellent specimens of enlightened, well-to-do English landed gentry, living in well-run country houses, very sufficient centres of interest to

themselves and those around them. The girls were adored by their parents and had every advantage that money and good social position could give them. They were taken for a long "finishing" tour on the continent; they were presented at Court and went into the best society. They enjoyed all the fashionable, intellectual and artistic pursuits of the day, attending scientific lectures then much in vogue and going regularly to the opera; they heard intelligent political gossip and were ornaments at their own and other select house parties. Florence made several devoted friends in her young womanhood. The second Lady Ashburton, Carlyle's friend, was one of them. Lady Lovelace, Byron's daughter, was another. Upon such friends she made striking impressions. Lady Lovelace wrote a poem about her.

I saw her pass and paused to think!
She moves as one on whom to gaze
With calm and holy thoughts that link
The soul to God in prayer and praise;
She walks as if on heaven's brink
Unscathed through life's entangled maze.

Mrs. Gaskell also spoke of her as being "so like a Saint" in appearance, but this simile does not really convey much, saints having as much variety of feature, expression and bearing as sinners have. That, however, a deep determination of purpose showed in Florence's eyes, when she raised them, for according to Mrs. Gaskell they were "generally

pensive and drooping" (and so they appear in a drawing of her at the age of twenty-five by her cousin Miss Hilary Bonham Carter) we may be sure, and that that purpose was a high moral one must soon have been realized by those who knew her intimately, though few perhaps guessed how deceptive were those downcast eyes and that quiet gentle manner. The "strong, silent Englishman" is a well-known type: no one is taken in by him; he is bred in the public schools and the stage is ready set for him to stride upon. But the modest and gentle-mannered, but resolute, Englishwoman is less generally recognized. No class or school traditions breed her; no stage, save of her own choosing, awaits her entrance; she arises from circumstances, an opportunist, brooding over her intentions, preparing herself to seize the chance of realizing them, not so confident that she can afford to dispense with modesty and reticence, preferring indeed to keep these true feminine attributes as a convenient cloak.

4

How dreary 'tis for women to sit still.
MRS. BROWNING, *Aurora Leigh*

The soul-destroying boredom of a purely domestic and social life for unmarried women has never been more tellingly put than in Florence Nightingale's own words, in her thirty-first year:

"O weary days! O evenings that seem never to end! For how many long years I have watched that drawing-room clock and thought it would never reach the ten!"

They paint the scene for us completely. There is no need to fill it in with descriptions of period furniture, dresses and manners. Drawing-rooms have much to answer for and on their souls, if they have any, must lie heavily the refined curses of those who have been unable to resist that tyrannous claim of family life that, whatever backslidings in the way of individual independence have happened during the day, family feeling must be manifested by all members of the home sitting together, apparently united, from dinner until bedtime.

But it was not only the evenings that were weary and seemingly endless to Florence. The days with their continual round of what she felt to be sham activities were just as intolerable to her. From early childhood, as she wrote in later life, her one desire had been to have "a necessary occupation, something to fill and employ all my faculties." And that desire had sharpened, as she grew up, into the determination to become a nurse. Her readiness to be useful was naturally taken advantage of, over and over again, by the large circle of relations; it was always she who was despatched to look after ailing relations or to take charge of their houses in emergencies. But numerous as were her uncles, aunts and cousins, and

prone as were her grandparents to be ill and to need devoted attention, there were long stretches of time in which her love of service could find no sufficient outlet, and such outlet as she made for herself in looking after the sick poor in the local village was always apt to be blocked by the family's regular habit of shifting their abode periodically from one home to the other. No sooner had she established herself in village work at Lea Hurst than it was time to go to Embley and having resumed work at Embley, she had to leave that in order to go to London. In London, eventually, through Lord Ashley, afterwards the great Lord Shaftesbury, she got into touch with Ragged School work and though she came more and more to dislike society, on the whole, she said, she preferred being in London to being in the country.

"People talk of London gaieties"—she wrote to a sympathetic aunt—"but there at least you can have your mornings to yourself. To me the country is the place of 'row.' Since we came home in September, how long do you think we have been alone? Not one fortnight! A country house is the real place for dissipation. Sometimes I think that everybody is hard upon me, that to be for ever expected to be looking merry and saying something lively is more than can be asked, morning, noon and nights."

Yet to be alone with her father, mother and sister also bored her to tears, and, according to her diaries, in which she outpoured her longings and subjected

herself to strict examination, she found that boredom was having the most disastrous results. It prevented her from early rising; it made her desultory in thought and action; it was, in short, sapping her energy. But what could one do but "dream" during so much of the time when all that she was expected to do was to be a contented, dutiful daughter? What could one do, for instance, while Papa was engaged in that well-meant but awful habit of his of reading almost the whole of *The Times* aloud to his daughters every morning? "Now for Parthe"—Florence related, years afterwards—"the morning's reading did not matter; she went on with her drawing; but for me, who had no such cover, the thing was boring to desperation." It was of this experience, no doubt, that she was thinking when she wrote in her privately printed book *Suggestions for Thought*: "To be read aloud to is the most miserable exercise of the human intellect. Or rather, is it any exercise at all? It is like lying on one's back, with one's hands tied, and having liquid poured down one's throat. Worse than that, because suffocation would immediately ensue and put a stop to this operation. But no suffocation would stop the other."

I think that what she meant by this last sentence was that, unfortunately, in being read aloud to there was no fear, or rather hope, of suffocation, for, from the diaries, particularly those after she had made a bid for freedom in 1845 and had been thwarted, there

were moments, apparently, when death, whether by suffocation or otherwise, would have been welcomed. In 1845, she had made what was then an astounding suggestion to her parents, that she should be allowed to go and be a nurse at Salisbury Hospital for a few months. Only for a few months; she was careful to ask for no more than that, and, as she presented the scheme, she explained that she wanted the practical experience in order to be able to do more useful work in nursing in the village. She had seen, she said, one poor woman die before her eyes that summer because there were only fools to sit up with her who poisoned her as much as if they had given her arsenic. A lot could be learned in a few months urged Florence, and upon this last statement, Mrs. Nightingale, who had heard dreadful stories of hospital life, shocking things, for instance, about the goings on between surgeons and nurses, put her own horror-struck construction.

The proposal was declared to be absolutely out of the question. It was unthinkable that a gently brought up young lady should expose herself to the conditions, to say nothing of the dangers, of nursing, as it was then carried on. "It was as if I had wanted to be a kitchen-maid" Florence afterwards said, though as the status of kitchen-maids has since undergone almost as much improvement as that of nurses, we may not be quite able to appreciate the comparison. Indeed, no kind of comparison meant to conjure up

visions of ignominious occupations will hold good to-day, to our modern views of the essential respectability of all work, carried perhaps to excess in the way in which society receives shady, if successful, financiers.

But a hundred years ago, and less, class distinctions were not abolished and, as depicted in *Aurora Leigh*, ladies had to hold their vinaigrettes and scented handkerchiefs to their delicate noses at the very thought of mingling with the lower orders. In many cases at such meetings it was no doubt necessary, hygiene being non-existent among the poor, cleanliness, as we understand it, not even being common among the rich, and Florence Nightingale's own experience of some of the women who were engaged in nursing confirmed many of the disgraceful stories that she was confronted with when she first made her proposal to train as a nurse. She wrote to her father in 1854 that the head nurse in a certain London hospital told her that "in the course of her large experience she had never known a nurse who was not drunken and that there was immoral conduct practised in the very wards of which she gave me some awful examples."

The failure of her plan caused Florence the most intense disappointment. "I shall never do anything and am worse than dust and nothing" she wrote to a cousin. Depression grew upon her, as her diaries for these years show.

"Lea Hurst—July 7, 1847. What is my business in

this world and what have I done this last fortnight? I have read the *Daughter at Home* to Papa and two chapters of Mackintosh; a volume of *Sybil* to Mamma. Learnt seven tunes by heart. Written various letters. Ridden with Papa. Paid eight visits. Done Company. And that is all!"

The *Daughter at Home* was a book of religious advice to discontented daughters. Florence found no comfort in it. Religion had come to mean to her something more than the cultivation of a spiritual state of mind for its own sake; it meant doing God's work in the world. The sense of being an unprofitable servant was poisoning her life. Wrestle as she did with herself in inward prayer and communings, she could not rid herself of the overwhelming conviction of having sinned and of continuing in sin while all around her was so much misery, poverty and ignorance and she was doing nothing to relieve them. She became morbid in this consciousness of guilt; going into society seemed treachery to God; she was afraid to laugh lest God should hear and think she had not repented of her sin.

The pleasures of intellectual intercourse, the personal satisfaction of "shining" in conversation or of writing good letters ("beautiful letters" her family called them, trying their hardest to side-track her into a less upsetting way of self-expression than the one on which she was bent) were temptations to be shunned.

Evidently, all through this torturing time, she had not brought herself to realize that for sanity's sake she must either take it to be God's will that she should stay at home—("anything and everything," her sympathetic but timid aunt assured her, "can be done to the glory of God")—or she must bluntly tell her parents and sister that home life stood in the way of her doing God's will.

The thought of leaving home, despite the family's objections, did not, I am sure, enter her head at this stage. To ignore her parents' wishes was literally unthinkable to her; she was not even able to toy with the idea of disobedience and to get relief from tension, if only for a moment, in doing that. Daughters, brought up as she was brought up, did not toy with forbidden thoughts because forbidden thoughts—at least of this kind—did not present themselves. The matter was much more simply arranged. Well brought up daughters were so trained that it never occurred to them to doubt the infallibility of their parents' wishes. The secret of this upbringing has been lost and, to those who are in consequence sceptical as to whether it ever existed, I would reply that their scepticism is mere jealousy. The secret did, undoubtedly, exist; it was common knowledge in our grandparents' days; it worked most potently, and there must be many people alive to-day who, if they cannot remember the heyday of that potency, can at least remember how hard it died.

Florence Nightingale's hopelessness, at this period of her life, was a proof of how unthinkable it was to her to go her own way regardless of what her family thought and said. Obedience to the Fifth Commandment was deep in her bones. Equally deep-seated, however, was this other urgent commandment to do God's work. Her hopelessness arose from her sense of utter inability to obey it. How could she obey it? What means was there? She could see none. She could see only her Paradise, her dream of active service in nursing far, far, ahead, because so obviously unattainable now—not at Lea Hurst, or Embley; Good Lord, no; away from home, O God, yes!—home claims and God's claims could never be reconciled. It was so far off, it might never come in this world. "The longer I live"—she wrote in her diary—"the more I feel as if all my being was gradually drawing to one point, and if I could be permitted to return and accomplish that in another being, if I may not in this, I should need no other heaven."

5

The family were very worried about Florence. She was so evidently out of sorts, low spirited and sometimes irritable—quite unlike her true self. Mr. and Mrs. Nightingale must often have conferred together and wondered what was the best thing to be done. They could not blame themselves, they no doubt said

to one another; they had merely acted as all parents whose first consideration in life is the welfare of their children would have acted in the circumstances. Flo's idea had been noble and fine of course, but how unpracticable! Dear Flo! What a simple, innocent child she was, after all, in spite of her learning! What a blessing it was for her that she had them to watch over her and to check her enthusiastic but reckless impulses. Ah, well, it was no easy matter to be a mother nowadays, with so many upsetting notions flying about, Mamma probably remarked to her intimates. "I always feared that it was a risk to let the girls study so much, not that it has done Parthe any harm, but Flo has always been unlike her sister."

"Come, come, Mamma!" Mr. Nightingale equally probably interjected, if he entered upon such conversation. "No harm comes from learning!"

"Well, it hasn't done Flo any good, my dear. She would have been happier without it."

"She will settle down all right. Give her time," urged Papa.

"I wish I could think so," replied Mrs. Nightingale. "She shows no signs at present of settling."

"Settle—settle," moaned Florence, upon whom the mere sound of the word acted almost as an emetic. What settlement could there be for one who was hungering and thirsting as she was? Did Cassandra settle down—or the Delphic Sibyl—or Sappho? Sappho, it was true, leapt to repose, presumably, but

it would be straining the meaning of words to construe her leap as inspired by the desire to settle.

Escape, promotion to higher spheres, larger duties, new development, these could be the only true objects of taking any step in life, the only good reason, even, for marriage.

Marriage! Yes, Florence had thought about marriage and, what is more to the point, she had felt about it. She had thought about it in a reasoning way which would have rejoiced the hearts of modern marriage reformers, had such then been in existence, but as marriage in the abstract was not then a popular topic of discussion, what she thought about it seemed, to those to whom she imparted her thoughts, to be too high minded to be really practicable.

Her views were that for women of intellectual or actively moral natures marriage was a sacrifice of the woman's higher capacities to her lower ones, unless it was entered into with a man of high purpose and in order to pursue that purpose with him "for mankind and God." Two heads were better than one for carrying out God's will, if both heads were agreed as to what God's will was: in such circumstances, marriage was the happiest lot—but not otherwise.

These were not, on the face of them, views that could give anxious parents and friends much ground for thinking that the holder of them would easily be lured into matrimony, though of course there

was always the hope that the appearance of "the right man" would bring Florence's views more into line with sensible opinion.

"Our dear Flo"—wrote one devoted friend to another, in 1844 (without, I am sure, intentional irony)—"has just recovered from a severe cold, but I hear nothing of what I long for, i.e. some noble-hearted, true man, one who can love her as she deserves to be loved, prepared to take her to a home of her own."

Colds, it is true, have a relaxing effect but nothing short of a stroke could have weakened Florence's principles. Her feelings, however, asserted themselves from time to time and on one occasion, at any rate, quite vigorously, and they had also, in this case, undergone a strict examination at her hands, as to their freedom from vanity or any other tainting quality. She was attracted to her suitor; she admired him and she found increasing pleasure in his society. But she rejected him and went over the grounds of her decision in a private note as follows:

"I have an intellectual nature which requires satisfaction and that would find it in him. I have a passional nature which requires satisfaction and that would find it in him. I have a moral, an active nature which requires satisfaction, and that would not find it in his life. I can hardly find satisfaction for any of my natures. Sometimes I think that I will satisfy my passional nature at all events, because that will

at least secure me from the sin of dreaming. But would it? I could be satisfied to spend a life with him combining our different powers in some great object. I could not satisfy this nature by spending a life with him in making Society and arranging domestic things. . . . To be nailed to a continuation and exaggeration of my present life, without hope of another, would be intolerable to me. Voluntarily to put it out of my power ever to be able to seize the chance of forming for myself a true and rich life would seem to me like suicide."

We may be tempted to apply "*Magnifique—mais ce n'est pas la guerre*" to this declaration of Florence's. Not perhaps *la guerre* of ordinary people but the natural attitude of an intensely high-minded and intensely earnest young woman, morally precocious, who had already made up her mind in what a true and rich life consisted. Such an attitude makes too much of self-consciousness to satisfy modern ideas of sincerity. We question too whether instincts can be subjugated to a vocation that denies them outlet. We take perhaps a more common-sense view as regards what may be called the vocations of those instincts themselves. Florence Nightingale evidently never felt a call to marry; a call possibly as worthy of attention as a call to nurse, for marriage, in some form or other, seems as indispensable to the community as hospital work. If she had felt such a call, there is no saying what she might have done to improve marriage,

to expose the extent and nature of the evils of the married state, and to force the Local Government Board or preferably the Home Office, because of its name, to take action, by introducing training, or otherwise, to raise marriage to the rank of a high calling. But she was not interested in marriage as an occupation for women—and her passional nature, by which it is more likely that she meant her capacity to love intensely, in the spiritual rather than in the physical sense, needed a moral stimulus.

6

The thought of marriage was not finally dismissed by Florence until about 1850 (she was then thirty years of age) according to entries in her diary at this time. Her lover* was a persistent one and her suspense as regards the future of her nursing schemes may have seemed like irresolution to him and to others who hoped that he would succeed. She may for a time have really been a little irresolute in view of the blank immediate prospect at home. As Sir Edward Cook finely points out, when she at last made her choice and elected to remain single for the sake of

** Miss O'Malley's "Florence Nightingale" divulges the fact that this suitor was Richard Monckton Milnes, afterwards Lord Houghton, and that Florence, though not in love with him, suffered acutely from the loss of his companionship after her rejection of his offer. Had she been in love, she might have found good reason for believing that in marrying him she would find full satisfaction. She was capable of intense feeling for individuals, as Miss O'Malley's references to her early friendships with women disclose.*

her ideal, she had no assurance that she would ever succeed in realizing this. Yet for the chance of realizing it, she relinquished an easy opportunity, which all her family and friends would have applauded her taking, of satisfying two out of three sides of her nature, and chose instead to remain in a way of life where no side of her was getting any satisfaction at all. For the sense of frustration was gaining on her, as she tried to compose herself to indefinite waiting and to filling up the time with the study of hospital organization from all the reports that she could obtain of English and foreign hospitals and institutions and of medical and sanitary works. The plan of going to Salisbury Hospital, though it had been so summarily nipped in the bud, had at least opened her family's eyes to where her interests concentrated and, after the first shock and clash of feeling over that proposal, there must have been less tension in the home circle than there had been before the plan was broached. But if there were less tension, there was also probably more obvious flat coldness and lack of sympathy between mother and daughter and sister and sister, as there often is when differences of outlook have been declared and enlarged upon. Mr. Nightingale was at bottom by no means unsympathetic, but he was timid in the face of his wife's strong disapproval. Florence knew that her father, alone, could probably be won over to her side, but her mother's altered manner, which in itself anguished Florence's sensitive

heart, betokened no readiness ever to give way. Florence loved, but feared, her mother, and minded the growing estrangement acutely. What Parthe thought, by itself, of course, wouldn't have mattered much. Florence didn't expect her to understand; she never had understood. But it was rather unnecessary and conventional, and really a little bit mean of Parthe to side with Mamma, thought Florence, because she hadn't really got very definite views either one way or the other, though she sometimes pretended she had, when she was in company. Besides, Parthe was happy at home for the simple reason that home life didn't interfere with her particular pleasures which were mainly artistic and could go on just as well at home as elsewhere. Also she was too much inclined to take up an elder sister attitude, which was absurd, for there was only a difference in age of one year between them—and it was sometimes quite maddening, to anyone who knew, as Florence did, how ignorant Parthe was of social questions, to hear her talking like a dowager about the dangers of nursing—and altogether, it made things worse having Parthe to deal with, as well as Mamma and Papa, for naturally they felt that as Parthe was perfectly happy, it was Florence's fault entirely that she was not. Parthe too made jokes sometimes about the situation, and jokes were just the very last thing Florence could bear when she had her back almost against the wall like this and was doing her utmost to be patient and to

keep herself from despair. Despair came very near sometimes and then suddenly, by some strange, feverish switch of her inner vision, the whole situation would change; the actual one, people at home and what they were saying and doing, would become dim and unsubstantial—and her dream would blaze in front of her, the only really alive thing. But that didn't often happen. More often the feeling was of living, mechanically and listlessly, in a world that she didn't belong to, that she couldn't, try as she might, take the least interest in, couldn't even appear to attend to. Her health suffered; she could not sleep: everyone noticed how ill she was looking. Her friends the Bracebridges suggested, one day, that she should go with them to spend the winter in Rome. The family jumped at it. It was the very thing. It would take Flo out of herself and distract her thoughts. Florence agreed willingly; she was devoted to Mrs. Bracebridge. She felt ill and it was important that she should keep her health for the sake of her work. The party set off for Rome in the autumn of 1847 and stayed there until the spring of the next year.

CHAPTER III

TRIMMING THE LAMP

THE close, if not stuffy, home atmosphere which, in old days, was looked upon as so proper for unmarried daughters to live and die in, produced in most of its victims alarming ideas of what would happen if any one of them ventured alone beyond the parental roof. On the eve of Florence's departure for Rome, her sister wrote to a cousin:

"Though it is but for so short a time, yet it seems to me a great event, the solemn first launching her into life, and my heart is very full of many feelings, but yet the joy is greatest by an incalculable deal, for one does not see how harm can come to her."

The real risk of harm coming to Florence lay, as we have seen, not in her going away but in her remaining at home any longer. The early Victorian family ideal could not, however, realize that. It was to a great extent the ideal of the wigwam and, so long as all the members of the family remained bodily together, no danger was contemplated. A "gap" in the circle was pre-eminently the thing to fear. Florence had been abroad before; in girlhood, she and her sister had been taken by their parents on a lengthy continental tour. There was no reason to consider this trip a launching into life beyond the

fact that she was on this occasion, aged twenty-eight, travelling without the protection of Papa and Mamma.

She was probably thankful to get away from them. She wrote long letters home, rejoicing, no doubt, in the new experience of communicating with her family and being happy at the same time. One can imagine the delighted comments at the Embley breakfast table when Flo's "beautiful letters" arrived, full of affection and enthusiasm, without any trace, it must have been immediately observed, of the "nursing craze"—instead, pages and pages of ecstasy about Rome. She was "doing" Rome thoroughly, seeing everything that Papa and Mamma had seen on their wedding tour—ruins, catacombs, churches, galleries, the Campagna—making copious notes of them all.

Florence was stirred to the depths by the rhetorical grandeur of Rome—its hugeness, its high solemnity, the eternal quality of that great theatre of the ages. When we are young, we respond readily to rhetoric; our aspirations are filled out and quickened by it; its immense sweeps and plunges from heights to depths, from the incongruous to the appropriate, from triviality to splendour, appeal to us immediately, for do they not reflect the swift changes of feelings familiar in youth—depression—joy; ecstasy—despair? In the vastness of St. Peter's, or overlooking the city from the Villa Mellini, Florence's feelings found room at last to stretch themselves to their full length. The immensity of everything—gigantic ruins, great churches

filled with dusk, glories of crimson and purple sunsets over the wide Campagna—matched the scale of her thoughts. She could breathe amply; her soul had space in which to soar. As she gazed rapturously at the Michael Angelo paintings on the vaulted roof of the Sistine Chapel, she did not think, she said, that she was looking at pictures, but straight into Heaven. The straining eyes of the Delphic Sibyl drew Florence's eyes after them, in pursuit—so she interpreted the painting—of a divine message which, in contrast to the "secure inspiration" portrayed on the features of Isaiah, had not yet been vouchsafed to the unbiblical prophetess. A tie was forged that day between Florence and the Sibyl that was never broken and a ladder set up on the pavement of the Sistine Chapel which, from that day onwards, she unceasingly strove to climb.

But it was not only inspiration that Florence found in Rome. There, for the first time, she met Sidney Herbert, the Minister at whose invitation she afterwards went to the Crimea, in close friendship and collaboration with whom she initiated her Army hospital and medical reforms, until his premature death in 1861, and alongside whose statue hers now stands, beside the Crimean monument in London. Mr. and Mrs. Herbert were also wintering in Rome and Florence saw much of them and found that both were exceedingly interested in a project for establishing a Convalescent Home and Cottage Hospital

for the poor on their English country estates. It can be imagined what a bond of union was created by this discovery. It was indeed as if God had planted, the Sibyl had watered, and the Herberts were preparing to provide the increase. Florence kept in close touch with her new friends after her return to England. Their country home, Wilton, was near Embley, and Mrs. Herbert was one of Florence's strongest supporters upon the Committee of Management of the nursing home in Harley Street of which in 1853 Florence was appointed Superintendent.

2

But still the appointed day tarried. When Florence's visit to Rome was over, life at home was no more bearable. Indeed, Rome had given her such a feeling sense of nearness to her ideals that family life must have seemed more than ever remote from them. Life went on exactly as before: so many months of the year in Derbyshire, so many at Embley, one or two in London. Papa and Mamma were no different; Parthenope the same as ever. So life would go on, Florence supposed, for another twenty or thirty years. It was at this stage, as her diaries show, that she was most desperate, realizing that nothing short of violent activity in a life of her own choice could bring her happiness, and that without this she was doomed to remain a source of unhappiness to all around her.

"My God! What is to become of me?" she cried. "Everything has been tried, foreign travel, kind friends, everything. . . ." What would be the end of it? Death? Death from Starvation of Thought or of Moral Activity, she reflected bitterly, would have taken place much earlier, but no one would have noticed that. Suppose such a headline were to appear in *The Times*, she wrote in *Cassandra* (that recently published fragment of her unpublished book *Suggestions for Thought*, an essay on the position of women, obviously written from her own experience), how people would stare, how they would laugh and wonder! Women were not supposed to need food for their heads, or hearts, she added; only their bodies were kept nourished.

"A woman cannot live in the light of intellect. Society forbids it. Those conventional frivolities which are called her 'duties' forbid it. Her domestic duties, high sounding words, which for the most part are bad habits (which she has not the courage to enfranchise herself from, the strength to break through) forbid it. What are these duties (or bad habits)? Answering a multitude of letters which lead to nothing from her so-called friends, keeping herself up to the level of the world that she may furnish her quota of amusement at the breakfast table: driving out her company in the carriage.

"We can never pursue any object for a single two hours, for we can never command any regular leisure

or solitude: and, in social and domestic life, one is bound, under pain of being thought sulky, to make a remark every two minutes. . . . To drop a remark, as it is called, every two minutes, how wearisome it is! It is impossible to pursue the current of one's thoughts because one must keep oneself ever on the alert to say something."

. . . . .

". . . Women never have a half-hour in all their lives (excepting before or after anybody is up in the house) that they can call their own, without fear of offending or hurting someone."

Why did they sit up so late or get up so early? she inquired. Not because the day was not long enough, but because otherwise there was no time in the day to themselves. A woman could never get anything but an odd moment to herself. How could she do anything serious, study anything thoroughly, in odd moments? "Can we fancy Michael Angelo running up and putting a touch to his Sistine ceiling in odd moments?" And yet, Florence continued, if a woman protested, she was blamed and asked contemptuously if she wanted to abolish domestic life. The "sacred hearth" had to be idealized in order to please men who were afraid that their houses would not be so comfortable if women were allowed to live intellectual lives. Sacred it was indeed, she remarked, with bitter sarcasm: sacred from the touch of sons who went

away from it as soon as they could, and from the affections of daughters who only married in order to escape. "Sacred to their husbands' sleep, their sons' absence in the body, and their daughters in mind." O mothers, wake up, besought Florence, "if this domestic life were so very good, would your young men wander away from it, your maidens think of something else?"

Thoughts like these, and bitterer, consumed Florence, as she sat in the drawing-room, a place she so loathed that she gave the startling question "Is God in the Drawing-room?" a place in her book. We can guess the answer. Her mother's demands upon her in this particular direction made her feel suicidal at times—and she flung forth the remark that one reason why a novel was so attractive was because the heroine had generally no family ties and almost invariably no mother.

To say that Mrs. Nightingale was selfish is no particular condemnation. Most people are selfish, not deliberately so, but out of sheer inability to cultivate genuine sympathy. In Victorian times, there was a type of maternal parent so spoiled by the submission of daughters (whose outward protests against domestic slavery rarely took any form but that of a passive, slow decline of youth and spirits) that she became a solid lump of indifference to everything beyond her own personal comfort and the ailments arising out of concentrating on her health. I have

been shown a characteristic letter from one such mother to a down-trodden daughter, the whole of whose youth had been spent in being practically an unpaid maid to Mamma and unpaid secretary to Papa, upon the announcement of her eventual engagement. Tired of, indeed ill from, accompanying her parents from one "cure" on the continent to another, and spending her leisure time in hotel drawing-rooms holding skeins of wool for her mother to wind, she, by some pretext, obtained permission to remain behind in London on one of these occasions of travel, and, a fairly eligible proposal of marriage turning up during this time, she accepted it with alacrity. She wrote at once to tell her mother the news and received the following letter in answer:

"Dear ——: Your letter has arrived and your Father, I believe, has also heard this morning from Major D—. You say that you will have £1,000 a year income. That does not allow much margin for London expenses. The weather has become very cold, with a bitter wind and my earache has returned and my neuritis, I am sorry to say, is no better." And so on—with no further reference to the daughter's news and a great deal more about the earache and the neuritis. The letter is by no means unique; the post was full of letters of this kind during the reign of Queen Victoria and is so nowadays, doubtless, only with less cramping consequences to the recipients of them, to whom sympathy is fortunately no longer

the indispensable necessity for attaining freedom that it was. Indeed, as we grow older and wiser, we learn that the less we depend upon so precarious and volatile a thing as sympathy, or others depend upon it from us, the better, for who among us can truthfully declare that the return of a real (or metaphorical) cold wind, bringing with it our own particular earache or neuritis, has not for the time being made us quite incapable of understanding, much less responding to, the joys and sorrows of others?

Recourse was again had to the Bracebridges in the autumn of 1849. On this occasion, they were bound for the Near East and were to return in the following summer via Germany, where Florence was to be allowed an opportunity of visiting the Kaiserswerth Institutions for Deaconesses, an establishment in which for years she had been intensely interested. With this privilege in view, she was naturally delighted to join her friends a second time and again the home circle rejoiced in the hope that foreign travel might have a composing effect. But again the hope was disappointed. Egypt and Greece merely intensified, as Rome had done, Florence's longings for active work, and more, for out of Kaiserswerth, her Mecca, where she stayed for a whole fortnight, studying the methods of that then unique institution under Pastor Fliedner, there arose the determination to decide for herself and to return to Kaiserswerth as an inmate for some months' training. It had been

borne in upon her lately that all the obstacles in her path—"Mountains of difficulties" she called them—might have been put there by God, not to compel her submission but to test her courage and resolve. This new and excellent way of regarding the situation was an immense stimulus. "I must take some things," she wrote. "I must take them: they will not be given to me—I must do without some things," and evidently the first thing which she now decided to do without was home sympathy.

So she determined to take Kaiserswerth, arranging her stay there so that it should fit in with a visit which her mother and sister were making to Carlsbad and elsewhere. She would travel with them and return with them, but her cure was to be at Kaiserswerth not Carlsbad. The plan was not to Mrs. Nightingale's liking.

"What would people say?" she expostulated.

"No one need know," replied Florence, firmly, "and there happen to be plenty of people [she instanced the Herberts among others] who if they did know would entirely approve."

Mrs. Nightingale acquiesced but unwillingly; Parthenope raised her eyebrows. Florence went to Kaiserswerth and stayed there from July till October 1851, three blissful months, only a little overshadowed by the thought of what Mamma and Pop were saying to themselves at their resort. "I should be as happy as the day is long"—she wrote to her mother—"if only

I could hope that I had your smile, your blessing, your sympathy, without which I cannot be quite happy." Distressed, but thankful for this mark of proper feeling, to which they had no intention of abandoning their claims, Mrs. Nightingale and her elder daughter continued the cure.

It used sometimes to be said that Florence Nightingale had no other hospital training but that which she received at Kaiserswerth. This is not true, though her constantly reiterated admiration for the Fliedner institutions in that old Rhine town may have given some people that impression. The hospital was only one out of several institutions; there were, besides, a Penitentiary, an Infant School, an Orphan Asylum and a school for teachers. They, or rather the modest beginnings of them, were founded by a Lutheran Pastor, Theodor Fliedner and his wife Friederike, whose zeal for prison reformatory work led them in 1833 to open a refuge for a single discharged prisoner in the Parsonage garden. Out of this developed the group of institutions for the training of women as Deaconesses consecrated to service but bound by no vows. The work of all the institutions was carried on by the Deaconesses who were trained, both practically and by precept and discussion, in various forms of social work, the education of children, hospital nursing, rescue and reformatory work and district visiting. The great attraction of Kaiserswerth to Florence lay in the intensely practical form of the Fliedners' idealistic

enterprise and in the simplicity of its beginnings by single unadvertised good deeds, without any pretentiousness of scheme. The pamphlet which she wrote after her first visit laid special stress on these features and it was in the high tone of the school and the devotion inculcated there—"the service of man organized in the service of God"—that she found inspiration for her later nursing reforms. She did not think highly of the Kaiserswerth Hospital; the standard of nursing was low and the hygiene bad; but never, she declared, had she met with "a higher tone, a purer devotion" than among the Deaconesses.

The routine was of a Spartan simplicity and strenuousness. There was no luxury of any kind; the food was poor; the hours of work long. But Florence revelled in it. "The work here fills my life with interest"—she wrote—"and strengthens me in body and mind—we have 10 minutes to each of our meals, of which we have four—we get up at five; we have 2 ryes and 2 broths: ryes at 6 and 3; broths at 12 and 7; bread at the two former, vegetables at 12. Several evenings in the week we collect in the Great Hall for a Bible lesson. . . . This is Life. Now I know what it is to live and to love life.—God has indeed made life rich in interests and blessings and I wish for no other earth, no other world but this."

3

But another year and a half were to pass before Florence could renew her experience of what she felt to be Life. Upon her return from Kaiserswerth she did not immediately strike again for freedom. Perhaps she felt that she must wait a little longer in order to give substance to the arguments that she had formerly advanced to her parents, i.e. that she wanted the practical training in order to equip herself properly for general philanthropic work. Evidently she was in a happier state of mind; freer from strain, no doubt, after having asserted her independence, and consequently prepared to give the family time to recover from the shock before asserting it a second time. That she did not intend to allow them to think that she had resumed her old life with contentment is shown by the letter she wrote to her father on her thirty-second birthday, May 12, 1852, containing the following:

"I am glad to think that my youth is past and rejoice that it never, never can return—that time of follies and bondage, of unfulfilled hopes and disappointed inexperience, when a man possesses nothing, not even himself. I am glad to have lived: though it has been a life which, except as the necessary preparation for another, few would accept. I hope now that I have come into possession of myself. . . . I hope that

I may live, a thing which I have not often been able to say, because I think I have learnt something which it would be a pity to waste."

She took herself very seriously, but that only shows how tortured she had been by her family's indifference to her aspirations. There must have been, there had to be, an almost insufferable self-importance, in the soulful sense, about pioneer women. The chief reason for self-determination, whether of individuals or nationalities, seems to me to be that those who are sat upon are so tiresomely full of themselves.

Restrained by growing confidence from acting hastily, Florence, for the next year, besides studying hospital reports and visiting hospitals whenever there was an opportunity, occupied herself in "odd moments" in thinking out the articles of her belief in a religion of practical service. If, as she hoped, she was going eventually to set up some kind of institution on the lines of Kaiserswerth, it was very necessary to have the fundamental religious ideas, by which the institution would be guided, perfectly clear. Religious speculation had always been a favourite recreation of hers —she had inherited a liking for it from her father who still preserved his Unitarian leanings—and though a member of the Church of England, her strong common sense had for years made her excessively critical of the conventional religious attitude. Deeds, not doctrines, were for her the test of true religion and she had no use for the interminable and heated

doctrinal differences with which England at that time was bubbling.

Nor could she feel either the attraction to, or the horror of, the Roman Catholic Church, both then prevalent. She was not likely, she said, to change her church. She had been born in the Church of England and should stay there, but, on the other hand, in her experience, she declared, the only clergy who deserved the name of pastors were the Roman Catholic. Moreover, as far as opportunities of work for women were concerned, Roman Catholics were much more enlightened than the Anglicans. "The Catholic orders," she wrote, "offered me work, training for that work, sympathy and help in it, such as I had in vain sought in the Church of England. The Church of England has for men bishoprics and archbishoprics and a little work (good men make a great deal for themselves). For women, she has—what? I would have given her my head, my heart, my hand. She would not have them. She did not know what to do with them. She told me to go back and do crochet in my mother's drawing-room; or if I were tired of that, to marry and look well at the head of my husband's table. You may go to the Sunday school, if you like, she said. But she gave me no education even for that. She gave me neither work to do for her nor education to do it."

It was a great defect of the English church, Florence considered, that in those days of terrible social evils,

it had not thought out for its members any practical scheme of serving God. It taught people merely to pray that God would have mercy upon all men, when they would have been much more usefully employed in educating and training themselves to live so that they would be sure of obtaining God's mercy. God's laws were ascertainable, this was her basic argument, and it was man's business to find them out. By the laws of God she meant moral and ethical principles, by acting on which human beings could realize, if not a state of perfection on earth, at least something near to it, vastly improved conditions of living. God, she argued, had put Evil into the world in order that men might busy themselves in getting rid of it and so profit by their own activities. She had a horror of any form of passivity, even of passive prayer. Of what use was it, she thought, to pray to be delivered from cholera unless we took steps to improve the drainage system and to teach people hygiene. Her creed was not a philosophical one, though in her thorough way she worked hard to make it so and was quite sure herself that she had satisfactorily explained why Evil was created and proved that men had Free Will, but from a practical point of view, it was none the worse for being unphilosophical, in fact rather the better, for its pseudo philosophy was after all nothing but a religious paraphrase of a rational attitude towards social questions, and consequently did not collide with it, as a sounder

philosophy might have done. Florence Nightingale was in outlook a rationalist, though she did not know it; in common with many others of her time she could not divest herself of ingrained religious feelings; all her speculative energies were spent in pouring the new wine of emancipated practical ideas into the old bottles of religious beliefs and these, with due deference to Gospel precepts, can generally be relied upon not to burst if thereafter handled carefully. Only in the inner chamber of Florence's mind, did bursts of this kind sometimes happen when she was exercising herself in spiritual conflict, but these belong to a later period of her life than the one we are now considering. Now she was burning with unused zeal; she was exceedingly strong-willed; her thought was not acute but it was earnest and powerful. The will to live, as for those three months she had lived at Kaiserswerth, ramped in her veins. It was no intellectual edifice that she was designing, but just a practical wherewithal to answer a purpose that she was hammering out, solid work but not subtle. At the beginning of her diary for 1853, there is this entry:

"The last day of the old year. I am so glad this year is over. Nevertheless it has not been wasted, I trust. I have remodelled my whole religious belief from beginning to end. I have learnt to know God. I have recast my social belief: have them both written for use, when my hour is come."

Only one who was at bottom a free thinker could

have assumed that belief was a matter of individual shaping. The self-reliant note in the above announcement is the very gist of free thought. She was, further, ready to offer her self-made religion to others. Among the working classes at that moment, tailors, in particular, were becoming godless. Florence was in close touch with Mr. Edward Truelove, a then well-known publisher and vendor of freethinking literature. When in London, she used to pay visits to the Literary and Scientific Institution in John Street, Fitzroy Square, a haunt of socialists and radicals, next door to which was Mr. Truelove's shop, and there she came to find out what a lot of intelligent working-class men were veering round "if not to atheism," as she reported, "at least to a vague kind of theism." Her newly made religion seemed therefore the very stuff to give them. She read bits of it to a few, with apparently good results, and corresponded with Monckton Milnes, afterwards Lord Houghton, as to the advisability of publication. But this was not decided upon, and so "a religion for tailors" remained in manuscript until eventually it was enlarged into what became the first volume, dedicated to the Artizans of England, of her book, *Suggestions for Thought*, which was printed privately some years later.

As a piece of writing, neither this, nor any of Florence Nightingale's literary efforts, is remarkable. It is interesting because of its revelation of her character, energetic, positive, trenchant and caustic, qualities that

made her the great administrative force that she was but not necessarily valuable for artistic expression.

She thought it was waste of time and more, wrong, to write for literary effect. "I think one's feelings waste themselves in words," she once wrote, "they ought all to be distilled into actions and into actions which bring results." Impressions, she thought, ought to be used only for stoking actions; they should not be frittered away in words.

This essentially militant attitude was partly due, perhaps, to her family's praise of her "beautiful letters" and her determination not to be piloted by them into a ladylike literary career. But also, at one time, she had rather fancied herself as a writer; she had taken immense pains with letters, making fair copies and sometimes using the same phrases and sentences in several of them. Some of her early letters, when she first came out in society, have a deliberate *verve* or social brilliancy about them, as if she were imitating the fashionable memoir writers of the day. Other later ones, as those from Rome, Egypt, and Greece, show considerable literary ability though the literary quality is too rhetorical for modern taste. But she had too morally active a nature to have been able to find lasting satisfaction in literature and besides, I do not think that she ever realized that a love of writing is, at its best, something far beyond the personal desire to produce an effect. As a form of vanity, which is how she regarded

it, she naturally found it snaring, tempting her impetuous, earnest longings to do good from the straight and narrow path. Temptations which, according to her diaries, she was constantly struggling to resist, were those connected with vanity and a wish to shine socially. "The power of writing a good letter," she wrote, "is a great temptation."

So she relinquished literary ambitions and dedicated herself to active service. Her "works," as she used to call the three volumes of her *Suggestions for Thought*, were the jottings of her mental efforts to shift the centre of gravity in religious ideals from speculative theology to practical morality.

She was not a theologian, nor had she the intellectual equipment for pure speculative thought. But she realized that the old religious ideals, from the point of view of social progress, were done for and she sought to make new ones that would wash, to use a word that she might have used herself, for it was characteristic of her practical religious attitude to choose words with an everyday smack in them for presenting divine ideals. She had a moral passion: her soul was on fire to do good. Little wonder that to those who came in contact with her she seemed holy and inspired.

4

Her religious equipment being now completed, Florence had but one thing left to do, the inoculation

of her parents against any phobia which might seize them upon her actual departure from home to pursue her ideals. Mr. Nightingale, by this time, was quite sufficiently tractable, and was ready to make his daughter financially independent by giving her an allowance, but he still dreaded the effect upon Mrs. Nightingale and Parthenope of any sudden move. They might, he feared, become hysterical, and then what would happen, what should he do?

A sister of his, Aunt Mai, aunt to Florence by marriage also on her mother's side (she had married Mr. Samuel Smith, Mrs. Nightingale's brother), was of the greatest help at this juncture for she was held in high esteem by all parties and could also understand the family's point of view. It appears to have been she who pointed out to her sister-in-law that Florence's chances of marriage were fast receding (she was then thirty-two and had already refused several offers) and that a day must come when that hope—which was what Mrs. Nightingale clung to so pathetically—must be given up. At that date, it was suggested, Florence ought to be allowed freedom to start an institution or mission of her own.

But though as regards the future Mrs. Nightingale could be reasoned with, as regards the present she was in the grip of the most acute fears and was not inclined to make any immediate concessions until the news of Florence's approaching mobilization reached her distracted ears. For, in the autumn of 1852,

Florence began to make arrangements to go to Paris to enter the Maison de la Providence to work under the Sisters of Charity there and to study the French hospitals and other institutions as she had studied the German ones. She was not proposing to go alone but with a party; a cousin, Hilary Bonham Carter, was going to study art and Lady Augusta Bruce, one of the Queen's ladies-in-waiting, was also to be with them and the whole party was to be more or less under the wing of Monsieur and Madame Mohl, old friends of the family and well-known leaders of intellectual society in Paris.

With the mobilization imminent, Mrs. Nightingale and Parthenope became panic-stricken and behaved very much as Sir Edward Grey did in the last days of the European crisis in 1914, that is to say they offered to sacrifice some of their most cherished prejudices in order to avert the immediate move. Parthenope wrote frantically, suggesting that there was a house close to Embley and another near Lea Hurst where Florence could carry on whatever institution she wanted, if only she would not go abroad. Why must she go abroad? Surely charity began at home and how could Flo be thinking of Paris when Great-aunt Evans was dying and Flo would be more than ever needed in England to soothe the last moments of that aged relative and to arrange for the funeral? Florence relented, for Aunt Evans' sake mainly, though she was touched by her family's change of

heart. She postponed her visit to Paris until the spring of 1853, when she stayed with her cousin Hilary at the Mohls and carried out her plans. Frau von Helmholtz, *née* Anna von Mohl and afterwards wife of the celebrated Hermann Helmholtz, then made her acquaintance and in her recently published memoirs, *A Life Story in Letters*, quoted from some letters which she as a young girl wrote to her mother about this meeting with Florence Nightingale. The following are extracts:

"Paris, 5 Feb., 1853. Needless to say, I am delighted to be here with Hilly and Florence. Both are so nice that it is a real pleasure to be with them. . . . Florence goes a great deal to see sisters of mercy, deaconesses and nursing homes and writes it all down at length when she comes back here. I suspect her of planning some similar institution."

"Paris, 8 Feb., 1853. I am on the point of quite falling in love with Florence, although I only see her at meal-times. She spends all day at the Faubourg St. Antoine where there is a convent or a house of deaconesses. She is so thankful to drop being lady-like that she does not even take a cab to get there but goes by omnibus which she finds most amusing. Her mother would be annoyed if she knew. I am surprised that she talks so little; she is so quiet and gentle, so different from my expectations. She has done nothing but visit hospitals: it is a strange taste."

The Paris visit was twice interrupted, first by the

illness and death of a grandmother which required Florence's return to England, and then by a humiliating attack of measles while she was an inmate of the Maison de la Providence. She returned to London in the summer of 1853 and almost immediately took up the post, negotiations for which had been going on throughout her stay in Paris, of Superintendent of an Institution for Poor Gentlewomen in Illness. It was not what she would have chosen but it was some sort of a beginning of real work. Moreover, the family's worst fears could not assert themselves. "It is a Sanatorium for sick governesses managed by a Committee of fine ladies"—Florence wrote to Madame Mohl who had offered to write a sedative letter to the parents—"But there are no surgeon-students there at all, which is, of course, a great recommendation in the eyes of the Proper. The Patients, or rather the Impatients, for I know what it is to nurse sick ladies, are all pay patients, poor friendless folk in London. I am to have the choosing of the house, the appointment of the Chaplain and the management of the funds, as the F.A.S. are at present minded. But Isaiah himself could not prophesy how they will be minded at 8 o'clock this evening."

The F.A.S. was the aforesaid committee of ladies, all well known in society, the initials apparently referring to Florence's previous description of them in the same letter as "fashionable asses." The description was no doubt a fitting one though the ridicule

that runs through her letters recounting her triumphant progress in the art of committee management strikes one as comically naïve! As if any really competent head ever expected, or indeed wanted, her ornamental committee to be other than stupid! A committee manned by Florence Nightingales might indeed have given Florence something to write home about. As it was, the "fashionable asses" were but superficially obstructive, and Florence, brimful of efficiency, had but to exercise tact and cunning in order to get them to do exactly what she wanted. To her father, she wrote:

"When I entered into service here, I determined that, happen what would, I never would intrigue among the Committee. Now I perceive that I do all my business by intrigue. I propose in private to A., B. or C. the resolution I think A., B. or C. most capable of carrying in committee and then leave it to them and I always win.

"I am now in the heyday of my power. . . . Last General Committee I executed a series of resolutions on five subjects and presented them as coming from the medical men. . . . All these I proposed and carried in Committee without telling them that they came from me and not from the medical men; and then, and not till then, I showed them to the medical men, without telling *them* that they were already passed in Committee. It was a bold stroke, but success is said to make an insurrection into a revolution. The

medical men have had two meetings upon them and approved them all *nem. con.* and thought they were their own. And I came off with flying colours, no one suspecting my intrigue. . . ." Principles of management, merely, which every competent permanent official is guided by, if bent on success!

Florence was eminently successful. Her Committee and staff marvelled at her competence. She was untiring; no detail escaped her control. She supervised both nursing and housekeeping; reduced the daily expenditure from 1s. 10d. per day per head to 1s.; watched over patients with motherly devotion and sympathy, befriended them in convalescence and helped them to start work again after they had left the home.

She was very happy in her new life. What the family were thinking had ceased to trouble her. She lived at the Institution in Harley Street and had no intention ever of returning home, except for an occasional holiday. Her father was now on her side completely; he and she were in close correspondence; by his directions she wrote to him at his club, the Athenæum. Mrs. Nightingale and Parthenope were still, however, fretful and anxious; relations with them at this time were evidently strained. They harped on the impropriety of her living away from home; they could not understand why, when they came to London, Florence could not live with them.

But Florence had tasted freedom and was adamant. "I have not taken this step without years of anxious consideration"—she wrote to Madame Mohl, who at Mrs. Nightingale's request had put in a plea for maternal claims—"I mean the step of leaving them. I do not wish to talk about it—and this is the last time I shall ever do so, but as you ask me a plain question, Clarkey dear, I will give you a plain answer. I have talked matters over ('made a clean breast' as you express it) with Parthe, not once but thousands of times. Years and years have been spent in doing so.[1] It has been, therefore, with the deepest consideration and with the fullest advice that I have taken the step of leaving home and it is a *fait accompli.*" And a *fait accompli* it remained.

The mother and elder daughter still, however, continued to look upon themselves as the best judges of what was good for Florence. The "medical student" complex still gave Mrs. Nightingale sleepless nights. In August 1854, Florence was urged to take the post of Superintendent of Nurses at the newly rebuilt King's College Hospital and this post was one after her own heart. The Harley Street Home gave her no scope for training nurses on a large scale and, in other ways, her friends considered that her great

[1] *Miss O'Malley's analysis of the relationship between Florence and her sister is most interesting. She points out that by this time, Parthe, though not consciously a rebel, was feeling the strain of imagining herself happy at home, unmarried and that Florence's departure considerably increased her (Parthe's) difficulty of having to "make-believe."*

abilities were wasted there. Mrs. Nightingale's fears on account of medical students were up in arms immediately and again Florence was beset by her mother's and sister's alarms. But then one morning, that same autumn, an appeal in the columns of *The Times* shook English breakfast tables.

Within forty-eight hours from the publication of that appeal, Florence Nightingale had responded to it and stood ready to go immediately, with a handful of nurses, to Scutari, to do what was possible to remedy the awful conditions in which British soldiers, sick and wounded after the glorious Battle of the Alma, were reported by *The Times* Special Correspondent to be lying there.

CHAPTER IV

THE CRIMEAN WAR

THE Crimean situation did not arise suddenly. The expedition with the French against Sebastopol had been talked of for months. But it was forty years since Waterloo and since that triumph no one had inquired into army administration. Besides, in former wars, the care of the wounded had scarcely been a matter for public criticism. War policies had been criticized often enough; losses of life had been arraigned by anti-war speakers and writers and had had their effect, with other war consequences, of making wars unpopular when they were over; but communication from the battlefields, outside the despatches of Generals, had been then difficult, the alleviation of suffering had been at best only a matter of rough kindness, and armies were formerly so exclusively close military preserves that civilians had heard little of actual war sufferings until old soldiers returned to tell their tales. It was not until well into the nineteenth century that public institutions began to be subject to any sort of outside criticism and the letters of Mr. William Russell, the famous *Times* War Correspondent, were the first professional civilian accounts that had ever been sent regularly from the seat of war.

The Times Special Correspondent's reports, exposing the shocking neglect in the arrangements for removing the wounded from the Crimean battlefields and for their reception at Scutari, staggered England, up to that moment exultant over the news of the Alma victory received only a few days before. The Battle of the Alma, in which the entrenched Russian camp had been attacked by allied troops and driven in full retreat from the heights above the river, had taken place on September 20th, but such was the slowness of communication in those days that the news did not reach London till the beginning of October. Excitement was intense; the rumour (incorrect) that Sebastopol had also fallen increased public joy. "The battles are over and the victory is won," announced *The Times*, in a leading article (October 5th).

"There is no longer any doubt that the legions of the Czar have been sought and encountered on their own territory by the soldiers of France and England, that they have been totally routed, that they have been driven in headlong flight and with a dreadful carnage to the very walls of their stronghold and that Sebastopol itself—that symbol and citadel of Russian power, with its mighty fleets, its enormous arsenals and its redoubtable garrison has become the prey of the conqueror at the end of a 10-days' campaign. . . . Never since the days of Napoleon—we may almost say since the days of Cæsar—has an exploit of arms been attended with such entire and instantaneous

success. . . . The final triumph followed close on the first disembarkation and all the anticipated incidents of an arduous campaign, marches, battles, sieges and stormings, have been crowded into a single impulse of onslaught and victory. It is barely seven months since the first division of the army left the shores of Britain amid the tumultuous acclamation of their countrymen."

Lord Raglan's despatch, with a long list of the killed and wounded, followed on October 9th, and on the same day was published a report from *The Times* Special Correspondent (written from Constantinople on September 25th) which described the ample spatial hospital accommodation at Scutari but added that there was one experiment which had been "a perfect failure." This was the sending out of Chelsea pensioners as an ambulance corps to attend the sick. Possibly the reason of this had been economy, remarked the correspondent, for the decrepit old men had died in numbers and consequently many pensions had been saved. But the result was that most of them needed nursing, all were so feeble as to be unable to perform the most ordinary duties, and the sick and wounded soldiers had had therefore to look after themselves.

On the following day, the report was continued. There had been "a great want of proper medical assistance" it was said. The wounded had been left, after the Battle of the Alma, some for two nights, all

of them for one, on the field. From the battlefield they had been bundled on board ship for transport across the Black Sea to Scutari without any medical attention. There had not been any proper means for removing the wounded from the field. If it had not been for Admiral Lyons and the inshore squadron, the wounded might have died where they lay. Admiral Lyons and the sailors of his squadron had behaved splendidly. The seamen and marines had carried the wounded by means of hammocks slung on oars to the beach; they had placed them on the transport vessels and tended them there like nurses. Officers and all on board had taken part, night and day, in this devoted work.

The number of lives which had been sacrificed by the want of proper arrangements and neglect, said the report, must have been considerable. It added that the French had managed admirably and had brought in all their wounded soldiers immediately after the battle.

But it was not only the field and transport services that were reported to be defective. Medical and nursing attendance at the Scutari hospitals, whither the wounded were taken by sea from the Crimea, were said to be equally bad. The columns of *The Times* were crowded daily with letters from officers, men and private residents in Constantinople drawing attention to the terrible facts. "You cannot imagine anything so fearful," wrote one lady from Con-

stantinople, "as the condition of the poor wounded soldiers here." "To think that there are 3,000 lying in the barracks and not even doctors enough to take care of them, and no nurses, for the few Greeks they tried to have were either not strong enough to bear the operations and the dressing of the wounded (for it was only very old women that could be procured) or else they drank so dreadfully that there was no depending on them. You will understand better the state these poor creatures are in when I tell you that many of them were brought down here three days after the battle without their wounds having been washed even and some were full of maggots; and most of them that have died since have done so after the amputations from want of proper care." These conditions were corroborated by *The Times* Correspondent who wrote (October 12th):

"It is with feelings of surprise and anger that the public will learn that no sufficient preparations have been made for the proper care of the wounded. Not only are there not sufficient surgeons—that, it might be urged, was unavoidable; not only are there no dressers and nurses—that might be a defect of system for which no one is to blame; but what will be said when it is known that there is not even linen to make bandages for the wounded? The greatest commiseration prevails for the sufferings of the unhappy inmates of Scutari, and every family is giving sheets and old garments to supply their wants. But why could not

this clearly foreseen want have been supplied? Can it be said that the Battle of the Alma has been an event to take the world by surprise? Has not the expedition to the Crimea been the talk of the last four months? And when the Turks gave up to our use the vast barracks to form a hospital and depot, was it not on the ground that the loss of the English troops was sure to be considerable when engaged in so dangerous an enterprise? And yet, after the troops have been six months in the country, there is no preparation for the commonest surgical operations! Not only are the men kept, in some cases, for a week without the hand of a medical man coming near their wounds; not only are they left to expire in agony, unheeded and shaken off, though catching desperately at the surgeon whenever he makes his rounds through the fetid ship; but now, when they are placed in the spacious building, where we were led to believe that everything was ready which could ease their pain or facilitate their recovery, it is found that the commonest appliances of a workhouse sick-ward are wanting, and that the men must die through the medical staff of the British army having forgotten that old rags are necessary for the dressing of wounds. If Parliament were sitting, some notice would probably be taken of these facts, which are notorious and have excited much concern; as it is, it rests with the Government to make enquiries into the conduct of those who have so greatly neglected their duty."

Again, two days later:

"It is impossible for anyone to see the melancholy sights of the last few days without feelings of surprise and indignation at the deficiencies of our medical system. The manner in which the sick and wounded have been treated is worthy only of the savages of Dahomey. Numbers arrived at Scutari without having been touched by a surgeon since they fell, pierced by Russian bullets, on the slopes of Alma. The ship was literally covered with prostrate forms, so as to be almost unmanageable. The officers could not get below to find their sextants, and the run was made at hazards.

"The worst cases were placed on the upper deck, which, in a day or two, became a mass of putridity. The neglected gunshot wounds bred maggots which crawled in every direction, infecting the food of the unhappy beings on board. The putrid animal matter caused such a stench that the officers and crew were nearly overcome, and the captain is now ill from the effects of the five days of misery. All the blankets, to the number of 1,500, have been thrown overboard as useless. There are no dressers or nurses. . . . Their (the French) medical arrangements are extremely good . . . they have also the help of the Sisters of Charity who have accompanied the expedition in incredible numbers. We have nothing. The men must attend to each other or receive no relief at all."

The horror of English people at home was mixed

with astonishment, in many quarters, sheer incredulity. How could such shocking neglect have occurred? For high medical authorities on all sides were coming forward, also writing letters to the newspapers and accompanying their letters with elaborate memoranda on the staff and material equipment of the British Army sent to the East, the whole mass backed by the strongest personal testimonies, all proving most satisfactorily and leaving no doubt whatever on paper, that never did an army leave British shores with such ample and careful medical preparation. Never had there been, apparently, so large a proportion of surgeons, such a various and abundant pharmacopœia of drugs, so many tons of lint and tow, so many miles of bandages and plaster, such mountains of bedding and bedsteads, such shiploads of medical comforts. Where could it all have gone to? Even Mr. Sidney Herbert, most terribly concerned of ministers, wasting no moment before appealing to Florence Nightingale for help, assured her that though at the moment there might be certain deficiencies of medical men, lint, sheets, etc., these must "have been remedied ere this, as the number of medical officers with the army amounted to one to every ninety-five men in the whole force, being nearly double what we have ever had before, and thirty more surgeons went out three weeks ago, and would by this time, therefore, be at Constantinople." As to medical stores, he added, they had been sent in profusion; lint by the ton weight,

15,000 pairs of sheets, medicine, wine, arrowroot in the same proportion; and the only way of accounting for the deficiency at Scutari, if, he said, it existed, was that the mass of stores went to Varna and was not sent back when the army left for the Crimea; but four days would, he said, have remedied this, and in the meantime fresh stores were arriving.

Throughout England, there was an immediate response to these terrible charges. Subscription lists were opened; a Patriotic Fund was established; organizations and individuals, men and women, offered their services to go at once to the Front. But trained nurses were as rare then as gold sovereigns are nowadays, and the vast majority of enthusiastic and tender-hearted Englishwomen who offered themselves had no conception either of a hospital or of its duties. Even among the carefully selected party of thirty-eight which Florence Nightingale took out with her to Scutari, there were not more than sixteen whom she found to be really efficient.

Mr. Sidney Herbert, Secretary-*at*-War, a minister whose office was distinct from that of the Secretary *for* War, which was then held by the Duke of Newcastle, and whose duties had strictly nothing to do with war administration, but to whose everlasting credit be it said, ignored that fact and took action immediately, was not the first person to turn to Florence Nightingale in this emergency. Lady Maria Forester got into touch with her earlier. She had no

sooner read the first *Times* reports than she offered immediately to finance the sending out of some trained nurses. Florence wrote to her friend Mrs. Herbert on October 14th:

"A small private expedition of nurses has been organized for Scutari and I have been asked to command it. I take myself out and one nurse. Lady Maria Forester has given £200 to take out three others. We feed and lodge ourselves there, and are to be no expense whatever to the country. Lord Clarendon has been asked by Lord Palmerston to write to Lord Stratford (the British Minister at Constantinople) for us and has consented. Dr. Andrew Smith, of the Army Medical Board, whom I have seen, authorizes us and gives us letters to the Chief Medical Officer at Scutari." The letter went on to ask for Mr. Herbert's opinion of the scheme, whether it would be better to keep it a private one or to apply for Government support, for the permission of the Harley Street Home Committee to break the engagement with them, and finally to request: "Would you, or someone of my Committee write to Lady Stratford to say: 'This is not a lady, but a real Hospital Nurse' of me? 'And she has had experience.' "

Experience, that was the lamp, trimmed and ready, with which Florence stood waiting to answer the call. The lamp, with which she is always associated, is an illustration of her ministering rounds along the miles of Scutari hospital corridors—but it is just as much a

symbol too. Like the wise virgins in the parable, she was prepared and trained, and it must indeed have seemed to her, as she read these dreadful accounts in the newspapers, that the voice which had led her, first through youthful longings and then through the last ten years of active preparations, was the same which called her now. She was prompt, calm and commanding as only thoroughly prepared people can be. To those who fluttered agitatedly around her in those last days before she left England she seemed amazingly unruffled. She was "as calm and composed in this furious haste," her sister wrote, "with the War Office, the Military Medical Board, half the nurses in London to speak to, her own Committee and Institution, as if she were going out for a walk." From this moment, it should be added, Mrs. Nightingale and Parthenope were transformed characters, the result, no doubt, of patriotic feeling combined with Sidney Herbert's appeal. Florence was now set on a pinnacle by them and spoken of with awe and reverence and with the most whole-hearted recantation of their former views. It was through the family's proud display of the Minister's letter that it got into the papers, being published in full in the *Daily News* of October 28th. Florence was upset by the publication but her family were of course delighted that all England should know what a wonderful opinion Mr. Sidney Herbert had of their "Flo."

"There is but one person in England that I know

of who would be capable," he had written. This letter had crossed Florence's letter to Mrs. Herbert and in it he had asked, "nay entreated," her, as Parthenope put it, to go out to Scutari and superintend the nursing there. The request was made as from the Government and the fullest official assistance was offered if she would go. "The selection of the rank and file of nurses will be 'very difficult,'" he had written. "No one knows it better than yourself. The difficulty of finding women equal to a task, after all, full of horrors, and requiring, besides knowledge and good will, great energy and great courage, will be great. The task of ruling them and introducing system among them, great: and not the least will be the difficulty of making the whole work smoothly with the medical and military authorities out there. This it is which makes it so important that the experiment should be carried out by one with a capacity for administration and experience. A number of sentimental, enthusiastic ladies turned loose into the Hospital at Scutari would probably, after a few days, be *mises à la porte* by those whose business they would interrupt, and whose authority they would dispute."

In this paragraph Mr. Sidney Herbert laid his finger upon the worst difficulties that did in fact beset Florence Nightingale, apart, of course, from the appalling conditions of the hospitals themselves. The introduction of female nurses into military

hospitals was an entirely new experiment. There were some military personages who, when they heard of it, exclaimed: "Women will be wanting to teach us to fight next."

The procuring of nurses was hard enough under any circumstances; the selection was made even more difficult by the fact that the suitability of the women to conditions of military discipline had also to be considered. Further, there was little time for examining applicants thoroughly. The expedition started on the 21st of October—five days after Mr. Herbert's letter had been received.

During those five days innumerable applicants were interviewed, a great number hopelessly unsuitable and offering themselves, according to Miss Stanley, Dean Stanley's sister, who assisted in the selection, merely for the sake of the wage. Eventually, thirty-eight were chosen, and several of these, found to be incompetent or unwilling to accept the discipline and privations, had to be sent home shortly after they reached Scutari. Yet another difficulty, and one which, from the first, both Sidney Herbert and Florence had been quick to recognize, was the religious one. The various religious denominations and sects in England, particularly the Low Church ones, were all up in arms against the inclusion of nurses of Roman Catholic or High Anglican faith. Low Church members were discovered to be in a minority in the expedition. The Anti-Puseyites fell upon this awful fact in the

press. The controversy raged—and the "No-Popery" party was beside itself with fury.

Florence had aimed at equal representation of religious opinions but the disproportion had arisen in this way. The Protestant Institution for Nurses had been applied to for nurses as had also the High Church St. John's House. Both of these institutions had, however, jibbed at the condition of the Government scheme that all the nurses were to be under Florence Nightingale's sole control. St. John's House had, however, given way, after the position had been put to its Council, but the Protestants refused to send nurses unless their own Committee controlled the management. As this was impossible, under the circumstances, the Protestant contingent had to be left at home. In consequence, the Catholics and the High Church nurses were in a majority.

Florence herself was more Low than High Church. But she had met with a high standard of nursing among Roman Catholic Sisterhoods and for her, efficiency, and not religious denomination, was the crucial test. Provided that a nurse was a good woman and efficient, she did not care what Church she belonged to, a point of view which few people would dispute to-day. But such tolerance was thought shocking in early Victorian times and there were many people who were suspicious of Florence Nightingale's principles because she was willing to work with Roman Catholics. Amid the newspaper bickerings

over this question the remark of one clergyman stands out as conspicuously enlightened. "Miss Nightingale belongs to a sect which, unfortunately, is a very rare one—the sect of the Good Samaritan."

This controversy did not break out, however, until after the departure of the expedition and in the meantime public opinion was investing Florence with all the known qualities of a popular heroine. To people generally she was unknown, so much so that the first announcements of her mission referred to her as "Mrs." Nightingale. When it became known that she was a "Miss" and "young, graceful and rich" in addition, the world's best oleographic sentiments were drawn upon for her portrait. An article in the *Examiner*, widely reprinted, enlarged upon all the "palpable and heartfelt attractions" of home and society which this heroic young lady was sacrificing for charity's sake. "Her friends and acquaintances are of all classes and persuasions," said the article, "but her happiest place is at home in the centre of a very large band of accomplished relatives and in simplest obedience to her admiring parents." Florence's rejoinder to this effusion, if she ever saw it, is not on record. Before it appeared, she and her nurses, accompanied by the devoted Bracebridges, were *en route* for Scutari.

CHAPTER V

THE LADY-IN-CHIEF

CONSTANTINOPLE was reached on the 4th of November and Scutari, on the other side of the Bosphorus, that same day. Florence and her party were greeted with the news of the Battle of Balaclava, fought on October 25th, and the fact that some five hundred wounded were at that moment being landed for reception into the Barrack Hospital where she and the nurses were to be installed.

The voyage up the Dardanelles had been a rough and stormy one; the party had been at sea, since leaving Marseilles, for eight days. It had taken about the same time to bring the wounded from Balaclava. Their wounds were still undressed; broken bones, even, not set. They were filthy and half starved. Their shoulders and thighs were raw from lying on the decks of the transports, in uniforms stiff with blood and covered with filth and vermin. These facts may give some idea of the ordeal with which Florence and her nurses were instantly faced.

A story used to be told of the dreadful predicament in which a number of trained nurses once found themselves when they were first drafted into a big London hospital to replace the untrained old-style nurses there. The latter so resented the new order that

they decamped in a body before the arrival of the newcomers, so that these, when they reached the hospital, found no one to hand over charge of the wards to them or to show them where anything was kept. That predicament was always spoken of as a terrible experience but it was a mild one compared with the situation which confronted Florence when she first entered the Barrack Hospital at Scutari. Not only were there no nurses to initiate her into the hospital arrangements, but there were no appliances and stores into the whereabouts of which she could have been initiated; there were not even the commonest necessaries of hospital furniture and the wounded men already in hospital were in not much better plight than those about to be brought in from the ships. There were no basins, vessels for water or utensils; only empty beer bottles for candlesticks; no soap, towels or hospital clothes. The men had no kit with them because on disembarking at the Crimea, it had been decided not to disembark kit-bags in order to march light. Instructions had not been given afterwards as to collecting these and as the Hospital regulations assumed that every soldier brought his kit with him, there was not so much as a single shirt in the Purveyor's Store. There was a great shortage of beds; mattresses had to be stuffed on the spur of the moment, sewn up and laid down on the floor which was verminous. Not a mop nor a scrubbing brush nor a broom nor any disinfectant was to be had. One of

Florence's first requisitions to the Commission of *The Times* Relief Fund was for three hundred scrubbing brushes. There were no knives, forks, bedroom utensils, clean linen. Nothing, apparently, had gone to the wash for weeks. Six shirts only had been washed per month before her arrival. The sanitary accommodation was foul and there were no bedpans. The Hospital was built over cesspools and the air of the wards and corridors was putrid with effluvia from these and the bad ventilation of the building. Nothing had been done, after the Turks had handed over the barracks, to convert them to hospital purposes beyond giving the inside walls a coat of whitewash.

It would be easy from the pages of the Report of the Roebuck Commission of Inquiry, which went to Scutari at the same time as Florence and reported early in the next spring, and from the Sanitary Commissioner's Report of the following year, and from the various books and accounts written by eyewitnesses, to compile a huge list of deficient or non-existent classes of articles not only vital to hospital nursing but indispensable also to ordinary life. To put it shortly, the barest necessaries were lacking; there had been a colossal want of foresight in every department, including of course the food provisioning, and such stores as the Purveyor had in his keeping were unobtainable sometimes for weeks after a requisition had been made for them, owing to a regulation that stores could not be unpacked or issued until a Board

meeting sanctioning these processes had been held. Hospital Stores, moreover, were packed in England alongside Army ones and went with these to the Crimea where they remained.

And yet the Head of the Army Medical Department in London and the Principal Medical Officer at Scutari had declared over and over again that nothing was wanted, and, relying on these assurances, Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, the British Ambassador at Constantinople, had advised *The Times* Commissioner that the best way of spending the Relief fund would be to build a new English church. Fortunately, Florence had discounted what the London Head of the Army Medical Department had told her before she started and had laid in a miscellaneous store of provisions and hospital material at Marseilles. Mr. Macdonald, *The Times* Commissioner, had also been wiser than Lord Stratford; he used his own eyes and then put his funds at the disposal of the Lady-in-Chief. Florence, from her own purse and out of donations sent to her privately, furnished masses of supplies and dispensed them upon medical requisitions from the large kitchen, converted into a store-room, adjoining the nurses' quarters in the hospital. "I am a kind of general Dealer"—she wrote to Sidney Herbert (January 4, 1855)—"in socks, shirts, knives and forks, wooden spoons, tin baths, tables and forms, cabbages and carrots, operating tables, towels and soap, small tooth-combs, precipitate for destroying lice, bedpans and

stump pillows." "From this room" (the kitchen), wrote a Lady Volunteer, in her book, *Eastern Hospitals and English Nurses*, "were distributed quantities of arrow-root, sago, rice pudding, jelly, beef tea and lemonade upon requisitions made by the surgeons. . . . In the middle of the day, everything and everybody seemed to be there; boxes, parcels, bundles of sheets, shirts and old linen and flannels, tubs of butter, sugar, bread, kettles, saucepans—besides the diets which were being dispensed." Next to this room was the small sitting-room where Florence held meetings, gave orders and wrote her letters, those "terrible" letters to Sidney Herbert, or to friends and supporters at home, laying bare the horrors of the situation and dissecting out the roots of muddledom and mis-management with a mental incision as precise and direct as the blade of a skilled surgeon's knife. She operated upon her correspondents without anæsthetics; none were authorized in the hospital wards. In the instructions issued by the Principal Medical Officer preparatory to the landing of the army in the Crimea, Dr. Hall had cautioned medical officers against the use of chloroform in operations, giving it as his opinion that the smart of the knife was a powerful stimulant, and that it was better to hear a man bawl lustily than to see him sink silently into the grave.

Florence spared no one, not even Sidney Herbert, when he acted contrary to her instructions in sending out a second batch of nurses to Scutari; her remarks

upon individuals were bitingly to the point. But in personal contact with the authorities and those who worked with her, her language was never unparliamentary. Her dignity and quiet manner impressed everyone. "She was always calm and self-possessed," a Roman Catholic Sister said of her. "She was a perfect lady through everything—never overbearing. I never heard her raise her voice." These qualities, combined with the patent value of her nursing, soon secured her position with a great number of the Army Medical doctors on the spot. Sex-prejudice was there, of course, but strong as it was, facts were stronger, and the undeniable benefits wrought by the coming of the nurses and the personal tact and diplomacy of the Lady-in-Chief were facts that most of the doctors, working at terrific tension in circumstances of which they were as much victims as were the soldiers, were quick to recognize.

Regulations which Florence drew up and enforced with military discipline forbade the nurses from encroaching upon the medical sphere; no supplies were issued from her stores until requisitioned for by the doctors and until requisitions upon the Government stores had failed. She worked all day in the wards, attending to all the worst cases herself, and assisting at operations. These were at first all performed in the wards and one of the things she did, soon after her arrival, was to get a screen for these occasions—"for when one poor fellow," she wrote,

"who is to be amputated to-morrow sees his comrade to-day die under the knife, it makes impressions and diminishes his chance. But anyway, among these exhausted frames," she added, "the mortality of the operations is frightful." Other reforms which she effected soon after her arrival were the institution of "extra-diet kitchens" for the preparation of light nourishment between the regulation meals and the establishment of a laundry. She took a house in the town, had boilers put into it and employed soldiers' wives to do the washing.

The officials, as distinct from the staff doctors, were aggressively on the defensive. It is a feature of officialdom, when a breakdown in organization occurs, for the official to be occupied mainly, first in denying that there is a breakdown and secondly, if facts are too flagrantly against this denial, in shifting the blame from himself or his department to some other official. Very few people, after all, can take criticism of their work impersonally: it is more important to them to squeeze themselves out of the target of criticism than to consider whether attention to the criticism would improve the work. To the world in general it is the work that matters; to the worker, it is, in most cases, himself or herself: wherefore, possibly, the reason why progress everywhere is slow. Florence once wrote: "Yes, I do see the difference now between me and other men. When a disaster happens, I act and *they* make excuses." Excuses were rampant during the

Crimean War. There were officials so busy making them that they could not see the facts in front of their noses. The Rev. Sidney Godolphin Osborne, well known for his book *Scutari and its Hospitals*, who arrived at Constantinople four days after Florence's party, wrote as follows:

"On the same day that I arrived, I crossed the Bosphorus to Scutari and went to the General Hospital (this was not the one in which the nurses were and was admittedly the best run of all the hospitals there), and there presented a letter from Mr. Herbert to the superior medical officer, Dr. Menzies; he took me round some of the wards of that building, and to my repeated offers, either from my own or other funds, of assistance in any way in which it could be afforded I received the answer 'they had everything—nothing was wanted.' . . . I was not for one moment deceived by the declaration of Dr. Menzies that nothing was wanted; I have had, as my friends all know, for many years an intimate acquaintance with most matters relating to medical and surgical practices: I think I can say with truth I have followed the study of medicine and surgery for twenty years of my life, with an attention equal to that of many who do so as a matter of professional duty—a hospital and its requirements were no new thing to me.

"It would only tire the general reader if I were to go, day by day, into the occurrences which, following in quick succession, soon proved to me, not only that

these vast hospitals were absolutely without the commonest provision for the exigencies they had to meet, but that there was in and about the whole sphere of action an utter want of that accord amongst the authorities in each department, which alone could secure any really vigorous effort to meet the demands which the carrying on of the war was sure to make upon them. It is quite true that, as ship after ship brought down their respective cargoes of wounded and sick, the medical and other officers with Miss Nightingale and her corps of nurses did work from morning till night and through the night, in trying to meet the pressure upon their scanty resources; but the whole thing was a mere matter of excited, almost frenzied energy, for where so much that was necessary was absent it followed that all that zeal and labour could effect was, by various temporary expedients, to do that which when done was wholly inadequate to do what was really required. I saw all the Balaclava and Inkerman wounded had to go through; I had it from the lips of the chief actors in the scene what the preparations were which awaited the wounded of 'Alma.' I know what the chaplain and officers had to do then; the 'Sisters' had not arrived—there was no Miss Nightingale with that wonderful power to command help, the quickness to see where it would most avail. I can say with truth I am glad I have not that tale to tell. And yet I could not find that anything had been asked from Lord Redcliffe even

up to the time I saw the hospital myself. Why should he have been asked for help? The chief authority was clearly under the delusion that 'nothing was wanted.' . . . I have never seen any accounts yet that have in their united information really given the whole truth as it might be given. I cannot conceive, as I now calmly look back on the first three weeks after the arrival of the wounded from Inkerman, how it could have been possible to have avoided a state of things too disastrous to contemplate had not Miss Nightingale been there, and had the means placed at her disposal by Mr. Macdonald. I could enumerate through a very long list article after article of absolute necessity, as a part of hospital stores, which was either not in existence or so stored as to defy access to it. It was not merely that with the exception of a ward here and there, there was no appearance of the order which one would have expected in a military hospital, supported at an almost fabulous expense; but there was an utter absence of the commonest preparation to carry out the very first and simplest demands in a place set apart to receive the sick and wounded of a large army. . . . I here deliberately record my conviction that not only was the Home Government grossly deceived by the information it received from the East, but that it must have been most grossly betrayed at home by those to whose several departments the proper management of the details of these hospitals was entrusted. Had Miss

Nightingale and her staff taken up their post in the best regulated hospital conceivable, with four thousand patients, their task would have taxed to the utmost their every energy. Here was an utter want of all regulation; it was a mere unseemly scramble; the staff was altogether deficient in strength. The commissariat and purveying departments were as weak in power as capacity; there was no real head, and there existed on all sides a state of feeling which was inclined to resent all non-military interference; while at the same time it was shamefully obvious that there was no one feature of military order. Jealous of each other, jealous of everyone else, with some bright exceptions there was little encouragement from any of the officials for anyone out of mere benevolence to lend any aid. The fact is, the stout denial of the shameful condition of the hospitals, made to the authorities at home could not be made on the spot; the officials therefore walked about self-convicted. As a warm friend of the Government, sent out under the direct sanction of the War Office, I am satisfied it was the wish of Miss Nightingale to make the best of everything. She at once found the real truth and gratefully availed herself of that help from irregular sources which to this moment has been her chief support."

The discovery of the true state of things is one matter; the remedying of that state another. Immediately beneficial as the presence of Florence Nightingale at Scutari was, numerous as were the

improvements that in a few weeks she introduced into the hospital régime, it would be absurd to suggest, as many people in England were led to believe by the glowing reports of her achievements, that from the moment of her arrival upon the scene, disorder vanished and completely changed conditions prevailed. What she did in a short time was extraordinary, considering the fierce pressure and strain in every direction upon her energies. Batches of wounded were constantly arriving—Inkerman was fought on November 5th—and the hospital which could not comfortably accommodate more than 1,700 patients was soon crowded with well over double that number. The huge corridors between the wards were lined with double rows of wounded, with just room for one person to pass between the beds. There were said to be four miles of beds altogether, a long round for the Lady-in-Chief to make, as she invariably did, night after night. Half an hour's walk from the Barrack Hospital was the General Hospital, holding, in December 1854, over 2,000 patients; and the nursing here was under her supervision, though her headquarters and main work were at the Barrack. The nurses' quarters were cramped, dilapidated and often invaded by rats and other vermin, and until Florence took a room for sick nurses outside the hospital, those who fell ill, from cholera, fever, over-fatigue or want of proper food, had to remain in the same room where others slept and had their meals. There was a great

deal of sickness and some deaths among the nurses. Cholera and fever were rampant among the troops.

2

The Government at home, under the spur of Sidney Herbert, was doing its best to remedy the evils. Queen Victoria was woefully concerned and sent a feeling message to the men which was read and posted up in the wards. Public opinion was furious in its denunciation of the administration which had failed to provide against such a catastrophe and the Aberdeen Ministry was forced to resign largely in consequence of this. But the fault lay with no one ministry and still less with any one minister. The mischief lay in the fact that army administration had not been looked into for forty years, that more than half a dozen separate departments had to do with army matters, that their various functions had never been co-ordinated, and that no single authority appeared to be able to exercise full control. Within the ministry there were two ministers, the Secretary for War, and the Secretary-at-War whose functions were quite disconnected, though Mr. Herbert, who held the latter post when the war started, wisely took upon himself to create an authority of his own: outside these ministers, there were the War Office, the Horse Guards, the Ordnance, Victualling and Transport Offices, the Army Medical Department and the Treasury all operating inde-

pendently of one another. A complicated and indirect circuit of transmission from one to the other of these departments existed, but it took so long to work that it was useless to set it in motion for emergency purposes.

For instance, at Scutari, it was imperative at one period to have certain hitherto disused and dilapidated wards put in a state of repair in order to fit them to receive a fresh influx of several hundred wounded. The correct procedure for getting the requisite expenditure authorized was by a representation to the headquarters of the Army Medical Department in London whose business it then was to approach the Horse Guards who in turn approached the Ordnance who finally applied to the Treasury for sanction. Weeks, in this way, would have elapsed before the necessary minutes could be signed and countersigned by the proper authorities, during which time the wounded would have arrived to find no accommodation ready for them. Florence Nightingale, on her own authority, engaged and paid workmen to carry out the repairs with the result that the wards were ready to receive the men when they arrived. She was violently criticized for this high-handed action, though the War Office, when the matter did come before them, approved it and paid the bill. "It is a current joke here," she wrote, "to offer a prize for the discovery of anyone ready to take responsibility." Officials, glued to a groove, could not be moved to act except in accordance with groove rules. The unfortunate Purveyor to the Hospitals—

"the wretched Purveyor" Florence called him—had not much in his store at the best of times, but what he had he would not part with without an official requisition, and then only in regulation amounts. So much wood for each stove in the wards was allowed and, whatever the wintry weather, no extra allowance could be obtained until a Board had "sat" upon the extra demand. Florence foraged daily in the Purveyor's department to find out for herself what the store contained, it being the Purveyor's habit to make no attempt to issue articles that were not there when a requisition came in, even though they arrived the next day. On one occasion she knew that 27,000 shirts had been sent by the Home Government in answer to her urgent demands and she ascertained that they had been landed. But the Purveyor refused to unpack them without a Board meeting which did not take place until three weeks later. Whether she ever insisted, as was reported, on having stores forcibly opened, to the horror of the store officials, is not accurately known. She provided from her own store, largely supplied by *The Times* Commissioner, 50,000 shirts. "The extraordinary circumstance of a whole army having been ordered to abandon its kits, as was done when we landed our men before Alma, has been overlooked entirely," she wrote to Sidney Herbert (January 1855). "The fact is, that I am now clothing the British army."

Clothes and other supplies were sent out by degrees

in profusion by the Government but, owing to routine transport arrangements, there was no certainty as to their arrival at Scutari. If they were despatched by military vessels they were often taken to Balaclava; if by merchant ships they could not escape the Turkish Customs House, a bottomless pit whence little emerged. Eventually, at Florence's suggestion, a Government Storehouse by the water's edge was established, where ships of all kinds discharged their stores for the hospitals.

3

The sanitary conditions in the hospitals were at first appalling. Miss Nightingale told the Royal Commission of 1857—which would never have been appointed but for her exertions—that the state of the atmosphere of the Barrack Hospital at night was impossible. "I have been well acquainted with the dwellings of the worst parts of most of the great cities in Europe," she said, "but have never been in any atmosphere which I could compare with it." Owing to cesspools beneath the building, open privies from which sewer air rose, inadequate ventilation and overcrowding, the stench in the corridors was overpowering. Men were dying of cholera and fever and no wonder. During the first seven months of the Crimean campaign there was a mortality of 60 per cent. among the troops from disease alone, some of this induced, some aggravated by the conditions in the

hospitals. "The quantity of vermin in the wards was past conception!" wrote a Lady Volunteer who arrived at Scutari in December 1854. "The men's clothes and beds swarmed with them, so did every room in the hospital. Our clothes had their full share, and the misery they caused us was very great; we never slept more than an hour at a time because of them."

Sanitary reforms were at last effected, thanks to the Lady-in-Chief's insistent demands. In February 1855, a Commission of three members was sent to Scutari and they set about the work of sanitary reconstruction with such despatch and efficiency that the mortality rate soon fell. Dr. Sutherland, the Head of the Commission, became Florence Nightingale's most devoted friend and helper from that time onwards. She did little without him; he was on almost every commission and committee that she had a hand in directing; he was to a great extent her Secretary and he died, an old man, in her by no means easy harness. Florence was a tyrant, there is no doubt about that. But her slaves were willing ones. There was something about her which compelled obedience and which, as Kinglake says, "lifted her from out the ranks of those who were only 'able' to the height reached by those who are called 'great.' "

To get at this something we can, I think, put on one side the popular idea of her. It was, of course, the "heroine" side of her work that appealed to the

public: they sentimentalized it and delighted in descriptions of her slender delicate figure bending over the prostrate forms of wounded and dying men. She was indeed a Ministering Angel. The public did not invent this picture of her. There was no more spontaneous or touching tribute to her than that letter from a soldier which was read out by Sidney Herbert at the great London meeting in her honour in November 1855, whose simple words have since gone the round of the world. "What a comfort it was to see her pass even. She would speak to one and nod and smile to many more; but she could not do it to all, you know, we lay there by hundreds; but we could kiss her shadow as it fell, and lay our heads on the pillow again, content."

The soldiers worshipped her. She had so transformed their torments that they looked upon her as a kind of goddess or Joan of Arc. Sebastopol would fall, if they only had *her* leading them, or if the Queen died, they ought to make *her* queen—were remarks often heard in the wards. When she nearly died of fever in the Crimea, their distress was poignant and when she was brought back to Scutari, so weak that she had to be carried on a stretcher, her baggage had to be distributed among far more men than were actually needed, so anxious were so many to do something for "Miss Nightingale." Not only by the men but by hundreds of soldiers' families in England was she beloved, for she had written personally to

them, giving news of husbands and sons and comfort to the bereaved. Also, she had done much to better the conditions of numbers of soldiers' wives who were with the army during the war and whose quarters and other conditions were at the outset deplorable.

But it was not of this side of her work that Kinglake was thinking when he spoke of her greatness, nor was it the close and devoted personal attention which she gave to those sufferers through whose long lines of beds she made her nightly rounds, lamp in hand, that distinguished her as the one outstanding personality of the war.

That "the Nightingale power" was the power it was may, it is true, be traced to various causes, some of which arose out of the unfailing support given to Florence by the Government acting through Sidney Herbert, and other circumstances, such as those of birth, social standing, Royal sympathy and the immunity from small-minded official tendencies, centring round questions of promotion and dignity, which she naturally, as an economically free agent, enjoyed. But, on the other hand, the mission would never have been entrusted to her and still more, she would never have been able to utilize those admittedly exceptional advantages, had she not been a very exceptional woman. "The Nightingale Power," as it was jealously and grudgingly spoken of by those against whose blind-bat regulations and unimaginative habits of mind it was shatteringly employed, had undoubtedly

a great deal of extrinsic backing, but the kernel of it just as undoubtedly lay in the power of "The Bird" herself. The gift without which she could never have achieved what she did, said Kinglake, was "her faculty of conquering dominion over the minds of men." She "not only came armed with the special experience needed, but also was clearly transcendent in that subtle quality which gives to one human being a power of command over others."

What was that subtle quality? Was it really a subtle one? Subtle perhaps only in its effect, since almost against their will, certainly against their groove-like habits, officials were compelled to give way to the Lady-in-Chief; but not, I think, in its own nature. Strength and simplicity of purpose are not subtle forces; they are the weapons of those who have discarded subtleties, thrown them overboard or thrust them away, in order to clear the decks for direct action—swift, straight, fierce—to an end. Florence was built, mentally, like an iron-clad: she carried nothing but essential equipment for action; every fibre of her being was disciplined to her resolute will.

She had no affectations; she was not striking to look at. Sidney Osborne wrote of her:

"Miss Nightingale in appearance is just what you would expect in any other well-bred woman who may have seen perhaps rather more than thirty years of life: her manner and countenance are prepossessing

and this without the possession of positive beauty: it is a face not easily forgotten, pleasing in its smile, with an eye betokening great self-possession, and giving, when she wishes, a quiet look of firm determination to every feature. Her general demeanour is quiet and rather reserved; still I am much mistaken if she is not gifted with a very lively sense of the ridiculous. In conversation, she speaks on matters of business with a grave earnestness one would not expect from her appearance. She has evidently a mind disciplined to restrain under the principles of the action of the moment every feeling which would interfere with it. She has trained herself to command and learned the value of conciliation towards others and constraint over herself. I can conceive her to be a strict disciplinarian; she throws herself into a work as its head—as such she knows well how much success must depend upon literal obedience to her every order. She seems to understand business thoroughly, though to me she had the failure common to many 'heads,' a too great love of management in the small details which had better perhaps have been left to others. Her nerve is wonderful; I have been with her at very severe operations; she was more than equal to the trial. She has an utter disregard of contagion; I have known her spend hours over men dying of cholera or fever. The more awful to every sense any particular case, especially if it was that of a dying man, her slight form would be

seen bending over him, administering to his ease in every way in her power, and seldom quitting his side until death released him."

Another contemporary, Mr. Ingleby Scott, wrote of her:

"She was never resorted to for sentiment. Sentimentalists never had a chance with her. Besides that her character was too strong, and its qualities too real, for any sympathy with shallowness and egotism, she had two characteristics which might well daunt the sentimentalists—her reserve, and her capacity for ridicule—and there is perhaps nothing uttered by her, from her evidence before the Sanitary Commission for the Army to her recently published *Notes on Nursing* which does not disclose powers of irony which self-regardant persons may well dread."

"*She was never resorted to for sentiment.*" Not for sentiment alone, perhaps. She would have made short work of such an appeal. But that strongly welded moral activity must have sprung from an immense compassion in that rather hidden heart of hers, compassion for a world so feckless in its dealings with sickness and poverty, so ignorant, as it seemed to her, of God's will. Just as she abhorred the idea of "giving utterance to one's feelings" in a poem, ("to appear," as she once put it, "price two guineas in the *Belle Assemblée*"), so to indulge in sentimental conversation must have seemed to her wrong—

a terrible waste of energy. The world is so full of people who talk and do nothing and those who say one thing and do another, that when we meet with someone whose feelings turn themselves immediately into action, we are inclined to think them lacking in feeling because they are so fearfully prompt, so impatient of losing time.

Lacking in some feelings Florence Nightingale was, certainly. Lacking in feeling for the average person's preference for talking rather than doing, or for talking, at any rate, for a while before he acts, lacking in understanding of the mixed mob of desires and impulses which complicate ordinary people's decisions, lacking also in a feeling sense of the multitudinous interests in life apart from the strict moral problem, but then being moral of course means that. Swift, strong action came naturally to Florence because of these lacks; in the simplicity of her mental constitution, in the unity of purpose, developed through years of frustration, lay her strength. And because she had not discarded good manners and was in appearance "a perfect lady," endowed, too, with that most valuable asset, an attractive voice, she exercised charm, for there is a special attraction in ability coupled with a self-possession so complete that self-assertion is not there. It was the absence of so many of the usual accompaniments of ability, self-importance, bounce, brusqueness, overbearingness of manner or voice, that made such an impression

on those who met Florence; as Sidney Osborne remarked, as Anna von Mohl had observed, she was not a bit like what one had expected her to be. And surprise of this kind makes for charm. Nothing is more charming when one is going to meet a woman, whose mental sinews are said to be as pronounced as a prize-fighter's muscles, than to find that she does not look like an Epstein figure.

4

It goes almost without saying that many of the nurses did not find the Lady-in-Chief charming. They kicked at the discipline imposed upon them and thought her a martinet. The first party of thirty-eight were a hastily chosen lot and contained a good many incompetent and some frivolous women. "Forty British females are more difficult to manage than 4,000 men," Florence wrote in one of her first letters from Scutari, in which letter she had already ironically reported a protest from one of the nurses, Mrs. Lawfield, about that very sore point with them all, "the Cap."

"I came out, Ma'am, prepared to submit everything, to be put upon in every way. But there are some things, Ma'am, that suits one face and some that suits another. And if I'd known, Ma'am, about the Caps, great as was my desire to come out to nurse at Scutari, I wouldn't have come, Ma'am." I have

not been able to get hold of any picture or description of the Cap, but we can, I think, assume that it was hideous, as were most articles of clothing, particularly if designed for utility, in those days. The uniform provided for the nurses, gray tweed wrapper, worsted jacket, cap and skirt, woollen cloak, brown holland scarf embroidered in red with the words "Scutari Hospital," does not sound fascinating and, as one gazes at the appallingly ugly and cumbersome dress in which Florence is sculptured in the Waterloo Place Memorial, one's heart goes out in sympathy to Mrs. Lawfield over the Cap. But then what modern woman can look at the photograph of her grandmother, as a young woman, without mourning for the youth and spirits that were buried alive beneath caps, shawls and all the paraphernalia of old age long before the wearers of them were anywhere near middle age!

Despite the caps and the uniform, which were perhaps intended to protect the nurses from male admiration, flighty conduct, however, sometimes occurred. Two or three nurses had to be dismissed for this reason, and to maintain discipline generally was a difficult task. With a few exceptions, the nurses were not ladies—trained lady nurses were not at that time to be had—and as anyone who has ever lived in a garrison town, or in the neighbourhood of large barracks knows, the domestic class is extremely susceptible to those noncommissioned officers of the army, sergeants and corporals. A deputation of six

nurses, followed by their respective suitors, on one occasion announced their engagements to the Lady-in-Chief. That meant an end, of course, of their careers as nurses. Florence may well have preferred the contingent of Roman Catholic Sisters since these were vowed to the single life. And yet, as we have seen, she had to be very careful about engaging Roman Catholics, because of Protestant howls; the religious controversy was kept up, like battledore and shuttlecock, throughout the period of the war, and one side was continually accusing the other of proselytizing among the soldiers. Such cases did occur. There is a story told in the *Life and Letters of Dean Stanley*, whose sister went to Scutari with a second batch of nurses, of an accusation brought against one of the party by a regimental chaplain, that she had circulated "improper books" in the wards. The authors of banned modern literature will be interested to learn that the book in question was Keble's *Christian Year*.

Florence was incessantly worried by all this religious squabbling. Her letters on this subject are most refreshing to read. To a demand that Presbyterians should be given their nursing rights, she wrote: "I object to the principle of sending out anyone, *qua* sectarian, not *qua* nurse. But this having already been done in the case of the R.C.s, etc., I do not see how the Presbyterians can be refused. And therefore, let six trained nurses be sent out, if you think fit, of

whom let two thirds be Presbyterians. But I must bar these fat drunken old dames. Above 14 stone we will not have; the provision of bedsteads is not strong enough."

The despatch of a second party of nurses—another 46—in December 1854, was entirely against Florence's wishes; she rated Sidney Herbert severely for sending them. She had not asked for any more to be sent out and she had been promised that no more should be sent until she asked for them. As Superintendent of the entire nursing staff, she felt very keenly the responsibilities of her position and even more keenly she desired that the experiment of having nurses in military hospitals should not run any risk of failure by the numbers being more than she could handle, or than the military authorities could be induced to accept. What strain it had meant to manage the first lot and to avoid conflict with the doctors in this connection, she only knew: people in England, enthusiastic and sentimental, had no idea of what the task had been. Besides, what accommodation was there for additional nurses? Accommodation for those already there was cramped to a degree. She was annoyed beyond measure that such steps should have been taken without her consent and she wrote furiously to Sidney Herbert declaring, as was true, that he had broken his word to her and threatening to resign. She did not do so, of course; cooler judgment prevailed and she made the best of a difficult situation.

But as she was not a person to be moved to such a threat lightly, nor was she one to take an affront personally without good reason, we can, through her anger, realize a little what a business the organization of that first party had been, and still was, for she had been little more than a month at Scutari when the news came that Miss Stanley and 46 more nurses were on their way. The whole experiment was still, to her conscientious standards, in the melting pot. "I have toiled my way," she wrote, to Sidney Herbert, "into the confidence of the medical men. I have by incessant vigilance, day and night, introduced something like system into the disorderly operations of these women. And the plan may be said to have succeeded in some measure, as it stands. But to have women scampering about the wards of a military hospital all day long, which they would do, did an increased number relax the discipline and increase their leisure, would be as improper as absurd."

However, the deed was done by this time. The unwanted nurses were already under sail and Florence realized that once they were in Scutari, it would be impossible to take advantage of Sidney Herbert's amiable but unpracticable suggestion that if she wished she could send them all back. They were received coldly by Miss Nightingale but less so, possibly, by the other nurses who may have looked upon the prospect of increased leisure (whether for the purpose of scampering or not) with different eyes.

Leisure cannot have been a feature of nursing life at Scutari, or at any of the other hospitals along the Bosphorus. Florence shuffled the old and the new packs, increased her own staff to 50, and drafted other nurses, under Miss Stanley, to Koulali and some to Balaclava. Eventually, she herself sent for more nurses, and before the war was over was in charge of as many as 125.

5

Up to this time, Florence Nightingale's organization had been confined to the hospitals in Scutari and its neighbourhood. But, in the spring of 1855, conditions in Scutari were so much improved and the number of cases so reduced, that she decided to visit the Crimean hospitals. The pressure there was expected to become heavy in view of attacks that were being planned against Sebastopol, not yet fallen, and the new arrangement for receiving the wounded into the Balaclava hospitals, whenever possible, so as to spare them the exhausting sea journey across the Black Sea and down the Bosphorus. Women nurses had already been sent to these hospitals but the terms of Florence's original appointment as Superintendent of the female nurses in all the British military hospitals in Turkey, gave the Crimean medical authorities a ground for disputing her authority in the Crimea which was not, of course, Turkish territory. The War Office subsequently rectified this merely technical error, but not

before Florence had had a very difficult time of it, not only with the medical officials but with the nursing staff as well; indeed in the Crimea, she was much more handicapped by military and professional opposition and jealousy than she had been at Scutari.

Lord Raglan, the Commander of the Forces, died of Crimean fever in the early summer of that year. He had strongly supported Florence. Upon her arrival at Scutari, he had written her a warm letter of welcome and in the Statement to Subscribers which she drew up and issued after the war she recalled "with deep gratitude and respect" the letters of support and encouragement which she had received from him, "who had invariably acknowledged all that was attempted for the good of his men with the deepest feeling, as well as with the high courtesy and true manliness of his character." Florence herself fell ill with fever a month before he succumbed to it. Then he was assiduous in enquiry as to her condition and in reports to her family at home. He visited the hut where she was lying, on the Genoese heights behind the Castle Hospital at Balaclava, describing himself to the nurse in charge who asked who he was as "only a soldier, but I have ridden a long way, and your patient knows me well."

Experienced, and still more determined, as Florence was, after her winter's work, to institute all the extra diet and washing reforms into the Balaclava hospitals which had so enormously benefited the men at Scutari,

as well as to organize the nursing staff more efficiently, her own severe illness, starting soon after her arrival at Balaclava, left her in no fit state to grapple calmly with professional obstruction. She returned to work long before she was fit for it; she was extremely weak at first, her nerves were frayed and opposition became almost a stimulus to increasing activity. She did a superhuman amount of work in the Crimea; her various stays there extended in all over several months, and the exertions to which she put herself were amazing.

She travelled the long distances between the different hospitals either on horseback or in the hooded but springless van honoured by the name of "Miss Nightingale's carriage." The roads were shockingly bad and the weather was often bitter. She suffered from rheumatism and sciatica, but pain, privation and fatigue left her dauntless. Her work, both in the Crimea and at Scutari, ere the war ended, had extended itself far beyond the sphere of nursing. She literally bred work. Not only was her finger in every pie, but she made pies daily. Having started by undertaking the clothing of the British Army, she next felt impelled to embark upon its education. She instituted canteens—herself drawing up the price lists—reading rooms, evening lectures and classes. She established money offices whereby the soldiers could send home part of their pay to their families. Her own family, who had been kept hard at it ever since she left England,

collecting, packing and transmitting medical and food supplies, were now turned on to collect and send school and lecture-room appliances, copy and text-books, writing materials, diagrams, maps, lantern slides, music, games and art pictures. Uncle Samuel Smith was converted into a Money Order Agent for dealing with the soldiers' remittances in England. The Queen sent a handsome present and in return Florence wrote her a long letter discussing the causes and remedies for the drunkenness in the Army then exceedingly prevalent.

It can be imagined how in some of these enterprises she encountered military prejudice. The camps were in danger of becoming model villages under Florence's motherly influence. The soldiers were devoted to her, but with colonels, "the Bird" was not so popular. "There is not an official," she declared, "who would not burn me like Joan of Arc if he could, but they know that the War Office cannot turn me out because the country is with me."

During and since her illness, she had become more than ever the idol of the British public. She was as popular as Nelson, as widely sung and advertised as any Jubilee. Rhymed broad sheets, with woodcuts of the Lady with the Lamp, were sold by hawkers in the streets. Her life story was in every paper. Songs with titles such as "The Woman's Smile," "The Soldier's Cheer," "The Shadow on the Pillow," were set to sentimental music. New babies were christened

after her. Lifeboats, streets, racehorses and puddings rejoiced in her name. Tradesmen put her portrait on their paper bags, and fairs throughout the country and on seaside piers had lifelike exhibitions of "Miss Florence Nightingale Ministering to the Sick and Wounded." Embley and Lea Hurst became the goals of excursionists, and poor Parthenope's wrists and fingers ached with tying and untying parcels and replying to letters of praise.

"I must give you the cream of this last three or four days' letters," wrote the sister to a friend in the summer of 1855. "Firstly, Mr. Hookham, the bookseller, sending down a parcel says he 'trusts to hear of the return of Miss Nightingale, as he does not think, though convalescent, she can get well on the shores of Bosphorus or Black Sea; that a General or Admiral can be replaced, but there can be no successor to Miss N., her fortitude, her courage cannot be replaced. I speak of courage in the most exalted sense that it is possible to characterize the bravery and devotion of women.' Then comes a letter from a shipowner in the north of Scotland going to launch a vessel and, wanting to call it after her, sends to have her name quite 'correct.' Next, Lady Dunsany saying that 'Joan of Arc was not more a creation of the moment and for the moment' than F. Joan's was the same unearthly influence carrying all before its spirit might—Joan's was the same strange and sexless identity, which, belonging as it were neither to man nor woman,

seemed to disembody and combine the *choicest results* of both, and then to sweep down conventionalities, prejudices and pruderies, with the clear, cold, crystal sceptre of its *majestic purity*. Joan's mission too, was the condensation of her country's moral and intellectual power in the person of a young and single woman when the men of that country were so many of them imbecile and effete! I think my parallel runs pretty close.' Lord Dunsany adds that he has no time to write, so he says 'ditto to Mrs. Burke,' and that I know he is '*fanatico* for Joan of Arc *rediviva*, God bless her.' Then a bit from Lady Byron, saying, 'even her illness will advance her work as all things must for those who do all with His aid' and more that is most beautiful. Then 2 copies of the *History of Women*, with portrait of Miss N. to be sent to her 'from the author,' and a flaming extract from a County paper in a pamphlet, 'Stroll to Lea Hurst,' 20 copies ditto, and a majestic effusion from the family grocer about 'heroic conduct, brave and noble Miss N.,' 'identified with Crimean success and sad disasters,' 'posterity,' 'arms of civilization,' 'rampant barbarism,' etc., etc., and so on."

The general enthusiasm reached its zenith when it became known that Florence had no intention of returning to England for convalescence, but was, on the other hand, resolved to get back to work as soon as possible. Doctors and friends implored her to take rest, but rest was the last thing she was thinking

of. "I am ready to stand out the war with any man," she declared and back she went to work again, after a few weeks' stay at Scutari. She disliked intensely all the fuss that was being made about her in England and when she heard that a public meeting had been called "to give expression to a general feeling that the services of Miss Nightingale in the hospitals of the East demand the grateful recognition of the British people" and that a testimonial was being planned in the form of a fund to establish and maintain "an English Kaiserswerth," she wrote, not very graciously, to the effect, that unless she had the sole control of it she should not be interested. The contrast between the doting nature of public feeling and the struggle to get her own way in the Crimea no doubt affected her painfully. Mr. Monckton Milnes at that London meeting drew attention to it, only in a less pointed fashion. He spoke of the contrast between the crowded and brilliant audience thronging Willis's Rooms where the meeting was being held, with the Duke of Cambridge representing Royalty, in the Chair, and "the scene which met the gaze of that noble woman who was now devoting herself to the service of her suffering fellow-creatures on the black shores of grim Tartary, overlooking the waters of the inhospitable sea." Florence had little time to survey Nature's inhospitalities; her gaze was fixed on human antagonists, Dr. Hall, the Medical Inspector-General, and Mr. Fitzgerald, the Deputy Purveyor in particular.

When, as the outcome of the meeting, the "Nightingale Fund" was instituted and she was asked to use it for the establishment and control (be it noted) of a Training School for Nurses, she wrote, feelingly: "Exposed as I am to be misinterpreted and misunderstood, in a field of action in which the work is new, complicated and distant from many who sit in judgment upon it—it is indeed an abiding support to have such sympathy and such appreciation brought home to me in the midst of labour and difficulties all but overpowering."

The inauguration of the Fund was announced in General Orders to the Army. The troops subscribed nearly £9,000, in small donations, to a total amounting to £44,000 drawn from all parts of the Empire. But many of the Army Medical staff and superior Army officers sulkily held back and there were only five London doctors among the subscribers.

There were, too, plenty of society ladies who, though ready enough to join in the fashionable applause of the heroine, were by no means inclined to support a scheme for training nurses in general. Lady Palmerston was said to have called the Nightingale Fund "great humbug" and to have added the typically "society" remark: "The nurses are very good now. Perhaps they do drink a little, but so do the ladies' monthly nurses and nothing can be better than them; poor people, it must be so tiresome sitting up all night." The conception of a nurse's duties as anything but

tiresome was however a widespread one. In Miss Stanley's *Hospitals and Sisterhoods* a number of replies from doctors in answer to questions as to nurses in various institutions are quoted. "I enquired for Dr. X," says one of these, "about the character of the nurses, and he says they always engage them without any character, as no respectable person would undertake so disagreeable an office. He says the duties they have to perform are most unpleasant, and it is little wonder that many of them drink, as they require something to keep up the stimulus." "Mrs. Gamp" was by no means an imaginary personage, and Forster's *Life of Dickens* tells us that her original, who was known to Dickens, had quite a high-class connection. "Mrs. Gamp," said Mrs. Harris, "if ever there was a sober creetur to be got at eighteenpence a day for working people, and three-and-six for gentlefolks, you are that inwallable person."

6

The tip of Mr. Lytton Strachey's ironic pen twinkled for a moment upon the inscription "Blessed are the Merciful" which surrounded the jewelled brooch presented to Florence Nightingale at the end of this year by Queen Victoria and designed by the Prince Consort. That irony was legitimate; it was directed less at Florence than at those who sentimentalized her; she would have been the first to insist that mercy for

the soldier-victims of the appalling failure in Hospital administration which disgraced the Crimean War was not compatible with mercy for the system that produced such a failure or for those officials who supported it. She had no mercy for inefficiency; to be unbusinesslike was to her one of the deadly sins; she was ruthless in her zeal for reform. To those who blocked immediately remedial measures, whether because they were apathetic or too busy with other matters, to those who were lazy minded, accustomed to muddle, and to letting affairs take their normal, haphazard course, she must have seemed a holy terror, a steam roller, any one, in short, of those things which are chosen to describe a person who is absolutely determined not to be blocked. And just because one aspect of nursing is so inevitably associated with the gentler side of human nature—a nurse standing for comfort, relief and all those ministering angel qualities on which this hard-hearted but sentimental world loves to dwell—also possibly because of the world's innate preference for those who step heroically into a breach to those who are concerned to see that there shall be no breach into which heroic people will have to step, Florence's steam roller qualities were, and are still, regarded as a distinct slur upon her heroic ones, indeed are felt by some to be qualities over which just appreciation ought, by rights, to draw a veil.

She would have hated a veil. The militant side of

her nature was the one side that gave her any satisfaction. To be incessantly active in prosecuting the battle of good against evil, of efficiency against inefficiency, was the Call to which she stood at attention all through her long life. To win a heroic reputation mattered nothing to her; to achieve reforms everything. No more single-hearted, devoted and fanatical apostle of duty to humanity ever existed than Florence Nightingale.

A sense of duty to humanity invades the average person only very occasionally. That is not surprising. The individual's immediate and cruel wants handicap his rapid initiation into true citizenship and delay the coming of reforms, since reforms and planning them take more time than the average person, untaught, often tired and nearly always hurried, can afford to give. Life is not, for most people, a single aimed effort against one, or even many great abuses; it is, for the general run of humanity, a struggle to endure his or her lot, to better that a little, to bring ease perhaps to a few, but only to a very few compared with the multitude. Florence was conscious enough of this, in one way; too conscious of it in that she felt it to be *her* mission and *her* responsibility to institute immediate improvement whenever she saw the need for it, and to set the pace of change for a better state of things. But in another way, she was not sufficiently conscious of it; materially, morally and spiritually well off, to start with, she had not in

herself that experience of struggle to get a living out of life, a living, not merely in the material sense of enough food and rest, but in the metaphorical one, too, of enough to keep hopes and dreams alive, enough pleasure as well as enough avoidance of pain. The very fact that she herself was fortunate probably stimulated her wish to devote her surplus moral energies—and she had enough of these to stock a kingdom—to the community, as a thank-offering. But moral energies, unfortunately, cannot be purveyed—we are not and cannot be our brothers' keepers—and Florence never, perhaps, quite realized this. She was too actively moral to have any sympathy with, or understanding of what one might call the secret, ironical ways of the universe, whereby, by slow and unintelligent methods, and enormous waste of time, people's short-sighted, self-seeking aims, shoddy resolves and perfunctory, shirking ways shift and push against one another so that the world shuffles eventually into more order and increased forethought and self-control, and a better civilization at last emerges. She had, devotedly, forsworn any but public-spirited aims; the daily round, the common task of ordinary existence had not furnished her with anything like enough scope for her personality. Life grew to mean to her an ever-increasing sphere of reforming activity, and so genuine and intense was her own zeal that she made no allowances for time—that indispensable factor in all reforming processes—

in which zeal like hers might, without coercion, spring up in others. For necessary as thoroughly earnest and strenuous people are, necessary, also, as a life dedicated to reform is, in an imperfectly civilized state of society, to wake up torpid souls and keep waning interests up to the mark, it is, nevertheless, a drawback when, in the eyes of the majority, the zeal with which a reform is pressed is looked upon as a positive nuisance. Reformers in a hurry are apt to forget this, and to be ignorant of the wider truth about the whole matter which is, surely, that reforms are more the result, the expression, of a better state of society than the cause of it, and that the ideal state is one from which not only grave abuses have been got rid of but also—and just as much a cause for thankfulness—rampageous and relentless reformers. Until the coming of that far-off, divine event, the world cannot do without its Florence Nightingales, but whether we look upon these noble, but exhausting, beings as blessings or nuisances depends, of course, on the degree of our own interest in the reforms which they advocate and insist upon.

CHAPTER VI

"AT THE ALTAR OF THE MURDERED MEN"

THE War was over but the difficulty was to get Florence back to England. Peace was signed at Paris in March 1856; the nurses, in detachments, went home soon afterwards, but the Lady-in-Chief lingered to the last among the empty hospitals. Early in June, the Secretary of State for War wrote, tendering the Government's "most cordial thanks for her humane and generous actions," and enquiring about arrangements for her return. A British man-of-war was offered, but Florence refused it and sailed eventually, at the end of July, as an ordinary voyager.

The whole of England was agog to welcome her, and triumphal arches, addresses from mayors and corporations, carriages drawn by an admiring crowd, were contemplated. Florence, however, evaded all publicity, travelled as "Miss Smith" from Paris, spent a hidden night in London and reached her Derbyshire home, Lea Hurst, the next day, August 7th, without anyone knowing the hour of her arrival. She walked from the country station; she had been careful not even to let her family know when she was coming.

She had been away for nearly two years. During that time, except for the period of illness, she had not once been absent from the post of duty. She

needed rest from the long strain of work and anxiety more than any soldier who had fought in the war.

But from the moment of her return she was strenuously occupied. Hailstorms of letters—congratulatory, begging, inviting—descended upon her and the only rest she would take was to keep away from meetings and receptions, much to the disappointment of her mother and sister who had counted on displaying her at the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire's garden party at Chatsworth.

She had the very greatest dislike of praise and publicity. Any reference to her "heroism" or to her supposed sacrifices affected her painfully. There must have been in her an excessive horror of facing the fact that she had attained complete emancipation and one goal, at least, of her aspirations, through the war. A less deeply religious person would have faced it more sensibly; would have taken popular praise and attention for what it was worth and not troubled very much about the public's mistaken notions as to her conduct. But Florence either from a horror of undeserved praise, or because she saw in it a mere display of feeling unlikely to lead further, would have nothing to do with publicity.

Her resolves were already racing onwards; she was determined that the lessons of the war should be learnt immediately; that never again should such a state of things, as had been exposed at Scutari, be allowed; and moreover that Army hygiene and the

entire field of Army Medical administration should be overhauled and reformed. Would that she had been at the Peace Conference, or behind the scenes of it, in 1918–19, as bent on Future Peace, as in 1856 she was bent on the Army's Future Health! The Big Three would have met their match in her: Mr. Wilson would have found an impregnable ally.

"I stand at the altar of the murdered men," she wrote, in her diary of this year, "and while I live I fight their cause." Again, she wrote, in a reply to an address from the parishioners of her home village:

"We can do no more for those who have suffered and died in their country's service: they need our help no longer: their spirits are with God who gave them. It remains for us to strive that their sufferings may not have been endured in vain, to endeavour so to learn from experience as to lessen such sufferings in future by forethought and wise management."

These words have a familiar sound; not so familiar, however, is the determination that lay behind Florence's utterance, for she was one of those rare people who meant every word that she said and never ceased from mental strife until she had made her determination a reality.

She was not speaking extravagantly when she spoke of "the murdered men." She knew that of the thousands who had died in the Scutari and Crimean hospitals, the greater number had died of neglect. In the Report which she drew up for the

information and instruction of the Royal Commission on the Health of the British Army, appointed in 1857, largely by her efforts, she pointed out that during the first seven months of the Crimean campaign there had been a mortality among the troops at the rate of 60 per cent. per annum from disease alone, "a rate of mortality which exceeds that of the Great Plague in London, and a higher rate than the mortality in cholera." Soon after her return, she began to investigate the mortality figures in barracks in peace times. She discovered, to her horror, that those figures, for men between the ages of twenty and thirty-five, were nearly double the civil death rate. In some London districts, the difference was much worse. In St. Pancras, the civil death rate was 2·2 per thousand; in the barracks of the 2nd Life Guards it was 10·4 per thousand. In Kensington, the civil rate was 3·3; the rate in the Knightsbridge Barracks was 17·5.

"Our soldiers enlist," she declared, "to Death in the Barracks." "It is as criminal to have a mortality of 17, 19 and 20 per thousand in the Line, Artillery and Guards in England, when that of civil life is only 11 per thousand, as it would be to take 1,000 men per annum out upon Salisbury Plain and shoot them—no body of men being so much under control, none so dependent upon their employers for health, life and morality as the Army." . . . "We hear with horror of the loss of 400 men on board the *Birkenhead*

by carelessness at sea; but what should we feel if we were told that 11,000 men are annually doomed to death in our Army at home by causes which might be prevented? The men in the *Birkenhead* went down with a cheer. So will our men fight for us to the last with a cheer. The more reason why all the means of health which Sanitary Science has put at our command, all the means of morality which Educational Science has given us, should be given them."

Delay in starting reform was not to be thought of. An intense feeling of personal responsibility burned in her. She could not forget the sufferings of those whom she called her "children." "No one," she wrote, "can feel for the Army as I do. These people who talk to us have all fed their children on the fat of the land and dressed them in velvet and silk, while we have been away. I have had to see my children dressed in a dirty blanket and an old pair of regimental trousers, and to see them fed on raw, salt meat, and nine thousand of my children are lying from causes which might have been prevented in their forgotten graves. But I can never forget. People must have seen that long dreadful winter to know what it was."

Her friends besought her to rest for a little before she plunged into the new campaign. She was obviously very overwrought and exhausted, and a spell of rest was essential, if she were to avoid a breakdown. Sidney Herbert wrote to her from Carlsbad imploring her to do nothing for a few weeks, but to do

nothing was one of the things that Florence could not do.

It is well known that in some states of nervous exhaustion patients feel that they cannot rest; their nerves have been subjected to too much excitement for natural relaxation of effort; excitement has become natural to them and they crave for it, at the expense, of course, of their recuperative powers. This was to a great extent the matter with Florence. She resumed work, or rather she went on working, when close up to the edge of a nervous breakdown, and she paid for it afterwards by acute neurasthenia, from the effects of which she suffered all the rest of her life. She became for many years a nervous invalid, incapable of any but mental activity, and that only between periods of such complete exhaustion that her life was at times despaired of by those who attended her in these states. When this stage was over, she had got into habits of invalidism and seclusion which a rigid nature like hers could not easily throw off, and which by that time she did not want to throw off, for they exactly suited her always marked disposition to work furiously—and to work behind the scenes.

2

Royal support and sympathy had been most useful to Florence while she was in the East. The Queen's letters and gifts for distribution, which had been

despatched to the Lady-in-Chief for almoning, had helped greatly to increase her prestige. The Queen had not met Florence but the Duke of Cambridge had, and these two had always got on very well. Florence had no illusions as to his interest in reform but, all the same, she thought him "a good sort." She appreciated his honest qualities and, particularly, his bluff friendliness with the soldiers. He had his family's memory for faces and that served him in good stead. In going round the Scutari hospitals with her, he recognized a Sergeant of the Guards, who had had at least one third of his body shot away, and said to him with a great oath, calling him by his Christian name and surname, "Aren't you dead yet?" Florence related the episode in a letter to Harriet Martineau. "The man said to me afterwards, 'Sa feelin' o' 'Is Royal 'Ighness, wasn't it, m'm?' with tears in his eyes. George's manner is very popular, his oaths are popular with the army. And he is certainly the best man, both of business and of nature, at the Horse Guards: that, even I admit." She must have had a soft place in her heart for "George," for in all her reforms, she never proposed to sweep either the Horse Guards or him away. He, on the other hand, presided at the public meeting in her honour and spoke feelingly of her "noble work" and of the modesty with which she conducted it.

Florence, on several occasions, had written to the Queen in connection with things which she wanted

done at Scutari and the Queen had the very highest opinion of her. "It will be a very great satisfaction to me," the Queen had written, in the letter accompanying the brooch-decoration, "when you return at last to these shores, to make the acquaintance of one who has set so bright an example to our sex."

That acquaintance was made very soon after Florence's return. An invitation came from Sir James Clark, the Queen's physician, to stay during September at his house near Balmoral and the letter added that the Queen would then be in residence there and was hoping to see Miss Nightingale.

Florence accepted the invitation and lost no time in preparation for the interview with her sovereign. She wrote at once to take the advice of various allies, Sir John McNeill and Colonel Tulloch, who had been sent out to the Crimea by the Government in 1855 to enquire into transport and commissariat arrangements, and Colonel Lefroy, another sworn friend, who had reported adversely on the hospitals. The latter was specially fitted to advise on a plan of campaign for, being employed at the War Office, he knew what the task ahead involved. He knew Lord Panmure, the War Secretary, and he knew what departmental resistance there would be to reform. He advised Florence to press for a Royal Commission of Inquiry into Army Medical Administration and this was what she was herself inclined to and what she eventually secured. Fully armed with facts and

plans, she then set forth on her Highland "foray" and, after a few days of inspecting barracks and hospitals and consultation with Sir John McNeill at Edinburgh, she reached Ballater. Balmoral followed. She made a highly favourable impression there. Prince Albert wrote in his diary: "She put before us all the defects of our present military hospital system, and the reforms that are needed. We are much pleased with her: she is extremely modest."

The Queen's remark has become classical. "Such a clear head," she wrote to the Duke of Cambridge, "I wish we had her at the War Office."

3

England is a strictly constitutional monarchy. The Crown cannot institute reforms without its Ministers. "I have had most satisfactory interviews with the Queen and the Prince"—Florence wrote after the Balmoral visit—"Satisfactory, that is, as far as their *will*, not as their power is concerned." She must often have wished that the Royal Prerogative were more as it had been in the time of the Tudors.

There was in more recent times an English woman doctor who went out to an Oriental country, before democracy had invaded those regions, and found such favour in the eyes of its despotic ruler that her least word, in medical matters, was law to him and his people.

Florence would have made the best use of such a position, though even she might not have relished one aspect of it, for there was an occasion, when, in consequence of some criticism of an obdurate high official on the part of the lady in question, his headless body was displayed by Royal command at her breakfast-room window, presumably as an "All Clear" signal. The situation, moreover, was not without its perils for the lady. The potentate fell ill and a dangerous operation on him became imperative. The doctor performed the operation but took the precaution of arranging secretly for her immediate flight from the neighbourhood in the event of any subsequent unfavourable symptoms which might prompt the patient to deal with her as he had dealt with his grand vizier.

There were times, however, when Florence would have welcomed the painless removal of Lord Panmure from his office of Secretary for War. "The Bison," as she and her friends called this large phlegmatic Scotch nobleman, was not a person to be moved quickly. He was quite ready to agree "in principle" to the need for reform, but within himself he had no propelling forces and had literally to be shoved into activity. "There is a *vis inertiæ* in his resistance which is very difficult to overcome" Sidney Herbert wrote to Florence. She knew this, of course, for had she not written to him immediately after her return from Scutari asking for an interview, to which letter he, with his mind fixed on Scottish grouse moors, had

replied politely but indefinitely? However, he was due to be in attendance at Balmoral in October, and the Queen, wrote Florence, "wished me to remain to see Lord Panmure here rather than in London, because she thinks it more likely that something might be done with him here with her to back me."

The first encounter between "the Bison" and his assailant accordingly took place under Royal patronage. To all appearances, it was eminently successful. Lord Panmure listened and was most attentive to all Florence's suggestions and agreed "in principle" to the appointment of a Royal Commission. Further, on his own initiative, he offered to send the plans of Netley Hospital—then under consideration—for her criticism. Evidently he was very much impressed with Florence, delighted, as so many people were, to find that in appearance she was not a monstrosity. Sidney Herbert wrote gleefully: "The Bison wrote to me very much pleased with his interview with you. He says that he was very much surprised at your physical appearance as I think you must have been with his!"

Florence, however, was not a woman to be lulled by these opening compliments. She had taken the measure of the Bison better than he had perceived her indomitable will. Within a week or so of her interview with the Minister, she was deep in correspondence and consultation with her allies: by the beginning of November she was in London settled at

the Burlington Hotel, from this time onwards known to her friends as "the little War Office," preparing a list of her nominees for the Commission, settling the scope and terms of the enquiry and making ready for another interview with the Bison at which these matters were to be discussed. She had, as she noted in her diary, a tough fight of it and did not altogether succeed in getting the Commission constituted as she wished. On the whole, however, she won. Sidney Herbert was appointed Chairman, Mr. Stafford, General Storks, Dr. Alexander, Sir J. Clark, Dr. Sutherland and Dr. Balfour (the Secretary of the Commission) were all friends of hers and pronounced reformers; Dr. Andrew Smith, the Director-General of the Army Medical Department in London, was the only representative and supporter of the old régime.

These matters were settled with Lord Panmure in November but it was not until the following May that the Commission was appointed and announced. Throughout these months Florence was engaged, with Sidney Herbert's help, in the process described by her as "bullying the Bison" and there is no reason to believe that this description was exaggerated or incorrect. The Bison could not be induced to hurry. He was suffering from gout in the hands, he said, and therefore could not write. "His gout is always handy" remarked Florence. "Go on bullying him," was her order to Mr. Herbert, who did as he was told. The Bison remained stationary. "Threaten to

resign the Chairmanship," she urged, "unless the Bison acts at once. Unless he is quick about it I shall take the matter into my own hands and publish from the housetops my experiences of the Crimean campaign. I shall go to the country, as Cobden did, over the Corn Law."

Her threats at last succeeded. The Bison stirred. The Royal Warrant was issued and the Commission began its work. Florence, at her Old Burlington Street headquarters, saw to it that its enquiries were concluded and its report ready for presentation within three months.

4

Not only was the appointment of the Royal Commission on the Health of the Army due largely to the energy of Florence Nightingale but its Report was equally largely the work of her hands. Three months before the Commission was actually appointed, and while chafing furiously at the delay, Florence had started to write her own Report. This was nominally in response to a request from Lord Panmure that she should furnish him with the results of her personal experience and observation during the war though, as has been seen, she had intended to do this and to publish it should the Bison prove unbullyable. It was not published but Florence printed it at her own expense for private circulation and it became to a great extent the basis of the Commission's Report

for the very good reason that it dealt exhaustively with every aspect of Army Hospital Reform.

I have not been able to get access to a copy but Florence's principal biographer, Sir Edward Cook, writes of it as follows:

"The wide range of the book, and its mastery of detail on a great variety of subjects, are as remarkable as its firm and consistent grasp of general principles. The key note is struck in the Preface. The question of Army Hospitals is shown to be part of wider questions involving the health and efficiency of the Army at large. Defects, similar to those which occasioned so high a rate of mortality among the sick in Hospital during the war, were the cause why so many healthy men came into Hospital at all. Those who fell before Sebastopol by disease were above seven times the number of those who fell by the enemy. A large number fell from preventable causes; but the causes could only be prevented in the future by the adoption of new systems. The bad health of the British Army in peace was shown to be hardly less appalling than was the mortality during the Crimean War. The only way to prevent a recurrence of such disasters was to improve the sanitary conditions of the soldier's life during peace, and during peace to organize and maintain General Hospitals in practical efficiency. The necessity of reorganization, and the application of sanitary science to the Army generally, are the two principles of which Miss Nightingale never

loses sight in any of the branches of her subject. There is an introductory chapter giving the history of the health of the British armies in previous campaigns, and the book then contains twenty sections. The first six of these deal with the medical history of the Crimean War. Then come three sections dealing with the organization of Regimental and General Hospitals. The remainder of the book takes wider scope, discussing, in succession, the Need of Sanitary Officials in connection with the Army; the Necessity of a Statistical Department; the Education, Employment and Promotion of Medical Officers; Soldiers' Pay and Stoppages; the Dieting and Cooking of the Army; the Commissariat; Washing and Canteens; Soldiers' Wives; the Construction of Army Hospitals; and the Mortality of Armies in Peace and War. A twentieth section gives, after the manner of Royal Commissions, a summary of Defects and Suggestions. There are also various Appendices, Supplementary Notes, Diagrams and Illustrations." The first volume of the book consisted of 830 octavo pages: the second volume was entitled *Subsidiary Notes as to the Introduction of Female Nursing into Military Hospitals in Peace and War*, and was almost a treatise on nursing at large.

Sir John McNeill, on reading it, wrote: "You have set up a Landmark. . . . It is a mine of facts and inferences which will furnish material for every scheme that is likely to be built up on that ground for several generations. No man or woman can hence-

forth pretend to deal with the subject without mastering these volumes. . . . Regarded as a whole, I think it contains a body of information and instruction, such as no one else so far as I know has ever brought to bear upon any similar subject. I regard it as a gift to the Army, and to the country, altogether priceless."

The Report, though written entirely by Florence and in her own handwriting, had not of course been drawn up without careful consultation of authorities and assistance from them. "The Little War Office" was a depot for pioneers in most branches of medical and social science. Florence was in correspondence and communication with such men as Dr. Farr, the great authority on Statistics, Sir Robert Rawlinson, the Sanitary Engineer, Sir John Jebb, the builder of model prisons, Professor Christisen, a well-known dietist, and a number of other experts. These gave her liberal assistance and her Report, in consequence, was a veritable compendium of reform. Many medical officers, social workers and even departmental officials came to her with their schemes or suggestions for improvement, relying on her driving power to forward these. She took their information, studied it thoroughly and remarshalled the essential facts in her Report with that cogency which marked all her work.

With such material to draw upon, the labours of the Commission, when it began its sittings, were enor-

mously lightened. As each branch of the enquiry arose for investigation, Florence was ready with a complete survey of the ground.

It is no exaggeration to say that she controlled the Commission. Sidney Herbert, the Chairman, was in the closest communication with her. The "Cabinet" was, in fact, composed of Sidney Herbert, Dr. Sutherland and Florence, sitting before and after each meeting at the Burlington Hotel. She drew up the order in which witnesses were to appear to give evidence, prepared the questions for their examination and cross-examination, "coached" her Cabinet and kept them hard at it, allowing no excuses for slackening of work. "My dear Lady," wrote Dr. Sutherland, on one occasion, when she had administered a stern rebuke because he had not called to see her to report progress, "do not be unreasonable. I would have been with you yesterday, had I been able, but, alas, my will was stronger than my legs. I have been at the Commission to-day, and as yet there is nothing to fear. I was too much fatigued, and too stupid to see you afterwards, but I intend coming to-morrow about 12 o'clock, and we can then prepare for the campaign of the coming week. There won't be much to do, as the Commission is going to the Derby. . . ."

The Derby! Florence's expression must have been withering as she read these words. Dr. Sutherland may have enjoyed imagining it, at a distance from her, for, devoted as he was, both to her causes and

to her personally, he often allowed himself a sly dig at her tyrannies and, when she was exorbitant, paid her back in her own coin. The history of their relationship is as interesting and amusing a story of two refractory but devoted co-workers as has ever been told. They squabbled and they made peace again constantly. He worked with her and for her for over thirty years—he was twenty years older than she was—and she rarely allowed him a holiday. If he took one, or gave her less of his time in order to pursue his own separate interests, she scolded him mercilessly; he sulked sometimes but invariably returned to her side. She kept him working for her until he was over eighty and then most unwillingly allowed him to retire.

Towards Sidney Herbert she was, of course, as stern a taskmaster, but his was not the temperament to reply by joking taunts. His intensely earnest and unselfish nature made him a much easier victim of her terrific energy than was the shrewd, persevering but sometimes cantankerous Scotsman. Where a goad from Florence would prompt Dr. Sutherland to hit back, or to tease—"This is the first day of grouse shooting," he wrote to her once from the North which he was visiting while on the Barracks Commission, "but as you will allow none of your 'wives' to go to the moors, the festival has passed off without observance"—upon Sidney Herbert it would act as a conscience prick and he would fling all his worn energies into a fresh effort. As a politician, without

the professional knowledge of Sutherland or the other medical and sanitary authorities on the Commission, he naturally required "coaching" more than they did, and he sought Florence's advice on almost every detail. The Report was finally written by him but very largely with her help.

Florence herself gave evidence before the Commission in the form of written answers to written questions. It was not considered seemly that she should in person appear and she had no wish to do so. Her evidence was naturally a résumé of her own Report and it goes without saying that no clearer, more forceful evidence than hers was received.

"It may surprise many persons," wrote an Army doctor, "to find from Miss Nightingale's evidence that, added to feminine graces, she possesses, not only the gift of acute perception, but that on all points submitted to her, she reasons with a strong, acute, most logical, and if we may say so, masculine intellect, that may well shame some of the other witnesses." The appreciative man would have been more surprised had he known, what, of course, only a very few people did know at the time, of the way in which the strong, acute, and by all means call it masculine intellect, if that conveys any additional meaning, of Florence Nightingale had engineered the Commission from first to last behind the scenes.

5

The Commission, which was appointed in May 1857, under Florence's fierce spur reported in August —a record time for a Royal Commission in which to do its work. The Report was not, however, made public until January 1858, for the same reason that had been the cause of previous delays. No sooner had the gist of the Commissioners' recommendations been communicated to Lord Panmure than he went off to the Highlands to shoot grouse and stayed there till late into the autumn. Members of the Commission also manifested holiday inclinations—it was, after all, August, a month in which most people take what they consider a "well-earned rest"—Sidney Herbert betook himself to fish in Ireland and Florence was only able to capture Dr. Sutherland and to keep him busy as ever by her side. She was not going to have a holiday; no idling, at such a critical moment in the life of the British Army for her!

The Report had confirmed the main argument of her own vast survey. The mortality figures in the Army were shown to be more than double what they were among the civil population. Obviously, therefore, soldiers were dying, at that moment, twice as fast as they need have died. Reforms had got to be initiated immediately. Lord Panmure could postpone publishing the Report but, if he delayed to take steps to improve Barrack conditions and to reorganize

the Army Medical Department, Florence was determined to raise such an outcry by the publication of her own Report that even the Bison might feel uncomfortable.

The Barracks question was naturally the most urgent. Lord Panmure, before he left London for Scotland, was got to agree "in principle" to the appointment of a Sub-Commission to put the Barracks in order. Florence set to work furiously to draft instructions and a scheme for this body. Dr. Sutherland was to be its head. He, poor man, was doing his best to get Florence to stop work, if only for a week; as a medical man, he could see that she was close to a breakdown.

Florence at last agreed to go to Malvern; she went there but nothing would induce her to stop work. She was ill; she knew she was ill but that was not the point; the point was that the soldiers were dying and that the mortality figures had got to be reduced at once.

"Pray leave us all to ourselves, soldiers and all for a while," wrote Dr. Sutherland, "we shall be all the better for a rest. Even your divine 'Pan' will be more musical for not being beaten quite so much. As for Mr. Sidney Herbert, he must be in the seventh heaven." Do stop work, he implored; do eat and drink and don't think. "You must have new blood or you can't work, and new blood can't be made out of tea, at least, so far as I know."

What is the good of writing to me like that? replied Florence, tartly. She rushed into a screed, not very coherent, the upshot of which was that it was essential that she should do as she liked. She declared that it was her sister who had put Dr. Sutherland up to "pecking" at her and to repeating all that had been said to her by her family "110 times a day during the last three months."

Her family, of course, were worried to death about her. She refused to see them as much as she could. She was scared lest she should be trapped into home life again. "Aunt Mai" was the only relation she would allow to be with her; "Aunt Mai" evidently could be kept well in her place.

"What can I say, my dear friend, to your long scold of a letter?"—wrote Dr. Sutherland. . . . "You are decidedly wrong . . . in thinking that I have joined with other equally charitable people in pecking at you. It is I that have got all the pecking . . . and your little beak is one of the sharpest. . . . I want you to live, I want you to work. You want to work and die, and that is not at all fair. I admire your heroism and self-devotion with all my heart but alas! I cannot forget that it is all within the compass of a weak, perishing body; and am I to encourage you to wear yourself out in the vain attempt to beat not only men but time? You little know what daily anxiety it has cost me to see you dying by inches in doing work fit only for the strongest. . . ."

But Florence paid no attention. She was lying on the sofa in a state of physical collapse, according to Aunt Mai, her companion at Malvern, not sleeping more than two hours in the night, feverish and with no appetite. Nevertheless, she insisted on working, dragging herself up to write or to interview someone, determined not to give in.

Things went on like this all through the autumn, Mr. Herbert constantly going down to Malvern to see her, Dr. Sutherland staying there. Her sister wrote in December:

"Aunt Mai's bulletin is generally the same. Mr. Herbert for three hours in the morning, Dr. Sutherland for four hours in the afternoon, Dr. Balfour, Dr. Farr, Dr. Alexander interspersed. They are drawing up the new Regulations (but this you must not tell. Florence is as nervous of being known to have anything to do with it as other people are of not getting honour). . . . And the determined way in which she will not let anyone know what she is about is so curious. She will not even tell *us*: we only hear it from these men. She is killing herself with work (which they all say no one else can do, no one else has the threads of it, or the perseverance for it) and yet no one will ever know it. Others will have all the credit of the very things she suggested and introduced at the cost, one may say, of life and comfort of all kinds, for it is an intolerable life she is leading—lying down between whiles to enable her just to go on, not seeing

her nearest and dearest, because, with her breath so hurried, all talking must be spared except what is necessary, and all excitement, that she may devote every energy to the work."

Florence herself was wrought up to a curious pitch. While embarking upon fresh schemes daily—she had only recently written to offer to go out to India to undertake nursing during the Mutiny—at the same time, she looked upon herself as a dying woman and wrote a letter to Sidney Herbert "to be sent when I am dead." She made her will, in which she arranged for the disposition of the Nightingale Fund and the building of a model Barracks, and she expressed a wish to be buried in the Crimea.

6

But she did not die. The publication of the Report of the Royal Commission, at the beginning of February 1858, resuscitated her and she set to work at once to get the Report widely reviewed and advertised in the press. She also wrote a memorandum, with graphic diagrams illustrating the mortality figures, and distributed it to the Queen and other Royalties, ministers and leading M.P.s, and medical officers abroad and at home.

In the meantime there was a change of Government. Lord Derby became Prime Minister and the "Bison" gave place to General Peel, the new Secretary

for War. An important debate took place in the House of Commons as the outcome of a series of Resolutions with regard to the Health of the Army which Sidney Herbert, with Florence behind him, had been instrumental in getting moved. The mortality figures were much in evidence and the House unanimously supported the Commission's proposed reforms. Four Sub-Commissions on various aspects of these proposals—Barracks and Hospitals, Army Medical Statistics, the institution of an Army Medical School, and the Reorganization of the Army Medical Department—were by degrees got going and, from now onwards until 1861, Florence and Sidney Herbert, who was the Chairman of all the Sub-Commissions, were incessantly at work. Mr. Herbert himself became Secretary for War under Lord Palmerston after the General Election of 1859, a piece of great good fortune for the reformers though for him, personally, perhaps the last straw. For he thereby became the engine of Florence's passionate determination "to beat," as Dr. Sutherland had well put it, "not only men but time," and she drove him, and he, infected by her fierce zeal, forced himself, at top speed uphill and down dale without respite. It was mostly uphill for, though Secretary for War, he had the Chancellor of the Exchequer to reckon with before any reconstruction of barracks and hospitals could be carried out, and it was not easy to extract money out of Mr. Gladstone. Herbert had collapsed with pleurisy once

in 1858; he was not a strong man at best and the strain of office, added to his incessant exertions as a Reformer, finished him. His achievements during his short reign at the War Office were summarized by Florence in a memorandum which she wrote immediately after his death in 1861. No one knew better than she did what he had done; he had been the official leader but she had instigated and directed his whole policy and campaign. Hers was the voice of command; his the obedience, the knowledge of practical politics. Between them, they had remodelled and, in some cases, reconstructed Army Barracks and Hospitals, insisting not only upon structural and sanitary improvements, but introducing new diet régimes, and establishing Schools of Regimental and Hospital Cookery.

Army Statistics had been completely reorganized and a Statistical Department set up. The Army Medical School and College, both now imposing buildings at Millbank, Westminster, had been founded. The whole Army Medical Department had been reorganized. Codes and Regulations for the efficient administration of Regimental Hospitals had been drawn up and fresh Warrants, defining the duties of Medical Officers and Purveyors, had been framed and issued. The Hospital Orderly Corps had been instituted for the training of orderlies. The provision of Regimental Institutes for the comfort and moral welfare of soldiers had been embarked upon.

And all this had been achieved in less than five years. "I do not remember any instance in which new ideas have made more progress," wrote Sir John McNeill to Florence. "You must now feel that you have not laboured in vain and that to you more than to any other man or woman alive, will henceforth be due the welfare and efficiency of the British Army."

But one thing—to Florence almost the most important thing—had been left undone. The War Office itself had not been reorganized. That illustrious but Ark-like department was still so constituted that the best intentions of its political chief could be short-circuited by the various sub-departments when so inclined. Sir Edward Cook tells us that among Florence's papers were many drafts in which she and Dr. Sutherland had completely reorganized the War Office from top to bottom, relegating Sir Benjamin Hawes, the Permanent Under-Secretary, to a position where he could no longer interfere with reform measures.

It was one or other of these elaborate paper schemes which was thrust before Sidney Herbert (Lord Herbert as he then was) in the last stages of that already stricken man's political life.

He had broken down in December 1860. "Mr. Herbert is said to have a fatal disease," Florence wrote to her uncle. "You know I don't believe in fatal diseases, but fatal to his work I believe this *will be*. He came over himself to tell me and to discuss

what part of the work had better be given up. . . . It was settled that he should give up the House of Commons but keep in office at least till some of the things are done which want doing."

So, as Lord Herbert of Lea, he went to the House of Lords, at Florence's urging. The House of Lords, though a refuge from the turmoil below, brought little respite to Lord Herbert. The problem of War Office reorganization was more than his rapidly failing strength could tackle. Florence continued to urge him to go through with it but even to her spur he could no longer respond. "As to the organization," he wrote to her in June 1861, "I am at my wits' end. The real truth is that I do not understand it. . . . I feel that I am not now doing justice to the War Office or myself. On days when the morning is spent on a sofa drinking gulps of brandy till I am fit to crawl down to the Office, I am not very energetic when I get there."

Florence did not, to her subsequent remorse, take this pathetic admission kindly. She was bitterly, rampantly disappointed. She had never allowed illness to checkmate her; while convinced that she was near death, she had slaved on—why should Sidney Herbert, she thought, show himself less of a man than she had been in equal prostration and weakness?

She did not, she could not, realize the difference between their respective positions. Her life, overworked as she had been during the last years, had, at

least, had her own terrific concentration to protect it from interruption. She had lain within self-made fortifications against the invasion of family and social claims. She had refused to see anyone outside her work, even, as her sister said, "her nearest and dearest," lest her energies should suffer, her mind be excited, her breath wasted. Sidney Herbert had had no such protection. As a politician, a public man, a figure in society, latterly a Cabinet Minister, he had been the victim of everyone's attention; his time had over and over again been wasted, his strength depleted by innumerable trivial and everyday matters as well as by affairs of State. He was married and had a family man's private affections, cares and anxieties. He had had, it must be added, Florence. No one more burning than she herself had been put by Fate in command of her career.

"Beaten" was all that, at this moment of exasperation, she could think of. "A Sidney Herbert beaten by a Ben Hawes," she wrote to Sir John McNeill, "is a greater humiliation really than the disaster of Scutari."

"The truth is, I expect," replied Sir John, more reasonably, "that he has been beaten by disease and not by Ben."

The truth declared itself. A few weeks later Lord Herbert called at the Burlington Hotel to say goodbye to Florence. His health had become worse. He had been ordered to Spa. The treatment there did

him no good; he returned to England at the end of July and died at his country home, Wilton, on August 2nd. Among his last words were: "Poor Florence! Our joint work unfinished."

7

She was devastated by the death of Sidney Herbert. She had not brought herself to face so awful, so terrible, a contingency. The word "Beaten" rang all day and all night in her ears. Beaten by disease, by death, by, perhaps, God himself! Florence, in the first throes of her grief, felt almost bitter towards the Almighty.

She wrote to her father:

"So few people know in the least what I have lost in my dear master. Indeed, I know no one but myself who had it to lose. For no two people pursue together the same object as I did with him. And when they lose their companion by death, they have in fact lost no companionship. Now he takes my life with him. My work, the object of my life, the means to do it, all in one, depart with him. 'Grief fills the room up of my absent' master. I cannot say it 'walks up and down' with me. For I don't walk up and down. But it eats and sleeps and wakes with me. Yet I can truly say that I see it is better that God should not work a miracle to save Sidney Herbert, altho' his death involves the misfortune, moral and physical, of five hundred thousand men, and altho'

it would have been but to set aside a few trifling physical laws to save him. . . . 'The righteous perish and no man layeth it to heart.' The Scripture goes on to say 'none considering that he is taken away from the evil to come.' I say 'none considering that he is taken away from the good he might have done.' Now not one man remains (that I can call a man) of all those whom I began with, five years ago. And I alone, of all men 'most dejected and wretched' survive them all. I am sure I meant to have died."

It was true. Florence could always express herself with admirable clarity. Her readiest weapon, her best tool, had been struck out of her hand. For the time being she was hamstrung. Her work was at a standstill; she could conceive no greater calamity than that. Her life was her work. She did not exist apart from it. Scarcely any more did Sidney Herbert exist for her apart from her work, her work and his combined. It was an extraordinarily simplified mental outlook but there was no pretence about it. Florence could not differentiate between herself and her work; the two had been merged indissolubly in the fiery furnace of her soul.

It was not quite so easy for her to ignore the difference between Sidney Herbert and his work. The personal charm, the fine face and graceful bearing, the sweet nature of the man would out; they were in excess of the needful allowance of such qualities for a public man, for a minister even! Everyone loved

Sidney Herbert; his courtesy, his delightful manners won all hearts. Florence would not have been mortal had not she too been susceptible to it. She was mortal, though she was not exactly human, to draw a fine distinction which I think most people will understand, without further explanation, between these two terms. And there were times when, absorbed as she was in the matters they were discussing together, she could not help noticing that abundance of graciousness and charm in her companion. Was it perfectly in keeping with a thorough grasp of the mortality figures and all the reforms that must ensue from that, or did it betoken another birthright, a sympathy for quite another kind of life than that of the conscientious reformer, a life with a dash of fun and simple pleasure in it, or less serious joy than that enshrined in the unceasing well-doing on a statistical scale which Florence so unquestioningly assumed to be his heart's desire? Florence, for herself, of course, was proof against any such heretical fancies —she had made no sacrifice—she was sure of that— but now and again, at rare intervals, a shadowy question as to sacrifice on Sidney Herbert's part may have alighted on the edge of her purposeful, swift-turning mind, to be swept off immediately, and forgotten, in the exaltation of drafting some new Code or Scheme.

Yet not quite forgotten always! There was something Florence could not forget though she did not

remember it until Sidney Herbert was dead. She had been hard on him when he had told her about his increasing weakness and that he could not go on with the struggle for War Office Reform. She had told him, angrily—she confessed this in a letter to Harriet Martineau—"that no man in her day had thrown away so noble a game with all the winning cards in his hands."

He had not answered her reproach in any bitter or self-pitying mood. "His angelic temper," she wrote, sorrowfully, "I shall never forget." "I wish people to know," she burst forth, with a rush of deep feeling which so often accompanies long-delayed recognition of the truth, "that what was done was done by a man struggling with death—to know that he thought so much more of what he had not done than of what he had done—to know that all his latter suffering years were filled not by a selfish desire for his own salvation—far less for his own ambition (he hated office, his was the purest ambition I have ever known) but by the struggle of exertion for our benefit."

So she avoided the more painful aspect of the calamity, namely, that she had overdriven him, but who, being mortal, would not have avoided it in this way? As she saw it, both of them had been fellow-workers in a Cause as sacred, as urgent, to the one as to the other. She could not have sullied his reputation by any hint, even had this suggested itself to her, that she had been the dynamo behind the scenes.

Rather, she could but magnify his share in their joint labours, and in the Memorandum which she wrote as a tribute, she made no reference at all to her own share. Sidney Herbert was "the head and centre" of all that had been done, she declared, and from this time onwards she ever spoke of him as her "dear Master," her "dear Chief," in the carrying out of whose plans she had been privileged to assist.

CHAPTER VII

HOSPITALS, NURSES AND STATISTICS

The death of Sidney Herbert closed a chapter of Florence's life and for a few weeks it indeed seemed to those who succeeded in breaking in upon her closely barred seclusion that it was impossible to persuade her that her work was not at an end. She left the Burlington Hotel and hid herself in Hampstead, giving orders that her address was to be kept secret and charging her uncle, who looked after much of her correspondence, that all enquiries were to be answered by the statement that "a great and overwhelming affliction" prevented her from seeing or writing to anyone.

But a nature like hers could not sit long in sackcloth and ashes, and, morbidly depressed as she was, and was always capable of being—a natural reaction, after all, from a state of extreme high tension—so much of her affliction came from the check which Sidney Herbert's death had caused to her reform schemes that it only needed evidence of some other means being given her, whereby these could be resumed, to set her again upon the warpath.

For a while she sat, or lay, gazing from the heights of Hampstead over the seeming desolation of the metropolis, like Noah, over the expanse of flood

waters, but with less hope than he had that the submerged earth would be restored to his prosperous tillage. Then, in the letters of condoling friends, letters which, despite the ban, Uncle Sam no doubt connived at her receiving, she espied promise. A frail sign of hope was brought in the shape of news that Lord de Grey, a friend of Sidney Herbert's and most sympathetic to reform, was, not in her "dear Master's" post, certainly, but in a position, that of Under-Secretary for War, where he could be made very useful.

"I know how irreparable a loss you and your objects in life had in Herbert's death," wrote Mr. Monckton Milnes, "but I should like you to know how you will find Lord de Grey willing to do all in his power to forward your great and wise designs."

Florence began to recover. She returned to London. As luck would have it, the American Civil War was then starting. Here was an opportunity for getting a trial run for the new Army Statistical Forms that she had recently been at work on. She despatched these, with many other forms and reports, to the War Secretary at Washington and also used the occasion to slip in a budget of remarks on the reduction of mortality figures in the British Army in consequence of recent administrative measures introduced by Herbert.

Her assistance was warmly welcomed. The lessons of the Crimea had already been taken to heart in

the Northern States of America—and many were the tributes of reverence and affection sent to her from American associations both during the period of the Civil War and afterwards. Later in this year, too, her advice was sought by the British Government via Lord de Grey in connection with the proposed sending of an expedition to Canada, during the dangerous *Trent* incident, which almost led to war between England and President Lincoln's Government, and Florence was for a little while deep in the expedition's hospital, transport and commissariat arrangements, going into every detail of these, as if she were still at Scutari.

So she weathered the loss of Sidney Herbert, and so, back at work again, Dr. Sutherland beside her, she was enabled better to bear the second loss of that year, the death of another invaluable friend and assistant, the poet, Arthur Hugh Clough. He had done innumerable odd jobs for her during the last five years, jobs of fetching and carrying, buying her railway tickets, escorting her on journeys, tying up parcels and correcting proofs, which, being a man of singular ability but also of singular conscience, he did as well as he had previously lectured and taught at Oxford which he had left, spiritually exhausted with the effort to live without a religious faith in which he could no longer believe. He was related by marriage to the Nightingales and Florence's immense vitality must have been as warming to his low-spirited

nature as the Neapolitan sun is to visitors from northern climes. But the sun's rays can be too piercing and Clough's strength failed, like Herbert's, beneath the burden and heat of the day. He died in November 1861, in Italy, and Florence, in a letter to Sir J. McNeill, repeated a portion of the lament she had written on Sidney Herbert's death. "Now not one man remains (that I can call a man) of all those whom these five years I have worked with."

But all the time she was busy fitting new strings to her doughty bow.

2

The reforms which Sidney Herbert had carried through between 1856 and 1861 were described by Florence in the privately printed *Memoir* of him which she wrote immediately after his death and before leaving the Burlington Hotel which for these years had been her London headquarters. These reforms, as has been seen, were as much Florence's work as his, if not more her work than his. Yet these very extensive improvements in barracks, military hospitals and Army medical administration, resulting, as Florence showed by diagrams in the *Memoir*, in a 50 per cent. reduction in the Army mortality figures and effected only by unflagging industry, ingenuity and courage against obstacles of every sort and kind, were by no means the sum total of Florence's activities during those five years.

Seed had been sown by her and progress reaped in many other fields than the Army since her return from Scutari; indeed to do justice to her manifold activities in this, or in any other period of her life, is beyond the powers of a single-handed biographer, and I can assure my readers that while trying to pursue the chief of these, merely in outline, I have many times gasped for breath.

Alongside her military work, she carried on a campaign for the reform of civil hospitals, in the matters of the sanitary and hygienic building of these as well as of the régime of diet and nursing within. In 1859, she published her *Notes on Hospitals*, "the most valuable contribution to sanitary science in application to medical institutions," wrote Sir James Paget, of "Bart's," "that I have ever read."

The old style of hospital had been built with little regard to drainage, ventilation or proper space for the beds. Equipment, furniture and utensils were hopelessly unsanitary and there were recognized "hospital" diseases, "hospital" gangrene, "hospital" fever, etc., which were looked upon as inseparable from hospitals and made going into these institutions a risky business, and one to be avoided if possible. Improvement was beginning to make way and Florence was by no means the only pioneer in institution hygiene. But her book with its insistence on health principles, now taken for granted, but then regarded by many people as revolutionary, had far-

reaching influence because of its author's Crimean reputation, and she was consulted about hospital plans and appointments by a number of progressive individuals and local authorities all over the country. She was a "fresh-air" fanatic; an anti-curtain-and-carpet fanatic, in days when the "sick-room" was nearly always kept in an awful condition of stuffiness, crowded with furniture and knick-knacks and with blinds drawn to keep out the sun. Both in her *Notes on Hospitals* and in her better-known *Notes on Nursing* she laid great stress on the curative effect of light.

Notes on Nursing was also published in 1859; it had an enormous sale and when it appeared later in a sevenpenny edition (its first price was five shillings), it found its way into thousands of cottage homes. It was published in America and translated into several foreign languages.

It is written with excellent sense and feeling. It first inculcated all those principles which Florence described as "nursing the well," namely attention to hygiene within the home which prevents sickness arising, principles which, in those days, were generally ignored. The chapters on actual nursing are as full of sound sense as anything she ever wrote; they contain, too, many characteristically barbed remarks.

"Feverishness is generally supposed to be a symptom of fever; in nine cases out of ten, it is a symptom of bedding."

"Merely looking at the sick is not observing."

"It seems a commonly received idea among men, and even among women themselves, that it requires nothing but a disappointment in love, or incapacity in other things, to turn a woman into a good nurse. This reminds one of the parish where a stupid old man was set to be schoolmaster because he was 'past keeping the pigs.' "

The little book is well worth reading from beginning to end. Everyone can benefit from it, as hundreds of thousands of people no doubt have benefited. It is not in any way a nurse's technical manual; it has a much wider appeal than that. It is a series of wise and simple reflections on the part of a highly thoughtful and understanding nurse on alphabet considerations to be borne in mind and in heart while tending the sick.

3

The foundation of the Nightingale Training School for Nurses was another achievement of these crowded five years. The Fund which had been collected to do honour to the Crimean Heroine amounted to £44,000. British soldiers contributed nearly £9,000 of this sum and the Colonies were generous subscribers. The Fund was invested in the name of trustees and Florence appointed a Council to administer it.

Her original plan had been to found an institution and to be the Superintendent of it herself—this had been an early dream of hers, long before Crimean

days—but the pressure of work for Army Reform made her realize the unlikelihood of that hope materializing, as far as her being Superintendent was concerned, and the precarious state of her health clinched her decision that the first plan must be given up. She offered to resign from responsibility; she suggested that the Council should apply the Fund as they thought best. But the Council, knowing that contributors had counted on her mind animating the scheme to which the money would be applied, begged her to go on thinking about it. The result was that St. Thomas's Hospital was chosen by her in 1860 as the training ground of a school of nurses, for the cost of whose training and wages the Fund was to provide.

There were plenty of people besides Lady Palmerston, whose remark that the Nightingale Fund was "all humbug . . . the nurses are very good now" has been already quoted, who were highly contemptuous of the scheme. The medical profession, in general, did not support it. Dr. South, the senior surgeon of St. Thomas's, wrote a pamphlet attacking it. He declared that the proposed school was quite unnecessary, that statements about nursing inefficiency and immorality were quite untrue, and that the old-fashioned nursing was excellent and was satisfactory to all physicians and surgeons, as was shown, he said, by the fact that out of ninety-five physicians and seventy-nine surgeons in the seventeen London hospitals, only three physicians and one surgeon from one hospital

and one physician from another had supported the scheme.

The last fact was true but whether it proved anything beyond that the medical profession, like so many professions, much prefer the good old way, however bad it is, can be left to students of the difference between nursing as Florence found it and as she left it to decide.

Nevertheless, in spite of opposition—a veritable "Chinese wall of prejudice," one advanced woman called it—the Nightingale School was founded, and, strange to say, the system introduced by it was in time followed by every other English hospital who went, in the first instance, to the School for their Superintendents. The Nightingale nurses formed, in fact, a body of apostles who went all over the world carrying with them the training they had learnt at the School.

It is impossible here to go into details of the training, or of the history of this epoch-making institution, for such it was. Florence watched over it with more than motherly attention for the rest of her life. After the Hospital was removed in 1872, to where it now stands, opposite the Houses of Parliament in Westminster, she, being by that time less preoccupied with political wirepulling, took the School in hand very much as if it were a Girls' Boarding School and she its revered but rather alarming Headmistress. All the nurses were invited singly to tea with her;

she took careful stock of them and kept a characteristic note of her impression of each. Of several of them she made particular pets, but upon all she lavished a prodigious amount of interest and kindliness. She considered and mapped out their future careers; she planned their holidays, often having them to stay with her; she sent books, fruit, flowers for their rooms in the Hospital; she corresponded with them long after they had left the School and was a never-failing source of advice, sympathy and encouragement. She wrote a yearly New Year's address to them, the reading of which to the assembled School by her deputy and brother-in-law, Sir Harry Verney, was a feature in the School calendar. The address was printed and a copy was afterwards bestowed on each nurse. She never ceased to hold before them her own high ideal of a nurse's calling, namely, that the call must be followed in a religious spirit. It was this very intensely held ideal that made her a die-hard in the battle for Registration of Nurses but we shall come to that later on. Here let it be said that in days when women's public work in no direction had attained a status higher than that implied in the word "occupation," in days, too, when nurses were classed with domestic servants and were in general drawn from that class and received no special training at all, it was inevitable that a movement to improve that derogatory status should emphasize (and from the point of view of to-day perhaps

over-emphasize) the moral and religious appeal. Florence's sense of her mission to humanity was a religious sense, as I have already pointed out, because she was born in a religious age and, also, at such an early stage of the movement for the emancipation of women that the insurgence of natural (though for generations crushed) promptings to break away from the daily, dreary round into independent life and action could be explained by nothing short of a call from God to take this otherwise highly rebellious step. Long endured subjection to a powerful convention, such as the convention which persisted for centuries as to the true womanly sphere, cannot be escaped from, or at least could not be in Florence's day, without an opposite conviction of the most powerful quality—and there was then no other name for this but "religious." Florence would have had no respect for herself, her friends would not have encouraged her either, had she merely put out her tongue, as it were, to her family and announced that she was going to be a nurse because she wanted to be one. God had to be brought into it; His call alone could justify such unusual conduct. And once brought into it, He could not of course be left in the lurch. The whole campaign had to proceed under His control and sanction.

4

Like Moses, Florence was a great Lawgiver. I fancy, however, that, had she been in Moses' place, she would have made short work of those wanderings in the wilderness; I think she would have got the Israelites into Canaan, by hook or by crook, in much less time than forty years. She would not have thought it necessary to toil up Mount Sinai to procure from Jehovah the Ten Commandments. She would have promptly established a department of statistics as an annex to the Tabernacle and from an exhaustive study of its data she would have deduced the laws of the universe.

She had a passionate belief in statistics. A foundation stone of her religion was that the laws of God for the governance of the world were not beyond man's powers of discovery; they were, she was confident, ascertainable, if people would only give their minds to finding them out.

Statistical methods, in her opinion, were the best way of proceeding upon this enquiry. In her *Suggestions for Thought* she points out that, by meteorological statistics, storms can be foretold. "When a ship goes down in an 'unforeseen' gale, do we say, 'How could God permit such a dreadful calamity as the loss of all hands on board? The devil must have done it.' No. We say, 'Study the signs of approaching gales, and you will *not* be lost.' Is it not the same with moral

evil, the laws of which are just as calculable?" She was sure that there was as much exact, logical sequence in God's moral laws as in his physical ones. "If we could not *depend* upon God"—she wrote, in a letter to her father—"i.e. if this sequence were not always to be calculated upon in moral as well as in physical things—if He were to have caprices (by some called *grace*, by others *answers to prayer*, etc.) there would be no order in creation to depend upon. There would be Chaos." And chaos, either on a small or a large scale, Florence could never endure.

The preparation and study of statistics was more or less of a novelty in those days. There was no statistical or economic information of a reliable kind before the nineteenth century. The first British Census was taken in 1801. From then onwards the economic and industrial welfare of the nation came more and more within the scope of political and historical knowledge and of course, to-day, though it has become a byword that statistics can be made to prove anything, no social reformer can go far without their help.

Florence became interested in social reform when quite a rage for statistics was beginning in select circles. Dr. Farr, the leading statistician in England, was a great friend of hers and she looked upon the book of the Belgian statistician and astronomer, Dr. Adolphe Quételet (a book entitled *Essai de Physique Sociale*—in which statistical methods were applied to

social problems), as a Bible. He had sent her a copy inscribed "with the Author's homage, respect and affection" and she kept it carefully annotated and wrote in it that its principles, if applicable, afforded "an endless vista of improvement," upon which vista she loved confidently to dwell. Quételet was also a meteorologist and had deduced a law of the flowering of plants. The lilac was one of his examples, and he had discovered that the lilac flowered when the sum of the squares of the mean daily temperatures, starting calculations from the last frost, equalled 4,264° C. Such accuracy of prediction enchanted Florence and she used to beg those of her friends who had gardens to take note of and verify Quételet's law. The lilac, because of its obedient habits, was a special favourite of hers; what she would have said to a flower of less amenable disposition, which does exactly as it likes, I do not know.

When she was in the Crimea, one of the defects in hospital administration that struck her most glaringly was the lack of proper statistical material. The deaths, for instance, were not carefully recorded. There were three separate death-rolls; the adjutant kept a daily burial-roll; the medical officer made one return, the orderly-room made another. None of these tallied. Further, none of these records showed the different diseases and injuries the men had died of, or where the men came from, or their ages and other details. Not quite as bad carelessness showed itself in the

London Civil Hospital statistics, when she came, on her return, to examine these but there was no sort of uniform scheme followed by all the hospitals. Each hospital classified on its own lines and no general view of mortality or disease was consequently obtainable.

Florence immediately started to alter this. She drew up standard lists of diseases and Model Forms. She had these printed and got some of the hospitals to adopt them. Then, through Dr. Farr, who had helped her in all this work, she arranged to have her scheme for Uniform Hospital Statistics put prominently on the menu of the International Statistical Congress which met in London in the summer of 1860. She had been more than usually ill before the Congress opened but the prospect of a feast of statistics acted upon her like an elixir. She was not able, of course, to be present at the meetings, but she gave a series of breakfast parties to the delegates, some of whom were taken upstairs afterwards into her presence. Her scheme was discussed and approved and a Resolution was passed that it should be brought to the notice of all the Governments represented at the Congress. The result was that the Model Forms were eventually adopted for a time by several of the London Hospitals but the experiment, according to Sir E. Cook, does not appear to have been persisted in.

Next, she did her best, and the Congress supported her in a Resolution to this effect, to extract from Governments a variety of other statistical abstracts.

She slogged away at an attempt to get the Census of 1861 to collect statistics of sick and infirm people throughout the country and of housing accommodation. But despite strenuous efforts in this direction, she was unsuccessful. Neither the Home Secretary, nor either of the Houses of Parliament could see, to quote a speaker on the subject in the Lords, "what was the use of asking people so many questions."

Florence not only saw the use, but she literally revelled in statistics. "I have a New Year's Gift for you," wrote Dr. Farr on one occasion, "it is in the shape of Tables, as you will conjecture." "I am exceedingly anxious," she replied, "to see your charming Gift, especially those returns showing the Deaths, Admissions, Diseases, etc."

5

Throughout these years, it must not be forgotten, her life was often expected to end at any moment. She herself lived in constant expectation of death. In 1857, she wrote a parting letter to Sidney Herbert and made various testamentary dispositions of her property; in 1859, she gave full instructions to Arthur Hugh Clough about her funeral. To several of her friends she wrote from time to time in dying strains.

The world in general assumed that she was dying. A line or two, referring to her serious condition of health, appeared now and again in the newspapers,

and these rumours chimed, of course, with the popular feeling that premature death, sad as it was, was the only fitting end for such a heroine. People enjoyed thinking that her sacrifices in the Crimea had cost her her life. It was, and still is, a common fallacy that some people are "too good to live."

"Sometimes, when I hear of the death of some great sensitive human being," wrote George Eliot to a friend, in 1859, "I have a triumph in the sense that they are at rest; and yet, along with that, deep sadness at the thought that the rare nature is gone for ever into the darkness."

But Florence did not die, though at times she may have wanted to, and at times too many people watching her may have piously wished that the awful suspense and anxiety in which they were kept could be relieved either by one thing or the other—recovery or death. She often spoke of wishing to die; not that she intended that death should end her labours. Her belief was that much greater opportunities for activity awaited her in the next world. In her farewell letter to Sidney Herbert, before alluded to, she had said that perhaps God wanted a "sanitary Officer now for my Crimeans in some other world where they are gone."

Exactly what was the matter with her appeared doubtful. Comparatively little then was known about nervous diseases. Dr. Sutherland, who was her medical attendant, in addition to being her chief adjutant,

believed her heart to be seriously affected, and no one had greater opportunities for observing her condition than he. Other doctors thought that her spine was congested and that complete paralysis was on the way. Often, after a long interview, she was completely prostrated and could not speak. Yet during the interview her voice was so strong and her conversation so animated that many people who saw her could not believe that she was as ill as she was supposed to be and as she herself thought she was. Her father, in a letter to Mrs. Nightingale, in 1861, said: "Chadwick and Sutherland at dinner: the former persisting that Flo's voice alone is sufficient to shew that her (so-called) heart complaint is doubtful: in truth, she still seems to work like a Hercules in spite of all weakness."

Her father was allowed to visit her occasionally, but Florence saw very little of her mother and sister; she found them too tiring. She admitted only "sympathetic" relations, and as by this she meant only those who were willing to work actively for her, there were naturally many who did not pass the test. The most "sympathetic" were her uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Smith, who for years devoted themselves to her. Mrs. Smith (Aunt Mai) was as useful as St. Jerome's Lion in keeping away visitors and, apparently, her post of vantage was like the Lion's, on the outside door-mat, for living in the same house with Florence did not mean that you ever entered

her room. "I communicate with her every day," Mrs. Smith wrote, in 1861, "but I have not seen her to speak to for nearly four years." Uncle Sam undertook a good deal of his niece's correspondence and transacted her business affairs, also from a distance. The invalid scribbled instructions on the letters which she sent him to be answered. She had no use for gushing letters, or for offers of marriage which were numerous. A frequent instruction was "Choke off this idiot."

Hitherto, since her return from Scutari, her London abode had been at the Burlington Hotel, in Old Burlington Street, where she had a suite of apartments in a house annexed to the hotel. The Queen had offered apartments at Kensington Palace but as Kensington was then too far out of London proper, Florence respectfully declined them. She wished to be at the centre of things, for the convenience of those whom she wanted to see—those whom she did not want to see were, to use her own expression, choked off.

Her rooms were very simply furnished. Flowers from home, or the offerings of devoted friends, abounded; also Blue books, which needed a van to contain them when she moved. Her father quite annoyed her once by offering to send some furniture for her "drawing-room." She declared that she had no such place; it was, she said, the ruin of so many women's lives. However, she indulged in one feminine consolation. She kept a family of Persian cats. It

instructed her, she said, to watch them. Cats are so self-centred that one can understand why Florence was fond of them, though there could not have been much that they could have taught her, one would think.

Her choice, in the first instance, had fallen upon the Burlington, because it was a favourite hotel of her parents. But having decided to live there, she did not wish her seclusion to be broken in upon by her family, and Aunt Mai had the painful task of intimating to Mr. and Mrs. Nightingale that Florence did not wish them to stay at the Burlington when they came to London. To be the parents of a heroine has its drawbacks. Mrs. Nightingale, according to Mrs. Gaskell, was reported to have said just after Florence first left home, with tears in her eyes, that they had hatched a wild swan. The wild swan on this occasion was behaving rather like that ungrateful bird, the cuckoo!

Parthenope was now married to Sir Harry Verney, a widower twenty years older than she was, rich, kind and public-spirited. Florence and her brother-in-law became excellent friends, and as he was a Member of Parliament, he was often very useful to her. In later years, he visited her constantly and they read religious books together.

It was through Sir Harry Verney that she went first to live in South Street; he lent her his house, No. 32 (now No. 4) when she returned to London

after Sidney Herbert's death. The Burlington was too painfully associated with her "dear master" for her ever to go there again. Eventually, Mr. Nightingale leased No. 35 (afterwards No. 10) South Street for his daughter and she lived there until her death in 1910. But between times she lived in various houses, Cleveland Row being favoured, at one time, on account of its nearness to the War Office. In connection with South Street, it is amusing and typical that Florence and Lady Verney each considered the nearness of their respective homes as more of a boon to the other of them than to herself. The difference between their temperaments and outlooks did not grow less with years.

CHAPTER VIII

INDIAN REFORMS

THE last chapter dealt with some of the reforms outside Army matters which Florence was at work upon during the years 1856–61. But there was another huge Reform in which she was at the same time violently interested and that was nothing less than the introduction of sanitation into India and the appointment of a Royal Commission to do exactly the same thing for the Indian Army as had been done for the Army at home.

The Indian Mutiny had broken out in 1857. Florence's *Notes on the Army* were then about to be published and at the end of the book she had added a flyleaf on which she wrote as follows:

"While the sheets were passing through the press, those lamentable occurrences took place in India which have led to a universal conviction that this vast Empire must henceforth be held by British troops. If we were to be led by past experience of the presumed effect of Indian climates on European constitutions, our country might almost despair of being able to supply men enough. . . . The British race has carried with it into those regions of the sun its habits, its customs and its vices, without con-

sidering that under a low temperature man may do with impunity what under a higher one is death. Our vast Indian Empire consists of many zones, of many regions, of many climates. On the mere question of climate, it is surely within human possibility, even in the great majority of instances, so to arrange the stations, and so to connect them, by railroads and telegraphs, that the troops would hardly be required to occupy unhealthy districts. Even with regard to such districts the question arises to what extent the unhealthiness is inevitable, and to what extent it would be remediable. . . . As an illustration of the necessity of Government interference in this matter, it may be stated, on the very first authority, that, after a campaign, perhaps one of the most arduous and successful on record, and when the smallness of the British force and the season of the year required every sanitary precaution to be taken for the preservation of the force, a certain earnest, energetic Officer appointed a sanitary inspector to attend to the cleansing of a captured city, and to the burial of some thousand dead bodies of men, horses, asses, bullocks, camels and elephants which were poisoning the air. The Bombay Government, to which the appointment was referred, 'would not sanction it,' 'because there was no precedent for it.' In future, it ought to be the duty of the Indian Government to require no precedents for such procedure. The observance of Sanitary Laws should be as much part of the future

régime of India as the holding of Military positions or as Civil government itself. It would be a noble beginning of the new order of things to use hygiene as the handmaid of civilization."

Florence thereupon began in 1858 to agitate for a Sanitary Commission in India. This was appointed, under Sidney Herbert's Chairmanship, in May 1859. Drs. Sutherland, Martin and Alexander, all friends of Florence's, were the sanitary authorities on the Commission and Dr. Farr, the statistician, was also a member. Florence as usual was the ruling spirit. She got under way before the Commission was appointed. She drafted a circular bristling with questions to be sent to every military station in India. The replies, as they came in to the India Office, were forwarded to her for analysis. The result formed a Statistical Survey on which she wrote a long report entitled, with that modesty which always dictated her choice of titles, *Observations by Miss Nightingale.* This Report was published with that of the Commission but Florence had copies bound separately, illustrated by sketches of native customs of water supply and drainage, which she paid for, as otherwise she would never have got the printing of the illustrations sanctioned by the Treasury, and she distributed them to many people, again including Royalty. The *Observations* were couched, many of them, in the now well-known Nightingale style:

"If the facilities for washing were as great as those

for drink, our Indian army would be the cleanest body of men in the world.

"There is *no* drainage, in any sense in which we understand the word. The reports (i.e. the Station reports) speak of cesspits as if they were dressing-rooms."

In dealing with overcrowding in barracks, she referred to one report which said that the men (300 per room) were "generally accommodated without inconvenient overcrowding." "What is *convenient* overcrowding?" she enquired. She discussed Drink, Diet, Want of Occupation and Exercise, Hospitals, Hill Stations, Native Towns, Soldiers' Wives and, of course, Mortality Statistics. The average annual death rate among the British soldiers in India was found to be 69 per 1,000: "a company out of every regiment," as she put it, had been sacrificed every twenty months. The causes of death were shown to be largely camp diseases due to bad water, bad drainage, filthy bazaars, etc. Drink sent thousands of men into hospital with liver complaints. "The picture is terrible," wrote Sir John McNeill, to Florence, "but it is all true. There is no one statement from beginning to end that I feel disposed to question and there are many which my own observation and experience enable me to confirm." It was to the writing of this Report at the request of the Indian Commission that Florence turned her grief-stricken mind in the autumn following Sidney Herbert's death —October 1861. It shows, however, no trace of weak-

ened energy nor falling off in pungent style and criticism.

Dr. Sutherland was of course at her side throughout the writing of it: the analysis of the Station reports was their joint work. All the writing was done in bed or on the sofa and Florence in a letter to her mother in March 1862, spoke of the extreme weakness, pain and misery through which for the last months she had passed. In the same letter she spoke too of the bitterness that had been mingled with her grief, bitterness, presumably, at the set-back to work by the deaths of Herbert and Clough. "Such unspeakable bitterness," she wrote, "has been connected with each one of my losses—far, far greater than the grief. . . . I think what I have felt most (during my last three months of extreme weakness) is the not having one single person to give me one inspiring word or even one correct fact." (This was rather hard on Dr. Sutherland.) "I am glad to end a day which never can come back, gladdest to end a month. I have felt this much more in setting up for the first time in my life a fashionable old maid's house in a fashionable quarter (tho' grateful to Papa's liberality for enabling me to do so) because it is, as it were, deciding upon a new and independent course in my broken old age. . . . Thank you very much for the weekly box. I could not help sending the game, chicken, vegetables and flowers to King's College Hospital. I never see the spring without thinking of my Clough. He used to

tell me how the leaves were coming out—always remembering that, without his eyes, I should never see the spring again. Thank God! my lost two are in brighter springs than ours."

Still she worked on, indefatigably. She was busy on the draft of the Commission's own Report now. Lord Stanley, who had taken Sidney Herbert's place as Chairman, had left the writing of the major part to her and Dr. Sutherland. She had finished it by August, but owing to other delays, at which, of course, she chafed furiously, the Report was not signed and presented until the beginning of the next summer. The last stage of the Commission's work had been taken up with considering what Florence insisted was essential to include in its Recommendations, namely, the setting up of practical machinery in the form of a permanent Commission either at the War Office or at the India Office, to see that the sanitary reforms proposed should be immediately entered upon. "A Report is not self-executive" was her constantly repeated argument—and after much discussion and hammering insistence from her she got what she wanted. The Standing Committee at the War Office, which had been appointed in consequence of the earlier Commission on the Army to deal with improvements in Barracks and Hospitals, was enlarged by two Indian representatives with authority over Indian sanitation.

But now, as before, the Press had to be got hold

of for reviewing purposes. Florence saw to that as in the case of the Army Commission. The printers were almost stampeded by her into providing early copies which she circulated and hence secured reviews in most of the important newspapers and periodicals. Her friend and ally, Harriet Martineau, who wrote for the *Daily News*, was coached up to the brim with what to say and to rub into public opinion. Moreover, Miss Martineau knew the Viceroy of India, Lord Elgin, personally. Florence dashed off the gist of a letter to be sent to Lord Elgin.

Then came the question of getting the Report read outside the newspapers. Members of Parliament must be pressed to ask for it. But the Clerk, knowing the ways of Members of Parliament, had prepared a shortened edition of the two massive Blue Books for public consumption and this was the volume that was laid on the table of the House of Commons. Members could get the complete Report only by asking for it. The short version, moreover, did not contain Florence's *Observations*.

Her observations on this omission can be imagined. The only thing to do was to arrange for the separate publication of the *Observations*—this was done and widely reviewed. Not content either with writing to all the M.P.s she knew, urging them to apply for the full Report, copies of which were oddly enough discovered to be reposing in the Burial Board Office, she offered to undertake the preparation of a smaller

edition herself, from which she was determined that no vital facts should be excluded. The Government gave permission for this, and Florence triumphantly set to work. Again, when this was finished, she was at the Secretary for War to secure that it should be circulated in the proper Indian quarters. She extracted a preface from him explaining that the smaller book was circulated "with a view of affording information on the subject to Commanding, Engineering and Medical Officers." Then she flung herself into yet another Press campaign.

2

"Do not fear that Lord Herbert's work will be left unfinished," wrote Lord Stanley, the Chairman of the Indian Commission, to Florence in July 1863. "Sanitary ideas have taken root in the public mind and they cannot be treated as visionary. The first step is to ask what the War and India Departments will do. . . . But we must give them time to read the Report," he added, probably rather wearily, for Florence had been prodding him, ever since the Report was signed, to get its Recommendations carried out at once.

The Report consisted of over 2,000 pages of small print. It could not, except by someone of wolf-like appetite for Blue Book literature, be read in a day, or even in a week. Lord Stanley went off to the

country. Florence remained, frantically busy, in London. She would, no doubt, willingly have read the Report for others, had such vicarious activity been of the slightest use. She spent August in drafting a Code of Suggestions to be sent out to India.

Her friend, Lord de Grey, was installed at the War Office, thanks to her own efforts to secure his appointment there. There had been some anxious days in the preceding April, when Sir George Lewis, the Secretary for War, had suddenly died. Sir George was no pet of Florence's; it annoyed her especially that he found time between his official duties for writing Latin odes. She thought this a deplorable form of idleness for a public man, and for one too who had the opportunity of carrying out War Office Reform. He, poor deluded man, by way of ingratiating himself with her, had sent her some specimens of his art. He added fuel to fire by subsequently publishing books on Egyptology. She could not contain her disgust and raged about it to her friend, Dr. Jowett, who sympathized, remarking that he too had felt like that with Mr. Gladstone "for writing nonsense about Homer" while the East India Bill was going through the House. Still, politicians must have their recreations. What could she have thought of "Dizzy," who wrote a novel while he was Prime Minister, or what would she have thought of Mr. Winston Churchill who paints pictures in his spare time and builds walls?

It is significant that Florence never felt well enough to receive Sir George Lewis though he offered to go and visit her. However, he died, and for a moment it looked as if "the Bison" might succeed him. Florence took immediate steps to prevent that catastrophe. She was determined that the Under-Secretary, Lord de Grey, should be appointed in Sir George Lewis's place. She telegraphed to Harriet Martineau to clamour for this in the *Daily News*; she wrote to Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister, and to Mr. Gladstone. She won.

In November of this year, 1863, another great opportunity for Florence to pull wires happened. Lord Elgin, the Viceroy of India, died. Sir John Lawrence was the ideal person, in Florence's eyes, to be the new Viceroy. She had immense admiration for him and he was known to be in sympathy with sanitary reform. She urged his appointment through Lord Stanley upon the India Office and, again, her urging carried weight. Sir John Lawrence was appointed, and before he left London in December he called upon Florence and immediately upon his arrival in India he established the Sanitary Committees for putting the Royal Commission's Report into execution, as he had promised that he would. He was in constant correspondence with Florence; she was kept informed of every step taken. "I sing for joy every day," she wrote, during the next year, "at Sir John Lawrence's Government." In that year

she published a pamphlet entitled *How People may Live and not Die in India*, in which she described all that had already been done. Owing to disputes and jealousies between the War Office and the India Office at home, there was still delay in despatching official orders and codes to the Indian Government, but the incessant touch that Florence maintained with the Viceroy obviated the drawback of this, as she usually sent him information and drafts of regulations and other papers weeks in advance. "I beg to inform you," she wrote to the War Office, on one occasion, "that by the first mail I sent off, by H.M.'s book post, at an enormous expense (I have a good mind to charge it to you), to Sir John Lawrence direct no end of copies of *Suggestions* (these had been drafted by her); and that, as he is always more ready to hear than you are to pray (you sinners!) I have not the least doubt that they will have been put in execution long before the India Office has even begun to send them": which warning, in fact, turned out to be true.

3

So began, and even more ardently, for the next twenty-five to thirty years, continued Florence Nightingale's splendid work for India. Starting with the comparatively modest aim of doing for the British Army in India what had been done for the Army at home, it developed into a programme of reform of the

entire Public Health Administration of India; from that programme it broadened out again into Irrigation and Land Reforms for the benefit of the ryot, and finally into an agitation for awakening public opinion to almost every aspect of the life and wretched conditions of India's countless masses.

Florence became an Indian Agitator and Reformer on a large scale. "Florence the First, Empress of Scavengers, Queen of Nurses, Reverend Mother-Superior of the British Army, Governess of the Governors of India," was the title given to her by her friend, Mr. Jowett, and she was entitled to it. Scarcely a Viceroy, between 1865 and 1885, left London to take up his Indian duties without first visiting South Street and discussing sanitary reforms with Florence. Sir John Lawrence, Lords Napier of Ettrick, Mayo, Ripon and Dufferin were the Governors she governessed: Lord Napier of Magdala and Lord Roberts were Commanders-in-Chief of the Indian Army who sought her advice. The War Office used her as a kind of standing counsel in all matters relating to the health of the Army; on more than one occasion she supplied the Secretary of State for War with a speech in defence of criticism of reform policy in Parliament. She was the confidential adviser of the Sanitary Department at the India Office in Whitehall, "my little Department," she called it, "all to myself"; it had been set up by her energies and Sir Bartle Frere, formerly Governor of Bombay, who

was its Chairman, referred every report, memorandum and circular issued by it to her, and she initiated most of its enquiries.

In addition, she was in correspondence with reformers and officials in every part of India on matters of Public Health administration and practical detail of sanitary work. Engineers and municipal officials sent her their plans for drainage and water supply and consulted her about water tests; medical officers wrote to her for advice on hospital equipment; Commissariat officials consulted her on soldiers' rations and victualling arrangements. It is not too much to say that in every step forward that was taken in Indian matters, either military or civil, she played the principal and the inspiring part. As Sir John Strachey, the Indian administrator, admitted to Sir Bartle Frere, of the sanitary improvements in India during the third quarter of the last century, three-fourths, if not more, were due to her.

Probably no woman, possibly no one man, certainly no man outside his official capacity, has ever before or since Florence's time enjoyed such influence or been so widely recognized as an expert authority on Civil as well as Military Sanitation and Health. The weight which her support of any reform carried was tremendous. Sir Bartle Frere once said to her: "I have often known a scrap of paper on which you had written a few words—or even your words printed —work miraculously." She was known to be a person

who got things done; people felt that if they had her backing they could not fail. Those in high authority had recourse to her for this very reason. Thus, for instance, Lord Napier of Magdala, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, wrote to her in 1874, enclosing a Minute he had written to the India Office complaining that improvements to barracks and other matters were "delayed year after year." "I cannot help telling you, dear Miss Nightingale, as I know you love the soldiers as well as you did in the Crimea when you broke down the doors of red tape for them."

She was never turned to in vain. An appeal on behalf of the soldiers set all the bells ringing in South Street; the anti-red-tape banner was hoisted and the bombardment of the dilatory or indifferent department began. There must have been many War Office and India Office officials who dreaded the sight of an envelope addressed in her handwriting. She did not mince her words. "You may think I am not wise in being so angry," she wrote to Sir James Clark in 1864, apropos of a correspondence she had been having with the War Office. "But I assure you, when I write civilly, I have a civil answer—*and nothing is done*. When I write furiously, I have a rude letter —*and something is done* (not even then always, but *only then*)."

She knew down to the ground the sort of reasons that delay official action; she wrote on one occasion

to Captain Galton (a relative of hers) at the War Office:

"I have not yet applied to you to put me into communication with Sir S. Northcote. Because why? Your Committee won't sit. It won't sit on Monday because Monday is Whit-Monday. And Tuesday is Whit-Tuesday. And Wednesday is Ash-Wednesday. And Thursday is Ascension Day. And Friday is Good Friday. And Saturday is the Drawing-room. And Sunday is Sunday. And that's the way British business is done."

"I had rather be criticized by anyone rather than you," Lord Stanley (afterwards Lord Derby), wrote to her. No Minister or Governor felt he could afford to let a letter from Florence remain unanswered. Even Lord Salisbury, aloof and somewhat cynical, when Florence took up Lord Mayo's complaints, sat down to write pages of explanation why improvements were moving slowly. Lord Salisbury forwarded her letter to the Viceroy, then Lord Northbrook.

"The first thing the Governor did on seeing your letter"—a friend on the spot reported to her—"was to sit down and write a full exoneration of himself to the Secretary of State. The second, I have no doubt, will be to call for his officials and hurry on the work."

When Florence wrote to the Queen, even the Queen, in answering through her Secretary, Sir

Henry Ponsonby, apologized for not answering the letter herself. The "Nightingale Power" was indeed portentous. We may well consider wherein it essentially lay.

The foundation of it, of course, lay in her Crimean reputation and in the fact that officials knew, to their fury, in some cases, that every stone of that reputation had been well and truly laid. No subsequent revelations ever tarnished the greatness of her Crimean exploits; everything that was brought to light in the Report of the Royal Commission on the Health of the Army redounded to the value of her work. Further, the immediate reforms which, through the Commission, she and Sidney Herbert set on foot, crowned that reputation and crown it still. The British Army owes its health and comfort in barracks, hospitals and regimental institutes to Florence Nightingale and to those who faithfully worked with her in those five years following the war.

A second reason, though it is one that cannot be separated from the first, for it was this which made her Crimean work so valuable and her reputation so enduring, was her amazing, and for those times, unusual, mastery of the practical situation, whatever it was with which she happened to be faced. She thought always in terms of practical detail. There was never any need in any discussion with her to say, "Now, to get down to tin tacks"—because she was attending to tin tacks from the start. She had

surveyed, counted and measured the tin tacks before she started. That was her idea of being business-like. Comparatively few people, in those times, particularly if they were reformers, troubled about the actual, practical situation. They displayed their ideals and proffered their panaceas and remedies in general, abstract terms. They did not know quite what they meant by their beautiful ideas, but the sentences in which these were couched sounded very striking—and that satisfied them.

Now Florence had no use for abstract ideas. She distrusted them because they might mean everything or nothing. When Garibaldi, the Italian hero, came to visit her in London, she was horrified at the vague state of his mind. He hadn't a notion of what he meant by his high-flown language. She wrote to Harriet Martineau:

"We had a long interview by ourselves. I was more struck with the greatness of that noble heart—and with the smallness of the administrative capacity—than even I expected. He raves for a Government 'like the English.' But he knows no more what it is than his King Bomba did. One year of such a life as I have led for ten years would tell him more of how one has to give and take with a 'representative Government' than all his Utopia and his 'ideal.' You will smile. But he reminds me of Plato. He talks about the 'ideal good,' and the 'ideal bad': about his not caring for 'repubblica' or for 'Monarchia'; he

only wants 'the right.' Alas! Alas! What a pity—that utter impracticability!"

"Alas! Alas! What a pity." That, unfortunately, has had to be said, both in the past and still in the present, of too many reforms and reformers, but it was particularly the case in that strenuous period of reform, the Victorian Age. There was an abundance of idealism, but practicability was generally the last thing considered by idealists, as of course, is often the case now. Practicability was the first thing that Florence Nightingale considered. She considered it so extensively and in such detail that when anti-reformers objected on the grounds of impracticability, she was prepared to show exactly how her proposed reform could be carried out. And as the "impracticability" objection was only as a rule based on a dislike of alteration, those who advanced it were quite unable to catch Florence out on a single point.

Method, organization and system were a passion with her. To draft a Scheme or a Code of Regulations was her greatest joy. Every detail was considered from a practical point of view, though it was, one must admit, a practical view bounded by her own experience. Large as that was, it was not all-embracing. There were things which she sometimes left out of account. She could never be got to acknowledge the advantage derived to health by the study of microbes. She had not met with microbes in the Crimea; at

least she thought she had not; she had only, as far as she knew, met with dirt, inadequate equipment, lack of proper food, ventilation and all the obvious concomitants of disease. She was to the end of her life exceedingly disrespectful to microbes. Dr. Sutherland infuriated her by his interest in them.

When Lord Dufferin called to see her before taking up Viceregal duties, she undertook to send him a Note of Instructions on sanitary matters which she immediately wrote to Dr. Sutherland to prepare "at once." Her letter of command reached Dr. Sutherland on a Friday; she demanded the Note by Monday. He replied that, for that day and the next, he was busy "working at the cholera bacillus with a beautiful Vienna microscope purchased with this object"—and that he could not work on Sunday, so that the Viceroy must wait. Florence sent raging notes and telegrams. "I did not know the bacillus was of more consequence than the Viceroy." But it was, replied Dr. Sutherland; study of it might save more lives than ever Lord Dufferin, however well instructed, could. The Note, however, did reach Lord Dufferin in time. But Florence never overcame her prejudice to bacteriology. She revoked a legacy to Francis Galton which she had intended to be used for furthering the study of statistics, but which she came to fear might be used for "endowing some bacillus or microbe," and, she added, "I do not wish that."

Her intense sense of the practical had, too, other

drawbacks but I have already touched upon those.

Florence was a hustler; she was ruthless towards the ordinary interests of life; she did appear to exaggerate the importance of drains. Within herself, as her diaries and notes in self-examination show, she knew that drains and all the other material improvements which her sleepless energies had set in being, were but means to an end, that of healthier and consequently nobler living, and no sensible person would think of disputing that strong belief of hers that if you want to bring about a Kingdom of Heaven on earth, you must start at the right end and work to improve material conditions before you begin to preach. Religious teaching, in her early days, had paid so little heed to that truth, that Florence deserves special honour, as a religious woman, for insisting on it.

But one of the dangers of insisting on anything is that that on which we insist too violently is apt to get the upper hand of our mental processes, to tamper with our inner sense of real values, to intrigue (I am speaking, of course, metaphorically) with all the half-savage powers and influences which lurk unsuspected in the spirit of man, and which are so unscrupulous that they will league themselves with any aim, however fine, in order to get a chance of issuing forth and having some tremendous fling. The very acts, the wiles, the hard work involved in per-

suading, prodding and goading people on to doing what they would not otherwise do, act as recruiting officers for these imperious, violent forces of the soul and the result may be that they, and not the original aim which summoned them, or the sense of values which inspired that aim, become supreme. So, under violent excitement, prolonged effort to speed up progress, we may lose sight of the real goal of our energies, that Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, and the means by which we fought to achieve it, those drains, better-built Hospitals and Barracks and all the rest of it, turn into seeming ends in themselves. To prevent that tyranny from within, to keep the inner sense of values undefiled, the soul needs rest, rest in which to recuperate, to criticize its methods, to plunge its aims now and again into the cold water of scepticism, even to make fun of them a little, in order to realize that, after all, they are not the only aims in the world. Drains are very important; all Florence's practical reforms were important, but it was very rarely that she indulged in any healthy scepticism as to their *all*-importance. She was once, in old age, brought face to face with a disturbing question put to her by the Aga Khan when he visited her in 1898. She wrote a note of the interview. "A most interesting man"—she said—"but you could never teach him sanitation. I never understood before how really impossible it is for an Eastern to care for material things. I told him as well as I could all the differences both in town

and country during my life. 'Do you think you are improving?' he asked. By improving, he meant, believing more in God. To him, sanitation is unreal and superstitious; religion, spirituality, is the only real thing."

CHAPTER IX

WORKHOUSES, POOR LAW AND WOMEN

Besides India, and besides all those reforms which have been sketched in the last two chapters, there was still another reform for which Florence laboured during the years 1861–66, the improvement of Workhouse Infirmaries and Poor Law Administration.

As can be imagined, before any system of trained nurses came into existence, the care and treatment of the sick poor in English workhouses was as bad as, if not worse than, in many cases, the conditions in the general and military hospitals. The nursing, such as it was, was done by paupers who attended to their duties as they felt inclined, who were often of a very low and vicious character and who, in any case, had no standards of cleanliness or efficiency. In an *Account of the Conditions of the Infirmaries of London Workhouses* issued in 1866 by a philanthropic society, the Association for the Improvement of Infirmaries, we are told that the rule of one nurse was to give medicine three times a day to those who were very ill and once a day to those who were less ill. The patient drank it out of a gallipot; the nurse poured out what she thought proper. The wards were filthy; the beds remained unmade for days; the nurses were often drunk and there was so much disturbance and

unruliness among both patients and nurses that in some places a policeman was called in to patrol the wards at night and to keep order.

It was Mr. William Rathbone of Liverpool who first consulted Florence on this matter. He was bent on introducing District Nursing among the Liverpool poor, and, on his own initiative, built and provided for a Nurses' Training Home and School. He then offered to pay for a staff of nurses at the Liverpool Workhouse Infirmary and turned to Florence, with whom throughout his earlier scheme he had been in close correspondence, for advice in drawing up a scheme to put before the Liverpool Town Vestry and in the choice of a Lady Superintendent.

Florence, with Dr. Sutherland, provided the scheme, selected twelve trained "Nightingale Nurses" from St. Thomas's and chose as Superintendent a Miss Agnes Jones who was one of those many women who had been so stirred by Florence's example in the Crimea that they had followed in her steps forthwith. Agnes Jones, an Irish girl, rich and of good family, had begun her training at Kaiserswerth and finished it under Florence's advice at St. Thomas's, where her abilities and character marked her out as a true daughter of her great Chief. She went to Liverpool, inspired and guided throughout by Florence, without whose letters of encouragement and counsel she could not have continued the struggle against the appalling difficulties which she had to face. "It is

Scutari over again," Florence wrote to her when she heard the details. But it was worse than Scutari, for the pauper patients were an unspeakably low lot and their language and habits were revolting. The wards, Miss Jones related, were "like Dante's Inferno."

Yet, in less than three years, order, discipline and decency were introduced into the Infirmary, and Agnes Jones's premature death from fever, while at the summit of her success, drew wide attention to her achievement which was indeed a magnificent piece of pioneering.

Florence wrote a stirring appreciation of the work of her young disciple in *Good Words*. "Una and the Lion" was the title of her paper; the workhouse inmates, she declared, had been "more untameable than lions." Quoting her favourite hymn—the one that was sung in 1910 at her funeral—she appealed to women to follow where Agnes Jones had led. Such an appeal was a trumpet call to thousands to whom Florence Nightingale had been a shrouded, though magical, personality since Crimean days, but who now heard the voice of the Lady with the Lamp calling to them:

The Son of God goes forth to War,
A kingly crown to gain;
His blood red banner streams afar!
Who follows in His train?

And the introduction of trained nurses into infirmaries

all over the country, within ten years of the beginning at Liverpool, was the answer to her call.

At the same time, while directing the Liverpool venture, Florence was pressing the Poor Law Board in London to tackle the whole question of Workhouse Infirmary Reform. She was in incessant correspondence with Mr. Villiers, the Ministerial President of the Board, and Mr. Farnall, the London Poor Law Inspector was her strongest ally. It was Mr. Farnall who, in reporting to the Poor Law Board in 1866, said: "From the first, I had a sort of fixed faith that Florence Nightingale could do anything, and that faith is still firm in me: and so it came to pass that the instant that name entered the lists I felt the fight was virtually won, and I feel this still."

Mr. Farnall's faith was justified. Very few Ministers could wriggle clear of Florence's toils. Press agitation and a deputation from the Association for the Improvement of Infirmaries were marshalled in support of a scheme drafted by her. Even the fall of the Whig Ministry in 1866 did not much delay matters for Mr. Villiers, out of office, was discovered to be more useful than in office, owing to a slighting remark made by the new President of the Poor Law Board upon the administration of his predecessor.

The Conservative Government was driven into appointing a Committee of Enquiry. The Committee had recourse to Florence for information. She presented a Memorandum, rubbing in the main feature

of her scheme, which was the separation of sick, insane and juvenile paupers from the rest of the workhouse community and the provision for them out of a general rate. She spoke of the existing system of "heaping up of aged, infirm, sick, able-bodied, lunatics and sometimes children, in the same building, instead of having, as in every other Christian country, your asylum for aged, your hospital for sick, your lunatic asylum, your union school, each under its proper administration."

The Minister, Mr. Gathorne Hardy, introduced a Bill. It did not go far enough to please Florence but the separation of infectious, sick and insane paupers and a general rate were thereby provided—and the reforms consequent upon the Metropolitan Poor Act of 1866 were a beginning in the right direction.

2

It has sometimes happened that women who were shining examples of female ability, and who have been in consequence, singled out by Women's Suffrage speakers and represented in Pageants of Pioneer Women of History as pre-eminently endowed with voting capacity, were not particularly sympathetic to the movement that went on during their times for the political emancipation of their sex.

Florence Nightingale was one of these lukewarm supporters of the Women's Suffrage movement. It

was the one reform that she did not feel drawn to support actively—the one reform that she had no inclination to hurry forward.

She did, in fact, join the National Society for Women's Suffrage soon after it was founded in 1867, but she at first refused to do so and the reasons which she then gave for not joining, combined with other remarks about the movement which she made from time to time during her life, throw a great deal of light upon her character.

John Stuart Mill, the great Women's Suffrage advocate, wrote to her on this subject in 1867. She replied that no one was more convinced than she was that women ought to have the vote. But, she said, it would be years before the suffrage for women was obtained, and, in the meantime, there were evils which pressed much more hardly upon women than the want of suffrage, and reform in dealing with these might be retarded, she was afraid, if women had the vote, because that might result in sex opposition in political matters and hence prevent necessary social reforms being carried. Then she added:

"As to my being on the Society you mention, you know there is scarcely anything which, if you were to tell me that it is right politically, I would not do. But I have no time. It is 14 years this very day (August 11, 1867) that I entered upon work which has never left me ten minutes' leisure, not even to be ill. And I am obliged never to give my name where

I cannot give my work. If you will not think me egotistical, I will say why I have kept off the stage of these things. In the years that I have passed in Government offices, I have never felt the want of a vote—because if I had been a Borough returning two members to Parliament, I should have had less administrative influence. And I have thought that I could work better for others off the stage than on it. Added to which, I am an incurable invalid, entirely a prisoner to my room. But I entirely agree, if I may be allowed to agree with so great an authority, that women's 'political power' should be 'direct and open,' not indirect. And I ought to ask your pardon for occupying you for one single moment with my own personal situation."

We must, I think, beware of concluding hastily from this letter that the personal situation was, at bottom, the ruling one. At first sight, this does seem to be the case, particularly because the argument that men and women might be so divided by a political sex division that an urgent social reform might thereby be delayed sounds a little specious—Florence evidently had not gone into it very thoroughly. Naturally, of course, she attached little importance to the possession of a vote as a means of achieving reforms; no one in high authority, who has seen the workings of the political machine from within, ever does. The vote merely confers a semblance of power upon the Electorate; the real power lies with those

who can wire-pull. Professor Ramsay Muir's recent book, *How We Are Governed*, leaves us with few illusions as to the power even of the Legislature, under the thumb, as it is, of Cabinet, party officials and bureaucracy, and though, sixty or seventy years ago, Parliamentary control was not so effete as it is to-day, yet it was clear enough then, as it has always been clear to those having the opportunity of studying governmental procedure and practice, that indirect, wire-pulling methods are the best way of getting reforms going, if you want rapid action.

Florence, as she frankly admitted, had never felt the need of a vote. Her wire-pulling operated over far wider, more influential spheres than that of the electorate. She went direct to Headquarters, to Departmental Officials, to Ministers, to the Prime Minister, if she wanted anything done quickly. She had no difficulty in getting at Members of Parliament; she had one Member of Parliament, Sir Harry Verney, entirely at her service. As Sir Edward Cook wittily observes, Sir Harry Verney might almost have been described as "Member of Parliament for Miss Nightingale." What additional weight would a vote have given her? What use is a bicycle to the owner of a Rolls-Royce, or a shareholder's vote to the director on the board of a company? The "Nightingale Power" was worth innumerable votes. The sight of her handwriting could make a Viceroy uneasy.

To the value of the vote as a mark of status, Florence

was alive, but not very vividly. "That women should have the suffrage"—she wrote, in the letter to John Stuart Mill—"I think no one can be more deeply convinced than I. It is so important for a woman to be a 'person' as you say."—"Till a married woman can be in possession of her own property, there can be no love or justice."

But, despite these emphatic expressions of opinion, she was not actively interested. At least, there were so many other things in which she was more actively interested. And status, or lack of it, in her experience, had never prevented anyone from doing good work in the world. It had, she realized, pressed hardly upon individuals; did she not know, if anyone knew, how the fact of being a lady had gone against her in her early ambitions—"Would you write to Lady Stratford and say, 'This is not a lady but a real Hospital Nurse' of me?" she had begged Mrs. Herbert, before starting for Scutari—and had not one of the aims of her Crimean work and the subsequent founding of the Nightingale School for Nurses been to raise the status of nurses and to make a better life for women generally? Yes, but she was too actively, impatiently moral and philanthropic to work for a merely political status. That would have seemed to her an empty occupation. Women should win their spurs by practical work, she thought, and she ignored the fact that though a woman could improve the status of a nurse by being a good nurse herself, a woman who is not a

voter cannot improve her status as a voter, if she has not got a vote to start with.

The truth is that Florence was interested, not in rights but in duties. She had no patience with those who put their rights before their obligations to the community, quite a good attitude, if pursuit of duties can be counted on to bring acknowledgment of rights, but unfortunately this does not always happen. It did not happen in the Women's Suffrage movement. Women slaved in political work for men; the women's Conservative and Liberal organizations did admirable political campaigning for their parties. They were not rewarded with the vote, in consequence. Women got the vote only by insisting on having it—by separate propaganda for that status as an end in itself.

Florence, too, made another mistake. She took for granted that the women who were, as she said, "always talking" about their rights, were doing nothing else but talk about them. Now the history of the Women's Suffrage movement shows that its foremost leaders were all doing useful work besides talking, though they may not all of them have been engrossed in Florence's special interests; but because Florence had naturally come across hundreds of women who were not serious workers, and plenty too who were not as "sympathetic" as she considered that they ought to have been to her various campaigns, she confused these with her particular bug-bears,

the Women's Rights talkers, and she said some very hard and disagreeable things.

She declared that women had no "sympathy." "I have never found one woman who has altered her life by one iota for me or my opinions," she wrote to her friend, Madame Mohl.

"Now look at my experience of men. A statesman, past middle age, absorbed in politics for a quarter of a century, out of sympathy with me, remodels his whole life and policy—learns a science the driest, the most technical, the most difficult, that of administration—not as I learned it, on the field from stirring experience, but by writing dry regulations in a London room by my sofa with me. This is what I call real sympathy. Another (Alexander, whom I made Director-General) does very nearly the same thing. He is dead too. Clough, a poet born if ever there was one, takes to nursing administration in the same way for me. I only mention three whose lives were remodelled by sympathy for me. But I could mention many others. . . . Now just look at the degree in which women have sympathy, as far as my experience is concerned. And my experience of women is almost as large as Europe. And it is so intimate too. I have lived and slept in the same bed with English Countesses and Prussian Bauerinnen. No Roman Catholic Supérieure has ever had charge of women of the different creeds that I have had. No woman has excited 'passions' among women more than I

have. Yet I leave no school behind me. My doctrines have taken no hold among women. Not one of my Crimean following learnt anything from me, or gave herself for one moment after she came home to carry out the lesson of that war or of those hospitals.—And I attribute this to want of sympathy. Nothing makes me so impatient as people complaining of their want of memory. How can you remember what you have never heard?—It makes me mad, the Women's Rights talk about 'the want of a field' for them, when I know that I would gladly give £500 a year for a woman Secretary. And two English Lady Superintendents have told me the same thing. And we can't get *one*.—They don't know the names of the Cabinet Ministers. They don't know the offices at the Horse Guards. They don't know who of the men of the day is dead and who is alive. They don't know which of the Churches has Bishops and which not. Now I'm sure I did not know these things. When I went to the Crimea I did not know a Colonel from a Corporal. But there are such things as Army Lists and Almanacs. Yet I never could find a woman who, out of sympathy, would consult one—for my work. . . . Women crave for being loved, not for loving. They scream out at you for sympathy all day long, they are incapable of giving *any* in return, for they cannot remember your affairs long enough to do so. They cannot state a fact accurately to another, nor can that other attend to it accurately enough for it to become informa-

tion. Now is not all this the result of want of sympathy?"

Now, is it? Would it not be truer to say that "all this" is the result of want of interest in big administrative reforms which does not spring up naturally in the minds of those who have been deprived of responsibility except in domestic matters and have no experience of life much wider than the immediate circle of their families, friends and acquaintances? The men whom Florence extolled for their "sympathy" held, or had held, responsible positions; Sidney Herbert, her first example, felt his official responsibility for the Crimean muddle most keenly, as well he might, for, for some time, the discredit on that account which attached to the Government of which he had been a Minister prevented general recognition of his subsequent magnificent reforms. Alexander was an Army doctor, concerned with the reputation of his profession, and Clough, a man overweighted with a sense of moral responsibility so that he may be said to have died almost from a surfeit of conscience. There was a high standard of responsibility in Victorian times; without it, the many great reforms of those days could never have been achieved. Florence, for all the terrific horse-power of her energy, could have done little, had she not had at her beck and call men who were in many cases as ready to be made use of in the public service as she was to make use of them. Women fell short of her superman ideal of public

duty for the simple reason that they had been hitherto excluded by the "sympathetic" male sex from public work. They knew nothing of it; they had no tradition or reserves of experience; they were untrained to look responsibly upon social evils: they were bred to be mothers and daughters and to crave for being loved. Florence, as many another woman in advance of her generation, thought her own sex "trashy"—a word I have heard used by an advanced woman of modern times respecting women generally—and no doubt, judged by her standard, many of them were, though they could scarcely be blamed for being so, or expected to be different until her aim of making a better life for women had been achieved. Such achievements take time, and it would be as foolish to expect even most women of to-day to have as inbred a sense of public duty as many men and some women have, as, for instance, it would be foolish to expect Egyptians or Indians, who clamour for a constitutional form of government which it has taken us westerners centuries I will not say to perfect, but anyhow to familiarize ourselves with, to be able to work it straight away without making an appalling hash of new liberties.

There was another factor which Florence was not sufficiently alive to, with regard to women's work. She had never had to earn a living, as, owing to her father's liberality, she was economically free. Consequently, the importance of political or civil status,

as a means to earning a living wage, had never come home to her. This was a drawback to her sympathy with the Women's Rights Movement, as it was also to her understanding of the Movement among nurses, in the latter part of her life, for Registration of Nurses —and explains to some extent why she was in this last respect a die-hard.

CHAPTER X

OUT OF OFFICE

FLORENCE had now been "in office," as she called it, continuously for many years. There came a time when her hold upon administration departments slackened, though her work cannot be said to have lessened much. But the fall of the Whig Government in 1868, and the advent of the Tories, materially affected her contact with Ministers and there were other causes which changed not exactly the amount, but the position, of her work.

Her health was no better and though, perhaps, she was no worse than she had been for many a year now, the effect of permanent invalidism was more noticeable. A certain helplessness, mental as well as physical, had set in, so that she was completely dependent on Dr. Sutherland, unable to write any but private letters, and not always those, without first consulting him. He gave his mind and his time to her ungrudgingly, but being a busy man on his own account, as well as on hers, there were times when he could not immediately attend to the innumerable matters she flung at him. Then there was friction. Florence was very exacting. Her helplessness increased her natural impatience. She gibed at Dr. Sutherland for finding pleasure in gardening. The poor man had

a garden at Norwood, where he was living, and enjoyed pottering in it in his very scanty spare time. He had also a living to earn and his own professional interests, as well as duties in connection with the various Committees on which he sat. He was a member of the Army Sanitary Committee from 1862, when it was first appointed, until just before his death, and there was scarcely a Commission or Committee which Florence was instrumental in appointing on which he did not sit.

Florence disapproved of the house at Norwood. Dr. Sutherland could not come from there to South Street as quickly as he had been able to come from Finchley where he had lived before. The move may have been made with a view to breaking Florence in to lesser demands upon him; Dr. Sutherland used to write "The Gulf" as his address on his letters to her and occasionally announced that he was not well enough to come up to town. Florence, however, was not "broken in"; she would have subpœnaed his attendance had she been Lord Chancellor. The correspondence between them was incessant, and often acrid, though in the end Dr. Sutherland generally did as he was told. "Thanks for your parting kick," he once wrote, "which is always pleasant to receive by them as likes it." He never "struck work" for her for more than a day or so. He was called upon for every kind of assistance; her habit was to despatch every letter, scheme or application that was

made to her for his perusal and advice. She even sent him her Census Form, asking how she was to fill it up. "Am I the Head of this household?" He forebore to say "undoubtedly" but got in a backhander when she requested him to define her occupation. He wrote, "None." When in attendance at South Street, their method of communication was often, also, by letter—as was the case with most of Florence's visitors there. A downstairs waiting-room was provided wherein the visitor was given pen and paper and the object of the visit had to be set down. The message, or question, was then taken upstairs and a written reply issued from the upper chamber where Florence lay in secluded state. Dr. Sutherland being deaf, and the task-mistress not always being in a mood in which she wished to see him, though she needed his help, this means of communication became a quite usual one between them. Sir Edward Cook tells us that among Florence's papers are hundreds of pencilled notes to Dr. Sutherland—"Can you answer a plain question?" "You told me positively there was nothing to be done." "Why did you tell me that tremendous banger?" and so on. Now and again, Dr. Sutherland, worn out by the battledore and shuttlecock of messages, would sign his name over a sketch of a dry pump with a handle marked "F. N." Mrs. Sutherland, who was no less devoted to Florence than her husband was, must often have welcomed home a very tired and exasperated man.

2

The great Dr. Jowett, of Balliol, was a friend of quite another order. There existed between this godly minded man of the world and scholar and Florence a relationship which never quite became that between spiritual director and pupil, for she was too much of a born heretic, too wilful to submit for long to his urbane and temperate admonitions.

But, superficially, their relationship was of this nature and, in the beginning of their friendship, Florence sought to reach, through Dr. Jowett's counsel, a religious peace of mind which by herself she could not find. She was a churchwoman but she never went to church. When Superintendent of the Nursing Home in Harley Street, she used, on Sunday mornings, to retire to a room she had taken in Pall Mall in order not to shock the inmates of the Home by being known not to be a churchgoer. She was consumed by an inner ardour for righteousness which rejected conventional religious teaching and she drew little satisfaction from considering the good works she had achieved. She could not reach a feeling of communion with God through these efforts and deeds. She was continually oppressed with a sense of spiritual loneliness and shipwreck of soul. She communed with herself in sleepless night hours and covered sheets of paper with self-reproachful meditations, wherein she chastised herself for impatience, exactingness, censoriousness

and most of the qualities which, indeed, she possessed. "O Lord, even now I am trying to snatch the management of Thy world out of Thy Hands." Dr. Jowett tried to instil into her a greater patience and resignation to the work of God which, as he said, "neither hastes nor rests"; to get her to carry on her work, not with less energy, but in a calmer frame of mind. She listened to him but she could not quell her obstreperous spirit.

She knew she was rebellious; no one but herself knew how much and how often she had rebelled against the inscrutable calm of the Almighty because she could not get her own galloping way in things. God knew perhaps; perhaps that was why He denied her the sense of communion with Him which she longed for. She felt that she had ruined her chances of obtaining this feeling of personal intimacy with God by being too confident that her own convictions as to what ought to be done were His inmost Will. She felt, I think, as if it would be only what she deserved if God were to appear and say to her: "Look here, Florence, what do you want with me? You seem to know all there is to know about my Laws. I'm not going to give you any more intimacy with me than you behave as if you have already got. It would be carrying coals to Newcastle!" I think that was what worried her; she felt that she had presumed too much and that God, in consequence, would not dwell within such overbearing presumption.

She was, as I have said before, essentially a free-thinker; she thought for herself, and on the whole most wisely, in all the work to which she put her untiring mind and hand; she only brought in God as a figurehead, not, of course, consciously—for there was never anyone less of a humbug than she—but because the impulse to do this or that, or to declare that this or that *must* be done, came with such overpowering strength that she could think of no other source than God from whom it could have come. She could not bring herself to acknowledge her own judgment as supreme; generations of theologically minded ancestors forbade that. How could it be merely her own judgment and will speaking in such Sinai-like tones?

And so the inner battle continued between religious strivings and wilful free-thinking soul. Florence suffered terribly from despondency, as did so many great Victorians, unable to reconcile their long and deeply planted religious feelings with the growing independence of their minds. Religious doctrine, impregnable at one point of attack, collapsed at another. The first lines of defence might be intact but in the rear there was confusion.

And not by outer ramparts only
When conflict comes—comes in the foe;
In front, the dogma stands still boldly
But elsewhere look—there's overthrow.

So, with apologies to Arthur Hugh Clough's famous lines, the position might be stated.

Intensely religious in feeling, as Florence was, she never realized any defeat. Her faith persisted, though it did not bring her happiness. She was not a happy woman. Dr. Jowett often besought her to think what a blessed life hers was and had been, of how many lives had been saved by her nursing reforms, how many thousand soldiers who would have fallen victims to bad air, bad water, bad drainage and ventilation were alive owing to her efforts, and of the other innumerable benefits that her energies had conferred upon the world at large. But such thoughts did not bring her lasting satisfaction. She yearned for a spiritual perfection which should quench her restlessness and she clamoured for a sympathy which should lighten the burden of those heavy responsibilities with which she felt, at times, weighed down.

It seems to me, as surely it must seem to many people, that her restlessness was not purely spiritual. The loneliness of which she so often complained, the lack of deep sympathy, came, I venture to suggest, from a certain human emptiness in her life. She was surrounded, at a respectful distance, by a host of admirers, men and women who sincerely reverenced her nobility of soul, her great achievements, and were profoundly appreciative of her character and powers. To the world at large, she was a legend of heroic

deeds, a symbol of womanly goodness. By hundreds of her nurses she was personally adored; she stood to many of them not only as a superlative inspiration in their lives but also as a goddess-friend.

Yet no one can attain to a superlative position in the world's opinion without loneliness. To be looked upon as a superman or superwoman is isolating and deprives the natural human instincts which exist even in superior personalities of ordinary outlet. Florence led, by her own choice, a very unnatural life. Anyone who lives wholly for work is bound to do so. She carried absorption in work to an extreme that has rarely been reached; she allowed nothing to interfere with her ceaseless routine of official labours. She saw her family, her personal friends only by careful appointment; no casual visit, no accidental, unarranged interruption, ever broke through the fortifications of her rigid seclusion. She was cloistered within the Rule of her own inexorable Order.

After her young womanhood, she knew nothing of ordinary intercourse. She saw one person at a time and for a set purpose; she never had the relief of being in the background in conversation, of listening to the play of other minds. An interview by appointment carries with it, on both sides, so much sense of the preciousness of time that it is a serious handicap to real human contact; we keep our eyes on the clock and that effectually keeps us, or tends to keep us, to the point and away from everything else. But

though by keeping to the prearranged point, we may exchange views and feel mutually sympathetic on a special subject, it is usually out of unappointed meetings and chance talks that we make friends. Friendship is more valuable than time—or at least it must seem so, both in the making and keeping, if it is to be a real factor in our lives.

Florence had many devoted friends and she was exceedingly solicitous always for their welfare; their material comforts were considered in every way when they stayed with her; they had early tea and hot bottles in their beds; cabs were ordered for them, flowers were bestowed and when they were ill, constant bulletins of their condition and progress were begged for, though this last requirement, Sir Edward Cook says, was partly insisted upon in order that the nurse in attendance on the case should be kept up to the mark. But all these and many other more delicate tokens of affection, do not make up for the essential thing in friendship which is a sharing of experience of living in the everyday sense of that word (unless, of course, both friends are made in the likeness of the Delphic Sibyl and share a common inspiration). This sharing of rough and tumble experience of life did not and could not exist between Florence and those she cared for.

So naturally, and inevitably, she was lonely and she felt the loneliness the more as she grew older and many of the friends, whose society she had been

able, occasionally (D.V.F.P. shall we say?) to enjoy, died, leaving her with many old and tender recollections of their share in building up her early life, recollections the more vivid because of the subsequent falling off in intimacy. Her father died in 1874; Florence felt his death deeply; he had been a true, though a timid supporter, and together the two had spent many happy hours in religious discussion. His death involved Florence in much tiresome family business as well as in the realization that it was now her duty to look after her mother, an old lady of eighty-six. She had, under Dr. Jowett's influence, spent some months in the country with her parents each year for several summers since 1867, employing the time profitably in studying the local mortality figures, whipping up the hospital, poor law and education authorities of the district and organizing the social life of the neighbouring villages.

During these visits the relationship between mother and daughter had become a gentle and understanding one. Mrs. Nightingale had quite retracted her former critical attitude. "You would have done nothing in life if you had not resisted me," she had once avowed to Florence and the latter, rather painfully aware of her own filial shortcomings in the past, now devoted herself with excessive zeal to enlivening her mother's growing decrepitude. For some weeks she actually took up her abode with her mother in a red villa at Norwood, "out of humanity's reach entirely,"

wrote Florence—"in a red villa like a monster lobster; a place which has no *raison d'être* except the *raison d'être* of lobsters or crabs—viz. to go backwards. It is the only time for twenty-two years that my work has not been the first cause for where I should live and how I should live. It is the caricature of a life!"

This experiment, however, did not last. Mrs. Nightingale's last days were spent at Lea Hurst, still in the family, though, under the entail, no longer her property. Florence continued to dedicate regular portions of her time to her mother, whose mind was now failing and who therefore was not always conscious of her daughter's presence. "Where is Florence?" she would ask. "Is she still in her hospital? I suppose she will never marry now." And one of her greatest pleasures was to have the Longfellow poem read aloud to her.

3

In later years, Florence became very demonstrative, particularly in her letters, to many of her nursing "daughters," the matrons, superintendents, nurses and probationers whose careers she guided and planned and whose moral and spiritual welfare she never ceased to watch over with intense fervour.

The Nightingale School at St. Thomas's was the apple of her eye and she was much more than in name the Chief of it. She had always, since its founda-

tion, been, as it were, its President but from the time she went "out of office," as regards incessant touch with Government departments, until in extreme age, her mental powers failed, she devoted herself to the work of the School and maintained the closest and kindest touch with practically every member of it. The nurses, of all grades, were invited regularly to South Street and Florence took careful stock of them. Applications for advice in appointments of Matrons and Superintendents came to her from all over the country and her recommendations had the weight of nominations. She kept a sharp eye on the training; the nurses had to make regular reports to her; she questioned her visitors as to every detail of the hospital life, and, as she once admitted in a note of self-examination, she found herself acting sometimes rather like a detective. Her generosity and kindness were, however, unfailing: she was deeply honoured by all the nurses and adored by many of them. She was lavish in her gifts of comforts to the School and to many Institutions where her nurses were installed and South Street became to the nursing profession its Downing Street or Buckingham Palace.

To many, it became a hostel. "I am immersed," Florence wrote in 1873, "in such a torrent of my trained matrons and nurses, going and coming, to and from Edinburgh and Dublin, to and from watering places for their health, dining, teaing, sleeping—sleeping by day as well as by night." She gave of her

best in hospitality, in advice, and in affection to these "daughters" of hers. To some she gave almost a doting affection. She had pet names for a few: there was one called "The Pearl," and another "The Goddess." To these, Florence wrote sentimentally, gushingly, sometimes in almost baby language, like a mother to her nurslings. It was a late flowering of personal emotion in her and contrasted oddly with her formerly repressed nature. There must have been an immense underground well of natural human feeling in Florence, though she never allowed it to irrigate the earlier, and perhaps more parched, periods of her life.

CHAPTER XI

FLORENCE AS A DIE-HARD

And where the vanguard halt to-day
The rear shall camp to-morrow.

THE registration of nurses did not become law until 1919 when the Nurses Registration Act was passed. The movement for registration had started long before this but, as in the case of many movements intended to better the position of women, the war hastened the last stages.

Fierce controversy between the advocates and opponents of registration had gone on since the early eighties and in this controversy Florence was a die-hard. She was unalterably opposed to Registration. The basis of her objection was a fundamental one. She could not bring herself to regard nursing as a profession; to her it was a high and sacred calling, as high as the charge of souls and not to be entered upon for other than moral and spiritual motives. Character and religious aims were to her absolutely vital qualities in a nurse; these, she maintained, could not be given by training, nor were they registrable. I don't suppose that the advocates of registration ever insisted that these qualities were registrable. Most people realize that moral qualities, and the

highest professional qualities, are beyond the reach of any purely external test. The examination system which controls and tortures modern professional life is but the test of the victim's power to memorize facts and formulæ which, in practical life, he would never think for one moment of relying upon. In fact if, in practical work, he did rely upon memory, instead of looking up his authority in each instance, he would be guilty of professional negligence.

Practical work is the true test of professional ability, and the substitution of an examination test for practical methods of finding out whether a person knows his job or not must, I think, have arisen out of a stultified conception of knowledge which came into existence with the uprising of a distinct, professional teaching class whose business is dissociated from practical work and whose anxieties to produce prize specimens of their teaching are comparable to the bloated ambitions of fat-stock breeders who think only in terms of the layers of energy-destroying flesh which their cattle can be fed to produce.

But this is by the way, for the registration of nurses was not proposed to be effected merely by means of an external examination. The chief externality involved was in the Register itself, which was to be set up and maintained by a Board which would admit no nurse to the Register until a definite period of training in a hospital had been undergone, thus securing, at least, protection to the public to this extent that nurses

who were registered would be known to have been trained. That such might not otherwise fall short of high standards of nursing could not be certified by the Register, any more than a clergyman who has been ordained or a doctor who has been qualified can be presumed to be a good clergyman or doctor. But the number of untrained and incompetent nurses, in those days, was so great that registration appeared to provide some means of protection, not only for the public, but for the trained nurses themselves whose prospects of a livelihood were seriously affected by the competition of completely ignorant and unskilled women.

It was this last consideration to which Florence was rather blind. Her blindness was, perhaps, understandable; for she never received any remuneration for any of her services. She had no need to ask for any; she received a liberal allowance from home. People of independent means need not bother about whether they are pursuing a calling, or a profession; they can call their work what they like; the choice is a matter of individual taste and feeling. But those who are obliged to earn a living have not the same liberty of choice and it matters very much to them whether or not they have a definite professional status. A professional status increases their wage-earning capacity and the fact that the great majority of workers are forced to consider the wage-earning side of their work does not mean that they are mercenary, as Florence sometimes rather unfairly suggested when she

talked of the mercenary spirit that was creeping into the ranks. The labourer is worthy of his hire and, in most cases, is better for it.

Pay is the spur which the average worker needs to remind him or her of responsibilities. There are comparatively few people who can afford to work for nothing; there are even fewer who are high-minded and disinterested enough to give the same zest and industry to voluntary work as they would give to paid employment.

Nurses' pay, ever since the profession of nurses has been recognized, has never been good, so that undue interest in money-making can hardly be brought as a charge against nurses. Other worldly considerations, no doubt, do influence women's choice of nursing as a career but nothing short of the scrutiny of a Recording Angel could prevent these from operating.

Florence came near to being such an Inquisitor with her nurses but the intensive supervision and guidance which she exercised could never have been maintained as nurses grew in numbers nor, under these circumstances, could a great body of nurses have been expected to submit to a maternal government of this kind. There comes a stage in the development of all professions and callings when self-government is demanded and must be granted. The Registration of Nurses, carrying with it elective rights as regards the constitution of a Council to watch over professional

interests, was a step towards control of the conditions, economic and otherwise, of their professional life to which nurses had every right to aspire. Florence, as I have said before, was much less interested in rights than in duties but rights have to be considered. Rights are, after all, only an insistence upon other people's duties, the duties they owe to those who are standing up for their rights, and human nature is such that both equally need stressing, if fair conditions are to be reached.

Another aspect of the whole question which Florence had so much at heart is worth considering. Why should the nursing profession be isolated as a religious calling? The care of the sick is a most important social function; there seems little prospect of its diminishing in importance, notwithstanding the tremendous advances made in surgical and medical science. The world's vast population; the interconnection between life everywhere; the increasing cost of living in the widest sense of that word; the increasing risks that come with civilization's jazz existence, make accident, disease and weakness ever present social problems for the dealing with which the whole community, both collectively and individually, is becoming more and more responsible.

A nurse's post is admittedly a highly responsible one; she holds her patients' lives in her hands but then that is the case, only perhaps in a less immediately obvious way, with hundreds of thousands of public

workers—engine drivers, motor-car drivers, captains of liners, builders, riveters, gas and electric corporations and a host of others, not forgetting the Government of the country and, above all, the Prime Minister, in whose hands lies the decision, involving the lives of millions, as to peace or war.

There is no basic reason why one heavy responsibility should be picked out from all the rest and regarded as a more religious responsibility than another.

But apart from the illogicality of such an attitude, to make an invidious distinction of this kind is unwise on other grounds. To put a halo round any particular occupation is to cast an exceptionally heavy responsibility on those who are employed in it, and a too heavily felt responsibility impairs efficiency. A sense of a "calling," over and above the individual's natural interest in and preference for a particular career, is really nothing more than an idealized sense of self-importance, a quite normal mental condition in the early stages of self-development, particularly when, as in Florence's girlhood, any form of self-assertion on a young woman's part in any direction away from home was considered highly improper and regarded with qualms even by the young woman herself. But as the individual attains to freedom of choice in these matters, and it becomes looked upon as natural that she should do as she likes, the self has no need to fall back on these ideal supports. They stand in the

way of full self-realization and tend to make us dogmatic and insufficiently self-critical and all the things which come from regarding oneself as the agent of a Higher Power.

The more we can bring *ourselves* to account for all we do, the more we can refrain from affecting a high prophetic and sibylline status and from deluding ourselves that we are imparting eternal verities when we are in reality merely giving utterance to our own very imperfectly built up opinions, the better it will be. For the world needs public-spirited thinkers and doers like Florence Nightingale, not set apart and cloistered in a "calling," but entering into every profession, business and other activity of ordinary life.

CHAPTER XII

THE END

I REMEMBER the surprise I felt on hearing—it was during the Boer War—that Florence Nightingale was still alive. I was young then, and, of course, when one is young, the events of forty years back are almost mythical. Anyway, the Crimean War seemed very much past history, kept celebrated however, in young people's minds, by Tennyson's *Charge of the Light Brigade*, a favourite school recitation, and the equally heroic legend of Florence Nightingale. The world in general had known nothing of her life after the Crimea; at no time, in the fifties and sixties, would the news of her death have caused much surprise, owing to the general belief that her days were numbered, and heroes who do not die at heroic moments no longer live in the popular imagination, unless from time to time they step again into the limelight.

The limelight stage of Florence's life was a short one. Her actual life was very long, longer, by nearly ten years, than that of her Royal contemporary, Queen Victoria. The Jubilee; the Diamond Jubilee; the Boer War; the Queen's death; King Edward's Coronation, passed and still an old lady lived on in South Street, for the last ten years, however, no longer in full possession of her mental faculties and before

the end came in 1910, quite oblivious to what was going on around her.

Until 1897 or 1898, she was as busy as ever, continuously interested in Indian matters, still corresponding with Viceroys, still as keen as ever on any matter affecting the health of the Army. On Balaclava Day, October 25, 1897, she wrote greetings to Crimean veterans, addressing them as "My dear old Comrades," and her interest in the work of her nurses all over the country and in the affairs of the St. Thomas's School went on unabated, bristling with correspondence and visits. She followed the nursing arrangements in the Boer War and received many letters from nurses on active service. She was still hot against registration; in 1893 she had written a paper which was read at the Nursing Section of the Congress on Hospitals and Nursing, held at Chicago, in which she referred to the debatable question and to the dangers which from her point of view attended that "new art and new science" which had been created within the last forty years: "a new profession—so they say; *we* say 'calling.' "

In 1893, her friend of long years' standing, Mr. Jowett, died. He had known her innermost thoughts perhaps better than anyone. At one time, she had freely confided in him; then there had been a period of coolness when she had been disappointed in his friendship. She had thought him lacking in spiritual energy—his God, she had once, rather tartly, remarked,

was a "jelly"—and she had felt too, sometimes when she was morbidly depressed, that he gave her no real sympathy. But the coolness had not lasted; the real affection that each had for the other persisted over temperamental differences which were considerable, and Florence's later life was much influenced by his teaching, particularly by a favourite maxim of his that the last years of life were and ought to be the best ones.

Grow old along with me: the best is yet to be,
The last of life for which the first is made.

Robert Browning's lines, from *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, were often on Mr. Jowett's lips and Florence, who had now to a great extent outgrown the nervous trouble which had for years prostrated her, was able, genuinely, to enjoy the wisdom they contained. She still kept to long-established habits; she kept to her bedroom—a sunny room on the second floor, with French windows and balconies—but she moved about in it more than formerly and those who were privileged to see her on these occasions had little doubt of her vitality and health. She was now a robust old lady, with nothing of the invalid in her looks or bearing, large and stately. The apparently excellent photograph of her that was taken by her companion, Miss Bosanquet, as late as 1906—one of the most illuminating things in Sir Edward Cook's illuminating book, unfortunately unobtainable for reproduction—once and for all

dissipates any cherished sentimental notion of the heroine. It shows her, even at the advanced age of eighty-six, as a stout old Trojan, on her couch and evidently, from the propped-up position and inert hands, physically helpless, but with warrior-like determination still in every line of her full, strong, combative face and a look as if its owner had by no means issued its last word of command or shot its last bolt of sarcasm. There is also a faintly coloured sketch in Sir E. Cook's book, by Miss F. A. de Biden Footner, made a year later, which shows apple cheeks and the same quizzical expression. Florence was said to have become much softer in her old age; if so, as we look at these pictures, we can imagine that in middle age she can have been no sugar plum. One can so well imagine her saying, as she did say, when she was pestered for photographs and to allow a bust of herself to be on view at a Diamond Jubilee Exhibition in 1897: "I won't be made a sign at an Exhibition." As a matter of fact she eventually yielded to besieging requests and allowed her bust to be set up among Crimean relics but she expressed a wish afterwards that the bust would get smashed, despite the fact that she had been told that some admirer had decked it daily with flowers. She was a strange mixture of autocracy and modesty; her excessive horror of praise must, I think, have come from a determined effort, made continuously, since girlhood, to conquer that at one time naïve ambition of hers to shine in society.

She had then deemed it sinful and prayed ardently to be delivered from its vanity.

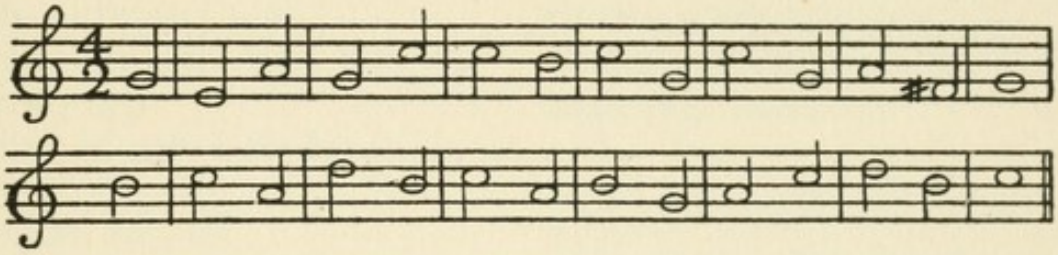
By the irony of fate, the greatest public honours were bestowed upon her when she could neither fear nor enjoy them. In December 1908, the Order of Merit—for the first time given to a woman—was conferred upon Florence Nightingale. There was no ceremony of presentation as depicted in the recently performed play, *The Lady with the Lamp*. The Order was brought to South Street by Sir Douglas Dawson, the King's emissary, and simply given to her in her bedroom. Florence scarcely realized the honour that she was receiving. Her mind was fast failing—she was nearly blind—and she murmured, "Too kind—too kind," as if Sir Douglas had been her nurse bringing her a cup of Benger's.

Six months later, the City of London, not to be outdone, conferred its freedom upon her; her feeble hand was guided to sign her initials upon the City Roll but she was by now beyond the reach of compliments. She died in sleep, one August afternoon in 1910. For months past she had been only vaguely conscious of her surroundings.

She was buried, beside her Father and Mother, in the churchyard at East Wellow near Embley, her old home in Hampshire. Six sergeants from Guards regiments carried her coffin.

Her favourite hymn—"The Son of God goes Forth to War"—was sung at the graveside. Its fine militant

air—familiar to all who have attended English garrison church services—has the strength of great simplicity and unfaltering advance.



How few the notes! What fervour they carry!

So it was with Florence's life. A few strong notes—no deviation from the scale of them; no elaboration of theme—faith, ardour, singleness of purpose, great Victorian qualities, filled out and quickened by a battle imagery, tense with fighting appeal.

His blood-red banner streams afar!
Who follows in His train?

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