

## **Experiences of an English Sister of Mercy / by Margaret Goodman.**

### **Contributors**

Goodman, Margaret.

### **Publication/Creation**

London : Smith, Elder, 1862.

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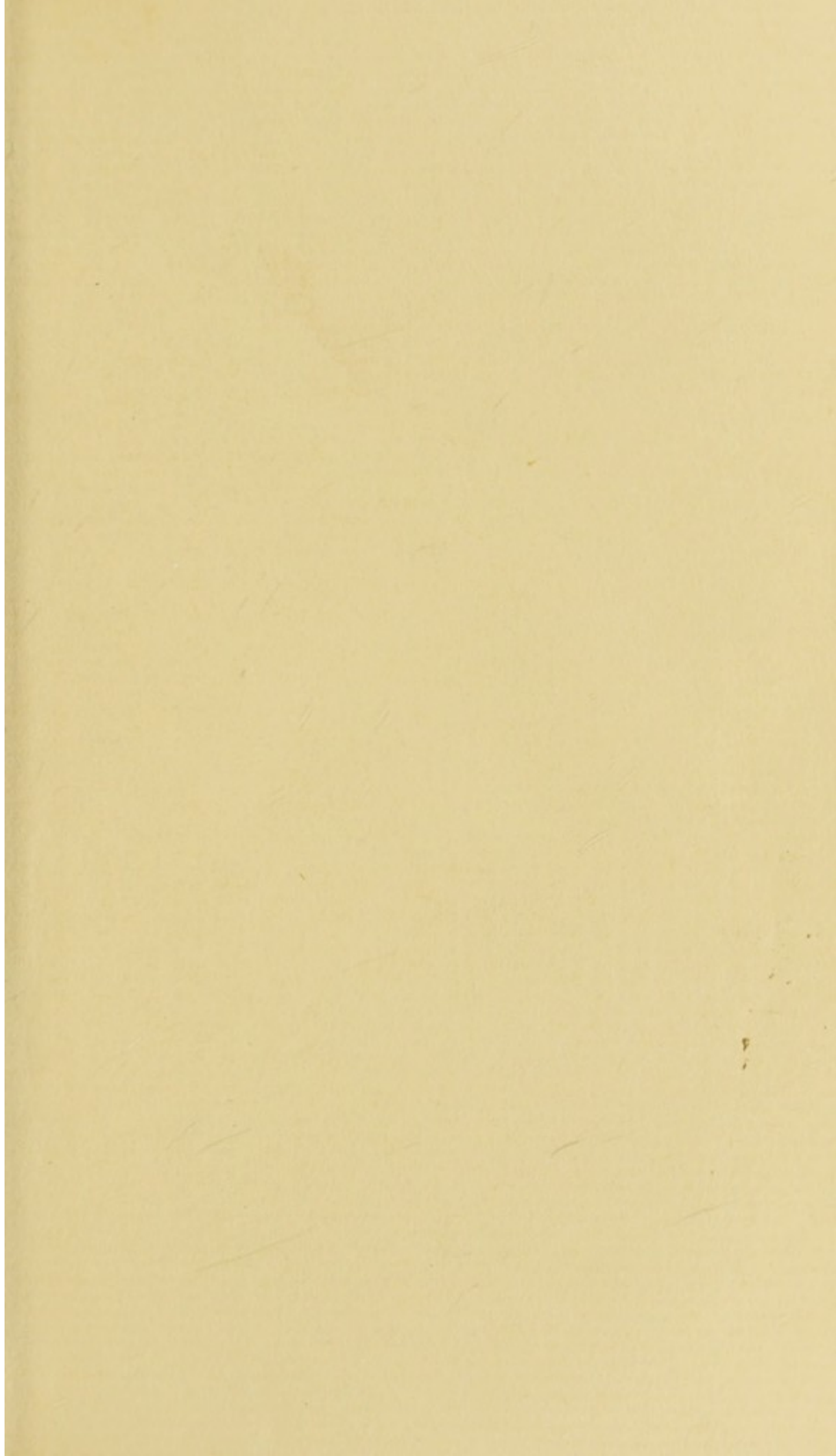
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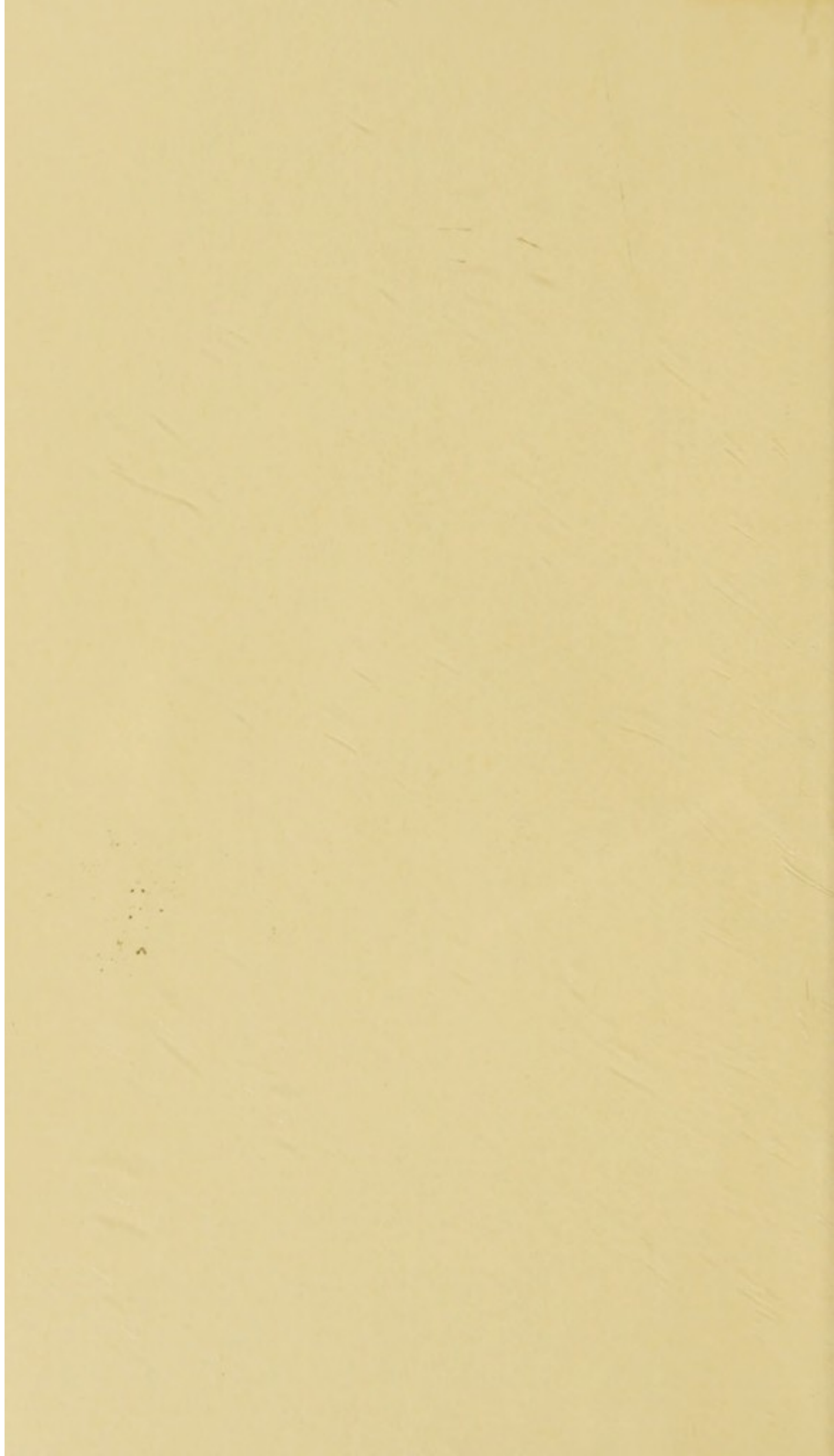
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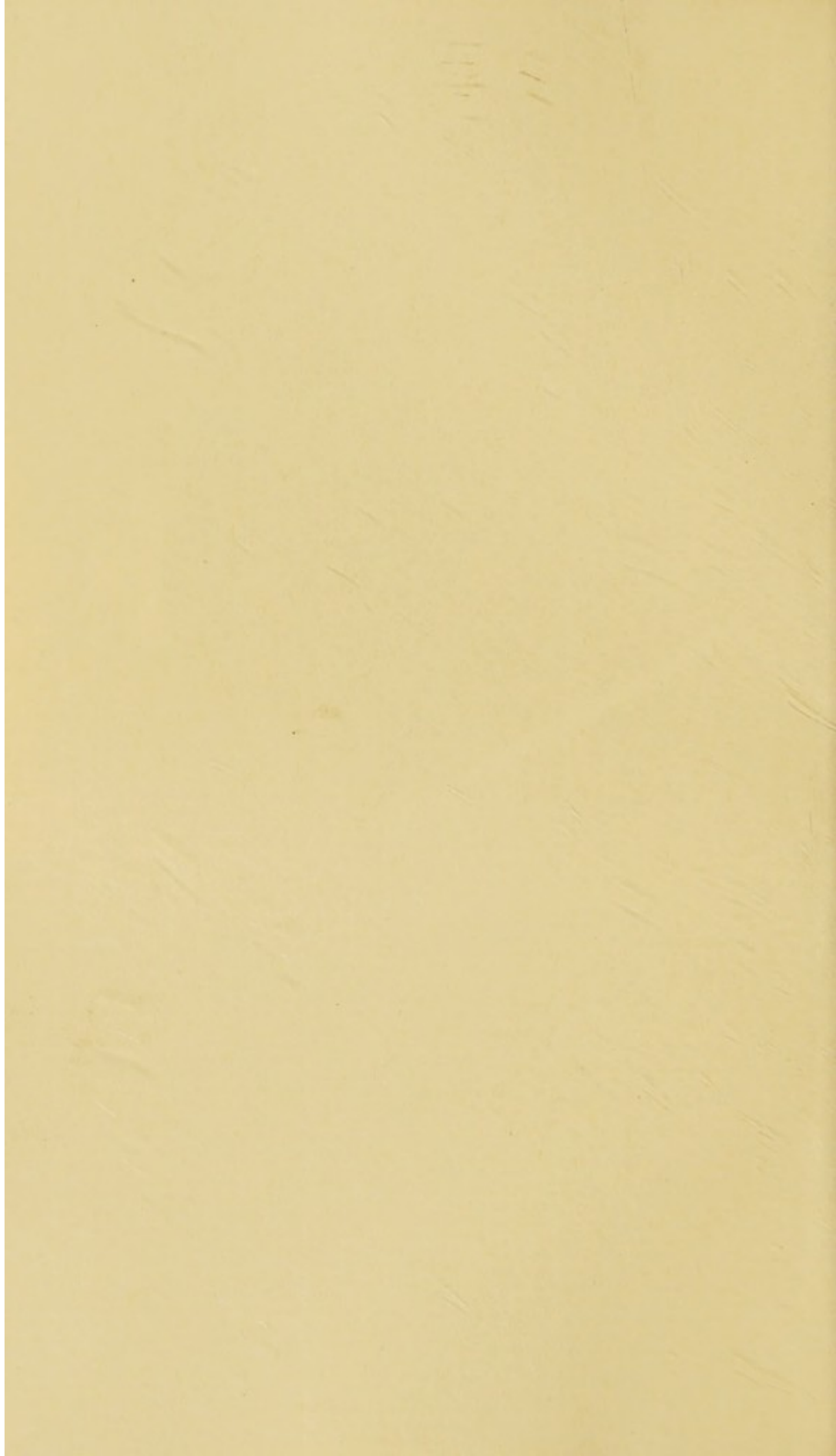




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EXPERIENCES  
OF AN  
ENGLISH SISTER OF MERCY.

BY  
MARGARET GOODMAN.

LONDON:  
SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

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SISTERHOODS : 19 cent

CRIMEAN WAR

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EXPERIENCES  
OF AN  
ENGLISH SISTER OF MERCY.

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CHAPTER I.

THE DEVONPORT SISTERHOOD.

PROBABLY in every step in life which is the result of deliberate choice, with the leading motive mingle many of less force; but led chiefly by the wish to minister to untended suffering, in the summer of 1852, I joined the Sisters of Mercy at Devonport. As time went on, Miss Sellon thought fit to develop such conventual rules as pressed too heavily upon many of us; and, therefore, after a sojourn of six years I returned to my former occupation.

The following reminiscences were jotted down



at the suggestion of a friend, who remarked that the simple delineation of the everyday life of a Sister of Mercy might prove interesting, and even serviceable; and he added, that their being written by one whose view was in a great degree limited to everyday life, would not be a disadvantage.

Before recounting my own experiences, it may be proper to advert briefly to the origin and extension of the Society of Sisters of Mercy of Devonport, and also to the rules of the Society, together with a few details which I conceive exemplify the practical working of these rules. It will be perceived that they are by no means creations of Miss Sellon's, but rather adaptations of existing conventual rules, and which, in the ordering of her household, are more fully developed by her from year to year.

In the following simple manner the Society originated: Miss Sellon, deeply moved by the wretchedness of many of the poor, especially in our maritime towns, took her portion, whatever it might be, and, with the consent of her father, determined to devote her little fortune, together with what other talents God had committed to her, to the relief of misery. With this intention, in 1847, she came to Stoke, part of Devonport, where she lived in humble lodgings: after a short



time, being joined by another lady, a small house was taken, and the two continued working amongst the poor with all simplicity. In a few months several other ladies came to cast in their lot with them, amongst whom was one of high standing, and of showy, but somewhat superficial attainments, and who was deeply imbued with fantastic notions gathered from reading the accounts of the mediæval ages, and the practices of the saints of old; a kind of literature perused in some circles about that time. It is often seen that persons of good sense suffer themselves to be guided by weaker minds, and it is said that from the mediæval lady came the original impulse to the mode of life existing in Miss Sellon's houses in 1859.

At this date the Society consisted of about twenty ladies, who were scattered at five or six different houses in various parts of the country. The "Abbey" at Plymouth was devoted chiefly to the "Order of the Holy Communion," which was the outer order; the Priory at Bradford, Wilts, to the "Order of the Sacred Heart," or the enclosed order; St. Saviour's, in London, to the "Order of the Holy Ghost," or to sisters who, while living ordinarily in their own homes, conformed to certain rules, and from time to time resided for a period at the London house, and



devoted themselves to visiting the sick poor. The sisters of this order are not included in the twenty I have mentioned as belonging to the Society, and with whom they had little intercourse. Some years previous to 1859 there were double this number residing with Miss Sellon.

The Sister of the Order of the Sacred Heart wore but one under garment, a long, rough, flannel chemise, of which article she possessed two. Those who kept the rule in all its integrity wore no stockings, and sandals in the place of boots; their dress was of white serge, over which they wore, out of doors, a cloak of brown serge topped by a bonnet of black alpaca, to which was suspended a long alpaca veil: the colour of the dress was afterwards changed to brown. On a wet day, when it was necessary to hold up the dress, our great enemies, the little boys, were in a state of considerable excitement; but sisters of this order seldom went abroad except to church.

The dress of those belonging to the outer order was sufficiently peculiar to make the wearer known as a Sister of Mercy, and, therefore, she could pass at any hour through the worst localities without hearing an unseemly expression. I suppose it would be considered by most people a decent, grave, and becoming dress for women engaged as



we were. The two orders differed in other respects; but gradually, in all but the dress, the outer one was being brought to the perfection of the inner, and all were greatly encouraged to leave a life of work for the higher vocation, as it was deemed, of prayer and meditation. Absorbing ourselves even in our spiritual concerns many may judge to be selfish, and not according to the example of our Great Pattern; but, if a life entirely spent in prayer and meditation were good, I do not think it is practicable. Many who profess so to spend the hours, employ them in listless dreaming, or in brooding over real or supposed grievances. I would not dare thus to judge the thoughts of others, did I not speak from experience of many conversations I have had with nuns, both of the Church of England and of Rome.

The daily rule of the "Order of the Sacred Heart," throughout the year, was as follows. I speak from memory:—Rise at three A.M. and proceed to chapel immediately, continuing there until 4.30; return to cell for private prayer and meditation for one hour; at six re-enter chapel for the service called *Prime*, which lasted about half an hour; and then self-examination until seven, when all went to their several occupations: these were not usually such as called the sisters from



their cells, where each one worked silently and alone. *Terse*, at nine, occupied about fifteen minutes : this service was followed by a sister reading aloud one of the rules of the order, appointed for special meditation on that day. Work was resumed until ten, when came *Sext*, and then came the long-looked for breakfast, in which dinner was also included : the meal consisted of an ordinary dinner of meat and vegetables, with tea ; except on the fasts of the Church, when for meat was substituted rice pudding or bread and cheese.

I cannot tell why it is supposed that fasting, besides being a mortification, is likely to prove a means of making us indifferent to the promptings of the flesh ; why it should be thought that under such circumstances the soul should be less dragged down by the body, and, therefore, capable of higher flights. I have heard those who had tested this by experience, say that, during a severe fast, when walking the streets, engaged in their work, in Church, or wherever they might be, their thoughts would run off from that in which they ought to be occupied, and in imagination they were counting the loaves in some baker's shop with which they were familiar, or something of that kind. The breakfast table was not left until



eleven, the time being spent in reading the Bible generally.

From eleven to twelve was allowed for recreation, and until this hour, silence was to be unbroken in the house; but when assembled in the recreation room, the novices, &c. might speak on certain subjects, if a sister were present. At twelve, *Nones* and meditation until one: then the sisters worked each in her cell until four, which was the time for *Vespers*; after this service we had tea, when there was reading again for an hour. Another hour's recreation was followed by *Complin*, and the household were supposed to be in bed by 7.3 P.M.; a sister going round to see that the lights were extinguished.

I suppose, fallen beings as we are, the wisest disposition of time on earth would be such a one as would best fit us for the presence of God, holy angels, and saints in the mansion's beyond the grave. But, setting aside the question whether such a life causes us to neglect social duties, it is doubtful if a life directed by these rules really trains the soul to any high degree of holiness, or is elevating to the character. It appeared to some who watched it, to have the effect of narrowing the sympathies, of engendering ignorance, self-conceit, and spiritual pride, and of



altogether destroying simplicity and self-forgetfulness. If these observances are really conducive to holiness, it is not worth while speaking of the suffering they entailed ; though that was something very real : at least mentally.

I have said that this rule was modified with regard to the outer order ; yet it was elevated above all usefulness, and held up as the perfection of holy living : the rule of almost perpetual silence being evidently in view for both orders. One lady arrived at such a state of perfection in speechlessness, that she had not spoken for several years, except to the superior and senior sister at rare intervals, and in the responses of the prayers : if she required to know the time, for instance, she would write her question on a slip of paper. This was quite voluntary on her part ; and I believe she went even beyond the wishes of Miss Sellon.

I have heard ladies acquainted with the conventual life remark, that nuns as a class exhibit much petty selfishness, self-conceit, and self-complacency ; yet the nun's waking hours are supposed to be spent almost entirely in thinking over her sins. She examines herself, and re-examines herself ; in short, so trains her mind to dwell upon herself, that at last she has no control of her thoughts, and can think of nothing but



herself; thus, all her little concerns become so magnified, that she will shed floods of tears if her cap is starched too stiffly. Nothing rubs the edge off conceit like jostling with our fellows; we can shut ourselves up and compare ourselves with ourselves until we believe that we are the cleverest persons in the world, and the very best in all respects.

It is scarcely possible to conceive the crushing effect this artificial mode of life has upon young fresh hearts, or the bitterness it engenders in the minds of restless spirits: many of these last appear to be tempted into the life by the mental repose it seems to offer. The intense disappointment which convent life had proved to a Roman Catholic nun, may be inferred from the following anecdotes. We observed while engaged in conversation, a lady approaching, whom we both knew to be one of the silliest, and at the same time most self-satisfied and serene beings in existence, unless perhaps it might be a little sparrow: the nun said, speaking of this lady, "Miss X—— is one of the happiest women in the world: she really enjoys life. Do you know why? It is because she is almost a born fool." And a Protestant sister of a kindred spirit remarked of another who was near-sighted, and a little deaf, "that she made a capital nun,



and was always happy, because she lacked three of the five senses—seeing, hearing, and feeling.”

I have heard a young novice say that it was her one prayer to die; and, though not sentimental or “in love,” most of them were ready to exclaim with Thekla:—

“The world is empty, my heart is dry,  
There’s nothing to wish for beneath the sky;  
She looked o’er the flats, and she said and she said,  
I’m weary, I’m weary, oh, would that I were dead !”

By the mercy of God, there are times of refreshing for weary souls, whether dwelling in a nunnery or anywhere else, if by the grace of the Spirit we long and wait for them; but possibly we have no right to expect to be especially sustained in trials which we have gone out of our way to encounter. But if the mental sufferings are terrible in health and vigour, they are increased tenfold by sickness. At such times it requires all our fortitude to accept and endure meekly and patiently lassitude and pain: we have no remaining strength wherewith to bear the tension of a highly artificial state of existence.

I have learned to believe that the bed of sickness is the arena whereon the natural character most truly reveals itself: there the selfish and exacting are so undisguisedly; and it is the same with all



our least resisted, most predominant failings ; while many with a rough exterior there reveal a well of tenderness in the soul, which has been through life as studiously concealed as the defects of some of us. We must be ourselves in sickness ; we have no power to be anything else.

In sickness, the nun's companions all regard her with wondering indignation rather than sympathy and pity ; they tell her perpetually that she must exert her self-control, and do battle valiantly with the lassitude which is weighing down every limb, or that she must rise above bodily pain, nor suffer her soul to be distracted by it : pointing to the example of saints and martyrs, she is still bidden to remain true to the precept, " Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," and her bodily weakness is ignored. When utterly prostrated, and lying on her death-bed, it is accounted a falling from her rule if she looks for human sympathy ; as she most certainly will, being human. God has told us that He will account the aid we render our neighbour in the hour of extremity as done unto Himself ; then how can it be wrong in any heart to look for sympathy at such a time ? Is there a rule of life higher than that of the Gospel ? It is customary, —at least, among some orders in the Church of



Rome—when a sick sister has been given over by the medical attendant (though, as is the case in some diseases, it may be a considerable time before death) for the reverend mother of the convent to suspend a crucifix on a frame before the eyes of the dying nun, and, after commending her to the Saviour, to leave her to breathe out her soul in solitude. We do not read that our Lord sent away the women who stood by His cross.

One of the strictest rules of a nun's life is that she walk loose to all human friendships : she must consider all ties of relationship severed when she becomes a recluse, and, therefore, she drops her surname, and often assumes a new Christian name. Whether at Miss Sellon's, or any other nunnery, if a friendship between two of the members be discovered, they are at once carefully separated. But in sickness I have observed that the love for her childhood's home and the brothers and sisters who dwelt there with her, often rushes back to the heart of the nun with all the more vehemence on account of the isolation hitherto imposed.

A dying sister at Plymouth said, "I sit and think of home, until I fear that I am going mad ; go and request Sister —— to come to me, that she may ask the Lady Superior again to let me go



home while I have strength: I cannot die without seeing my father." She did, poor creature, about a month after the declaration. This sister came to Devonport when about twenty, and while in health; and none could have embraced the life altogether more heartily, or submitted her reason, as she was taught, more implicitly to the rule of "obedience:" yet all these restraints utterly failed in sickness; though the meek, loving gentleness of her character, and the tenderness of her conscience were never before so apparent. I heard a sister, who had helped her down a long flight of stone steps, say to her, on reaching the bottom, "You really ought to exert yourself more, dear; it is wicked of any one to give way in this manner." "Indeed, sister," she replied, with the utmost meekness, "I do try and struggle; but I will try still more: it makes me very unhappy to see you displeased with me," and she then went panting up a second flight, with all the energy she could summon. I said to the sister who had administered the rebuke, that I believed the invalid was in the last stage of consumption. Though for months together I had seen her daily, the dying girl might be said to be a stranger to me, and, indeed, to most of us; she had been so careful before her illness to observe the rule of silence.



The senior sister repeated her belief that she required "rousing."

The invalid met me the next day in the buttery, and, knowing that I was never careful about the silence, she addressed me; asking, as she knew I had had experience as a nurse, to tell her frankly if I thought she had more power than she exerted with regard to the "rousing" herself: for she was anxious to do right. She went on to say, "I have little pain, but all my limbs are weighed down as it were with weights of iron, and I have great difficulty in breathing after the least exertion." She left Plymouth for another of the houses in a few days, and I then became the occupant of the cell out of which she went. On the table she had cut with a penknife her old name in full; the name by which father, mother, brothers and sisters had known her: the one which she herself had not heard for years. She asked me in our only conversation if I would sometimes speak of her: a curious request to make to a stranger, but tending, I believed, to show that she did not then, as she had once done, wish to die, in a certain sense, wholly to the world, even when her soul left it; and the returning to the old name, and cutting it in the varnished table, exhibited the same feeling. It was a singular



thing for any one to do; especially in that house, where, very properly, habits of order are assiduously cultivated: and it must have been done from a strong motive, or it would not have been done at all.

I was not in the same house with this sister when she died, nor were any of the younger members of the community; but the details of her last hours were communicated to us by those about the house whom we afterwards saw, and these details formed the subject of many whispered stolen conversations, and of much secret scribbling, throughout the household. On the day of her death, the invalid asked the cook to give her an allowance of boiled milk and bread twice in the day instead of once as appointed; and when this person mentioned difficulties, the dying sister said, "Let me have it to-night instead of to-morrow, when I shall not need it." She begged so earnestly, and made such a point of it, that at length the cook, a good-natured person where she had it in her power, promised to try and spare sufficient for the supper, and gave her a portion in the forenoon: bread and milk was the only part of her diet she relished. The cook going to her room in the evening with the milk, found her lying on the bed; "Elizabeth," she said, "I am dying: call Sister —— at once." Elizabeth told



her that this sister was with the Lady Superior, and of course she must not go there, and endeavoured to persuade her that she was fancying, and would feel better after the milk. She reiterated her impression that her last moments were approaching, until Elizabeth became much alarmed and went to the door which opened into the part of the building occupied by Miss Sellon; and while standing in the corridor thinking what she must do next, the senior sister opened a door to put out a tray. The cook called to her, but was bidden to go away, as she was engaged; not to be repulsed she rushed forward and said, "Sister —— is dying." They turned back together, but when they came to the bed-side, the sick sister was past speaking. The senior sister went immediately to fetch help, and returned with the sister who not many weeks before had helped the invalid down the stone steps, and who, as she drew near the bed, said, "You must rouse yourself, dear; it is only a fainting fit." The dying girl smiled sweetly, and ere the smile had flitted from her face, her soul had entered where sorrow and sighing are done away: "For God shall wipe away the tears from their eyes."

During her last day in this world, she sent to beg the loan of a pocket-handkerchief from a sister



who was then a great invalid, and has since rejoined her. The request was not complied with, and the refusal was a subject of remorse to her who gave it during the remainder of her brief life. We were allowed three of these articles clean per week, and while staying at Plymouth, the novices strove to spare the invalid three or four from amongst their allowance, at her entreaty ; for which trifling favour she showed great gratitude. The sister who refused this dying request followed the corpse to the grave, and I heard that she said on her return, " I thought my heart would break when I looked in. Oh, that she could come back, that I might show her how sorry I am to have been so unkind."

The foregoing incidents may appear to some of too trifling a nature to mention ; but I believe that this simple thing, more than her other trials, fixed the attention of the dying girl and filled her soul with bitterness. She had been reared in all the refinements of life, and had voluntarily given up her station and made herself a servant of servants ; which position she never for a moment dreamed of resigning whilst strength remained to her : and it seemed rather hard that her own dying hours should be thus untended, uncomforted, and that she should have to beg, and be refused what was such



a trifle to others, but which was needful to her at that moment.

In contrast to this almost destitute and untended death-bed we may think of one occupying comfortable apartments, into which none must penetrate unbidden, and sitting down every day to a luxurious table; who was expensively dressed, had a French waiting maid, a travelling carriage, &c. "Truly it is safer to obey than to govern." Grandeur and luxury for the Lady Abbess is an important part of the conventual system, and perhaps Miss Sellon is not so much to blame as those sitting in pleasant parsonages, or luxuriating on jolly college fellowships, who are ever trying to preach and write back mediæval times. She is too practical, too earnest-minded to content herself with whining sentimentally over any subject: and she has tried to reduce the system to practice. I have heard (but I cannot tell how truly) that all severities in her houses have been discontinued since I knew them, now nearly three years back; and I think they would have been long before, if Miss Sellon had mixed freely with the sisters, and thus have been able to understand better how much these severities were weighing them down. I saw her only a few times, but it seemed to be the general impression



with those who had opportunities of knowing her better, that she was naturally a woman of high intellect and great firmness of will, and with a gentle, loving, tender heart. If any of the younger ones were near her person, I know that she was always very indulgent; and they all loved her very much, and never reflected upon her when they mourned over their trials.

It may be wondered why any persons stay for years in this sisterhood, where there is no compulsion as in Romish convents; but possibly many think it safer for the soul to abide in a course of life which has been sought with high aspirations, and followed for years with daily and hourly prayer for grace to persevere unto the end.

In each house occupied by the Devonport sisters there is a room set apart for devotional purposes, and furnished with exquisite taste and simplicity. The services used in this room consist chiefly of the Psalms, together with a collect and hymn. The hymns are very forcible, but somewhat rugged translations from the ancient Latin; the collects, with one or two exceptions, were taken from the Book of Common Prayer. I have no copies, but as a specimen of the general tone of these sacred songs, I subjoin the following verses.



## One of the hymns for Ascension-tide :

“ O Jesu, our redemption !  
Lov'd and desired with tears,  
God, of all worlds Creator,  
Man in the course of years ;

“ What wondrous pity moved thee  
To make our cause thine own,  
And suffer death and torments  
For sinners to atone !

“ O Thou, who piercing Hades  
Didst break the captives' chain,  
Who gloriously ascended'st  
Thy Father's throne again ;

“ Subdue our many evils  
By mercy all divine,  
And comfort with thy presence  
The hearts that for Thee pine.”

## And for Lent :

“ Jesu, as tho' thyself wert here,  
I draw in trembling sorrow near,  
And bending o'er thy form divine  
Kneel down and kiss those wounds of thine.

“ Ah me ! how naked art Thou laid ;  
Blood-stained, distended, cold, and dead ;  
Joy of my soul, thou Saviour sweet,  
Upon thy sacred winding sheet,” &c.

I believe the translations were made by the sisters themselves, and the tunes were arranged by them that they might suit a choir of female voices.



In the chapel those of the outer Order spent greater part of the time not taken up in outdoor duties, and as oftentimes the work of a Sister of Mercy in the homes of the sick poor is carried on amidst squalor and dirt, it was peculiarly refreshing to enter this room set apart for collectedness and prayer, and which was so remarkable for spotless cleanliness. There were but few attempts at adornment, except that vases of flowers were placed here and there. These flowers were the only luxury in which the sisters indulged, and I believe they spent about one shilling a week in this manner; but often a friend would send a few exotics, or our school children would bring a small nosegay of rarer blossoms. Perhaps the beautiful music of the chapel, the sweet pure flowers, and the outward tranquillity, were good for us in a sense distinct from the primary one; these influences might have helped to keep up in our souls a sense of the beautiful, and have been among the refinements of life which, without an effort on our parts, tended to preserve old thoughts and feelings, and to prevent the taste and tone of mind from sinking down in any degree towards the level of surrounding circumstances: this was of the utmost importance not to ourselves only, but to our work.



## CHAPTER II.

## EXPERIENCES AT PLYMOUTH.

ON reaching Plymouth, I was almost immediately instructed to take the oversight of three large houses, rented by the Sisters, in a very low district. The rooms were re-let at the usual rate of payment to those only who would conform to certain regulations ; thus the disorderly who were irreclaimable were kept out, and a quiet home secured for such families as were desirous of leading peaceful, decent lives. The buildings were provided with a reading-room, supplied with two or three weekly papers and periodicals designed for the use of the various trades, and its shelves were filled with light literature as well as books of general information. To this room the inmates of the houses had free access, and any steady man was admitted of an evening on payment of twopence per week. On two evenings in the week Sisters attended to help those who desired



it with their drawing, French, reading, writing, and arithmetic; drawing and French being selected at the request of the men, many of whom were marble masons, and others were employed about the foreign vessels frequenting the port.

Among my pupils I remember a gigantic railway labourer, about fifty years of age, who was learning his letters; which he found much harder work, I believe, than shovelling earth, or working with a pick-axe. Towards the close of our acquaintance he was able to read the Gospels; and a few nights before he left the town, with a little help from me he wrote a letter to his wife, which he declared she would consider a "stunner;" and I think she might well do so: we wore out a great number of quill pens in the execution of the task, and wasted a great deal of ink, and as for the steel pens we tried, they went through the paper and stuck in the table, or split in pieces, while under the guidance of his heavy hand, "trained," as he himself said, "to guide nothing less heavy than a pickaxe." We were both very proud, and he was hot and almost exhausted when the letter was duly folded and addressed.

At one period, beds were provided for women travelling as pedlars, &c.: any one who could see



the places to which poor travellers of this description are under the necessity of resorting, would think such a provision very desirable. I was told that the antecedents of a little child living in the sisters' houses (they occupied several in Wyndham Place) were these: a poor faded creature with a baby in her arms requested a night's lodging, and when she left in the morning, she carried what was supposed to be the infant asleep under her shawl; but on the person appointed going, later in the day, to the bed to remove the sheets, they were not to be found, and between the blankets lay a sleeping babe. The deserted one was christened Agatha, because she was found on the day marked for that saint in the calendar. When I knew her she was a beautiful but delicate child: she died on the eve of the Holy Innocents, at the age of about two years, and at the head of her tiny grave in Plymouth cemetery stands a cross bearing the inscription, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."

The sister in charge of the "Houses of Hope," as they were termed, read daily prayers in the school-room provided for the children of the houses; and on Sunday afternoon, the Confession, the Lord's Prayer, and the Psalms for the day were read in the same room to all who chose to attend;



after the devotions, the sister read a short, plain sermon, and concluded by catechizing the children in the presence of the parents, and then books were given out from the children's lending library. All were supposed to attend the evening daily prayers, but, on the Sunday, the attendance was quite voluntary; the only aim being to provide on the Lord's day some kind of religious exercise for those who could not be induced to attend church.

It would appear that the labouring classes, while much attached to the Liturgy, which is with them in their sorrows and joys, deaths, births, and marriages, are yet most reluctant to attend the places of worship belonging to the Established Church: chiefly, I believe, on account of the distinction made there between the rich and poor, whether by means of pews or appropriated sittings. A sister frequently amused us by recounting an adventure she met with in a large church in a fashionable watering-place. Not observing any free sittings, she proceeded up the aisle, under the impression that a seat would be found for her in one of the many empty, or half-empty, pews; but the pew-opener, or "butt-woman," as females following the occupation are termed in Devonshire, darted from a distant part of the building, and, as the sister expressed it, charging down upon her, drove



her at the point of the bayonet, so to speak (the point of the bayonet being represented by the forefinger of the right hand), to the end of the aisle, where she was deposited in a subdued and crushed frame of mind on a bench attached by a hinge to the door of a pew. The sister used to argue, "My clothes were poor, but they were whole and clean, and the best I could afford: what was my offence? But I was not finished with yet: many times, with the rest of my peers on the flagstones around, I was hustled up, and required to stand erect and make myself as small as possible to allow the owners of the pews to enter; and three times we took this lesson in meekness, to permit the passage of the minister to and from the vestry." My thoughts always revert to the angry butt-woman when the second chapter of St. James' Epistle is read in its ordinary course.

On returning from Scutari, I entered a Maltese church during divine service, and could not help contrasting it, in this respect, with our own places of worship: Peer and Peasant, Duchess and Char-woman would be all equal there, during the time spent in the common supplications to the common Father. As there will be no second heaven provided for the poor, might it not, therefore, be well for the rich to accustom themselves to some



little contact with their poorer brethren ; lest, being forced, in heaven, into a collision to which they are totally unused, they should be made uncomfortable in a place where they have all come expecting to be happy.

On the Sunday it is not true that the labouring classes are the “unwashed,” and they make great efforts to preserve a suit of apparel to wear on that day alone. Why should it be unpleasant for the rich and poor to mingle freely? It would seem that our Lord took as much thought for the dignity of the poor as for that of the rich. He himself was a poor man amongst his brethren when He came to redeem the world, and they were poor men whom He sent forth for its regeneration. Perhaps, judging from some congregations, it might be thought that the Church of England lacked one of the marks of the Church of Christ,—“And to the poor the Gospel is preached.”

On the other evenings of the week I was occupied in the schools opened for the street “Arabs” of Devonport. We made great efforts, but I doubt if any boy acquired, in this school, the power of reading the simplest book ; they appeared so extremely restless, so utterly incapable of sustained attention. The sisters trusted that it



was beneficial to meet the boys and chat to them freely and kindly during the long pauses between the lessons: indeed some few of them were observed to humanise considerably under the intercourse, and, gradually smartening themselves up, to emerge from their street life into one of honest labour. For about a quarter of an hour each evening a sister, selected for the rare faculty of arresting vagrant attention, spoke to them on a few simple religious truths.

The most popular preacher was a sister of Miss Sellon's, a perfectly lady-like and gentle girl, whose voice, from illness, was so weak that the boys had a difficulty in catching her words; yet they were almost invariably absorbed listeners, as she spake of Him who with many weary steps sought out the abject, and by such a mode of teaching as that shown in the parables, strove to gain the ear and enlighten the understanding of the ignorant, the inattentive, and toil-absorbed. I allude to this lady, and so far describe her, because there are some who think that, in dealing with such as these lads, if we wished to have authority over them, it is necessary to be rough, and to depart from true womanliness; while, on the contrary, emphatically it is here that, "In a woman's weakness lies her strength."



Sometimes, when attempting to teach others, we miss our aim by not making due allowance for their ignorance; we scarcely remember to teach truths which we ourselves can never remember to have learnt, so early were we familiar with them. Hardly one of these lads, of sixteen or seventeen, could repeat the Lord's Prayer; many of them had never heard that Jesus died for them, at least, so as to put any intelligent meaning to the words; and there were some to whom the expression, so full of awful blessed meaning, seemed quite new. I once visited an old woman, of keen intelligence in all worldly matters, shortly after the curate had been with her and expounded, in simple language, the doctrine of the Atonement, which she had grasped for the first time; from her emotion, I conceived myself able to comprehend the feelings in a pure, honest, anxious heathen mind, when the holy truth, for which he has long been groping, is first revealed to him.

The boys were never riotous, and, generally speaking, laid themselves out very much to please. The sisters were presented with various specimens of their ingenuity, some of which were rather odd presents for ladies; in particular, one sister received a clay tobacco-pipe of the donor's own design and workmanship, having, in compliment



to her less secular calling, an angel with outspread wings on the bowl: the stem also was ornamented with ecclesiastical symbols. The boy was aware, no doubt, that the sister had not acquired the taste for tobacco, but he looked upon his present in the light of an article of virtú: as did also the sister, for she knocked a nail up in her cell, on which to suspend it.

In the same room during the winter months, at noon on Wednesdays and Fridays any aged person past work, who chose, came to a dinner of soup and a piece of bread: the cost of this charity was small, while it helped out materially the weekly pittance of twenty or thirty old men and women, giving them such a meal as they seldom obtained at home. A cheerful fire was lighted for them, all the appointments of the meal were clean and neat, and they were encouraged to take their time and chat over it: indeed, the party were at no loss for highly interesting subjects of conversation, though at intervals there was a lack of listeners, and now and then a little dispute would arise, which seemed to forebode a storm; but it was quelled generally by the sister going to that part of the room, and entering herself upon the question, which was sometimes



whether Mrs. Scrivens were sixty-three or sixty-four last birthday, &c. At the conclusion of the meal the Litany was read; for which they stayed, or not, as they pleased.

## CHAPTER III.

## INCIDENTS DURING THE CHOLERA.

WHILE in the midst of occupations such as these, the lady who, on account of Miss Sellon's illness, had chief charge in the sisterhood, came to me one afternoon to inquire if I had any objection to go into the homes of the Irish in Stonehouse Lane; many of whom were dying untended of cholera. We went together to a house in which, after a short stay, she left me for the night at my request, but said I must leave the next morning at five o'clock, when she would ask another sister to take my place; she also expressed her intention of sending one of the old sailor men, who found a home in the sisters' houses, with my tea, and to see if all were right. On this afternoon began my experience of nursing in the cholera, and it appeared to me so awful a pestilence, and caused me to witness such fearful privations, that every minute incident in



the scenes of the next few weeks is so graven on my memory, that I believe they will never be effaced until the whole tablet is blotted.

The room in which I found myself, contained a large bedstead, but positively no other article of furniture: not even a cup or spoon. A girl of about seventeen, sister of the sick woman on the bedstead, was sitting on the floor in front of the empty grate, with her knees drawn up to her chin, rocking herself to and fro and moaning piteously. My first care was to quiet her, the noise was so extremely distracting; she was suffering from want, fatigue, and grief, and when she understood that I would take charge of her sister, she was persuaded to lie down in a corner of the room, and, drawing her thin shawl over her head, soon fell asleep. The sick woman was lying on the planks of the bedstead, without a vestige of bed to save her from them: the floor would have been less uncomfortable. Being a Romanist, she was not surprised at seeing me, as she believed me to be a Roman Catholic Sister of Mercy. I endeavoured to make her understand that I was a Sister of Mercy, though not of the Romish faith, and had come to nurse her, but not to interfere with her religion; she seized my hand, and pressing



it to her lips, said, "Water, in the name of God!" There was not a drop in the room, or in the tank I found in the court; indeed if there had been, there was no vessel in which to convey it to her lips. None of the lodgers in the house would speak to me: they shut their doors in my face; whether from a dread of the pestilence being carried in my clothes, or from their having had instructions thus to act, I cannot tell: but this reserve wore off in a few days. The water was brought from our own house, and a few other necessaries at the same time. "It is cold I am," she said: "cold through and through." The bedstead was destitute of sheets and blankets; but a few old rags were scattered over and about her, and in the midst of my grief I was conscious of dragging at an old pair of trowsers and the leg of a stocking, as I made efforts to cover her up.

In moments of intense thought, or even mental agony, the senses are often more keenly alive than at ordinary times to trifles, and we can smile while deeming ourselves heartlessly wicked that we are able to do so. Amongst the rags, to my great surprise, I found an emaciated child of two or three years old, who exhibited the faintest signs of life. "Yes," the woman said, "that is my poor Johnny." During



this same pestilence, a sister restored a child under somewhat similar circumstances, by clasping it to her under her shawl and gently chafing it, until the warmth from her own person re-animated the little creature. It is a great joy when any can think that, by the blessing of God, they have preserved life. I have always observed that medical men consider themselves much indebted to a patient whom they can see brighten up under their treatment: however great the fatigue and anxiety the sick person may have cost them, they conceive that they are the obliged party, if the patient will but be so amiable as to recover.

The sailor arriving with my tea, I despatched him to the sisters with a request that fuel, a hot water-bottle, a tea-kettle, arrowroot, sugar, &c., might be sent me, together with a mattress and blankets. He soon wheeled these things down on the barrow, and an old, lame Irish beggar volunteering to help him up the stairs with them, stayed and lighted the fire for me, and helped me to make the room more comfortable. As the old beggar left me, he said, with an infinite number of bows, "I am lodging in the room below, and shall feel highly flattered if you will call me when you need help." I felt very grateful



to him, not only for his assistance, but more especially for the reassurance which his friendship gave me through the night. I had, as time went on, to employ the beggar frequently ; indeed, so often that he had no opportunity for the next two or three weeks of following his lucrative occupation : but he never received any remuneration from us, and when it was mentioned to him said that he did not wish to be paid, and had sufficient for his wants.

We were not aware whether or not the three poor creatures found in the room constituted the whole family, but about ten o'clock an Irishman rushed in with a bottle of mixture in his hand, and in his eagerness, without regarding me or the alteration in the room, lifted up the head of the sick woman, his wife, and placed the bottle to her lips. She was now past swallowing, and the few drops of the medicine he poured into her mouth gurgled out again. I shall never forget the poor man's anguish : he laid her head on his shoulder, and with more words of endearment than the English language alone would seem capable of, besought the poor, unconscious creature to speak to him once more, or even to uncloset her eyes and look in his face. "Sure, Judy, jewel," he said, "it is not my fault ;



I have done my best for ye. We were boy and girl together in the fresh, green fields at home; think of them days, and give me just one token more." Had he been twenty minutes sooner, he might have received a parting word; but it was too late now: there was no hope of her rallying again, so I tried to comfort him. "She has been used to a clean and wholesome bit and sup," he said to me, "and the fresh air, and she's been ailing ever since we left Ireland." And then he began, poor fellow, to call down curses upon those who drove them from their home, and upon those in their new country who stood by and saw his wife die from want of help.

After a time he grew more calm, and then he told me that he had been standing at the door of the poor-law official since eight that morning, and at nine in the evening his importunity gained the bottle of mixture, a packet of groats, and some coarse, brown sugar. He added (though I am not now giving his exact words,) that God alone knew the agony of his impatience, as he felt every moment's delay was reducing the chance of his wife and child living. A man may keep his soul from the dominion of bitterness when he himself alone is dying from neglect, but what husband and father can see his wife and child



thus perish? The man himself had been ill all day, so, at my suggestion, he took a dose of the mixture, and lay down on a blanket. In less than an hour he was suffering fearfully; I think I hear his voice now, "Rub, sister; rub harder," as the cramp gathered lumps in the calves of his legs as large and as hard as an egg.

The girl slept through it all; the little boy lay before the fire, wrapped in a blanket, and to him I administered a few teaspoonfuls of arrowroot and wine every ten minutes. The poor woman died, and I covered up her face. Thus the night wore away, until five o'clock brought a sister to relieve me. The girl and child were removed next day to a cholera hospital which Miss Sellon opened in the district, and both of them ultimately recovered. The man was too ill to be removed, but, like several other such cases, was nursed by the sisters in his own abode. He lived about a fortnight; dying from the fever which followed the cholera. I was with him the night he died.

The large house in which we were was a beer-shop, under an Irish landlord, and many of the rooms were occupied as nightly lodgings by tramps of every description, and of several countries—English, Scotch, Irish, and French. The Swiss and Italians with barrel-organs, plaster



of Paris statuary, &c. visited Plymouth a good deal, but the lodgers at this house were too riotous and disorderly for them. "As merry as a beggar in his cups," is truly very merry, indeed. As I sat by the bed of the dying man, who was almost unconscious to everything save his own agonizing restlessness, weariness and weakness, the noisy laughter of the party below, and the sounds of the fiddle, together with the shuffling and tapping of the dancers' feet, as they performed jigs, reels, and hornpipes, came up the stairs, now fainter and now louder, as the amusements languished or revived.

Soon after dark, the old beggar tapped at the door, saying he had come himself, and brought his little girl to keep me company, for I must be mighty lonely. She was a beautiful child of about seven years old, and I remember her father was extremely proud of her flaxen curls, which were as bright and clean as those of any high-born little damsel: there was altogether a degree of niceness and refinement about the child, little to be expected; he accounted for it by saying that, in the course of their wandering life, she now and then obtained some schooling in one or other of the Romish convents. And here I discovered the clue to the motive for the poor



old man's goodness during the cholera : if, indeed, he needed a motive over and above his own natural kindness of heart. He appeared to be something of a fatalist, and remarked, with a touch of Irish humour which broke out unseasonably in spite of himself, that if he tried to run away from the pestilence, the Almighty could soon overtake an old lame rogue like him ; but he trusted that if he were cut off, God would accept his willingness to help others, as a token that he was sincere in wishing to make some atonement for an ill-spent life : not to the extent of sparing the old man himself, but of averting a judgment upon his little one, that the sins of the father might be visited upon the father alone, and not reach the child.

The landlord also came up, not to apologise for the mirth downstairs ; he took the matter up by quite another handle. He proceeded to explain that, knowing poor William to be an " airy lad," he thought it would help him to go out of the world " aisy," if cheered by the sound of the fiddle ; at the same time, if I wished, he would put a stop to it. I answered that he was very good, but that I did not think the " sound of the fiddle " made any difference either way to the dying man, who did not appear to be conscious



of it; but for my own part, I trusted that he would take care there was no brawling, which would be most unseemly under the circumstances, and very distressing to me: he promised to attend to this, and, with many expressions of kindness, bade me "good-night."

After taking his little girl to bed, the beggar returned to spend the night with us. There was little we could do for the dying man; but it is sometimes a help to those who are dying hard to moisten their lips with a little wine, and there are other offices in a nurse's power which tend to calm and tranquillize the dying in that agony of restlessness which many appear to suffer when partly unconscious. Between twelve and one the patient died, and the beggar started for a coffin immediately; as I believe there was a penalty if it were not secured in a certain time for the dead from cholera. The errand occupied him some hours, as he was sent hither and thither until some one could discover whose business it was to furnish it. I washed the face of the corpse, and standing by, watched with awe how it gradually lost much of the haggard, pain-worn expression without which I had not before known it. The face of the dead will sometimes change in an astonishing manner; all the wear and tear of



pain and sorrow, and even of evil passions, will sometimes clear off, and the face become most unexpectedly beautiful.

Any one acquainted with cholera will understand that the state of a person is very dangerous when the feet and legs become quite cold—cold to the touch as some cold-blooded animal, or death itself; and this symptom, if not arrested, will gradually seize upon the whole body, until even the breath of the sick will come upon the cheek of the nurse, as she bends over them, in an icy stream. Passing up a street, a sister was called in to a young mechanic who had been attacked by cholera a short time previously while at his work: he was only lodging in the town, and she found him lying in the cold state I have described, on a poor bed in a bare room, with a comrade stretched beside him trying to impart warmth. The sufferer was conveyed to the hospital, whither he was accompanied by his friend; who, having closed the eyes of his dead comrade, was himself seized, as might be expected: the two friends soon lay side by side in the little “dead room.” Miss Sellon ordered a good fire to be kept up there, with candles burning, and we were desired, if we had no objection, to enter the room at least twice in an hour throughout the



night and day; this direction being given in deference to an opinion, very generally entertained by the lower classes, that many persons, at various periods, have been buried alive from cholera-stricken districts.

When the disease in these streets had nearly spent itself, and the stress upon us was removed, we then began to feel—and not till then fully—how much we were affected by the scenes through which we had passed. One night our hospital was empty, with the exception of the tenants of the dead room, three in number, and myself. Being very tired, I lay down on the floor of the room used as a hospital, and soon fell asleep. During my slumber I dreamed that there marched before me, in single file, all the dead I had seen expire during the pestilence: not one was missing; and I remember them all at this moment more vividly from that dream than from any impressions received in waking hours.

Medical men, and even hired nurses, never allow in themselves any fears of contagion; but in the case of a Sister of Mercy, there is less excuse for fear, because, from the peculiarity of her social position, if she falls, she falls alone: there are none dependent upon her; her death causes no gap in a family circle; there is no one left



to miss her voice and glance. Reflections such as these, though tinged with melancholy, help to give courage to a Sister of Mercy. The household matters are all arranged for a sister: her bread and water are sure, and she has no domestic anxieties of any kind. It would hardly be credited, unless by those who have had experience, how much more work she is ready for from her head and hands being entirely free to think and work for others alone: the same number of women having domestic duties and family cares, could not do so much each in their several homes.

Many of us hardly know the necessities to which our fellow-creatures are reduced. A sister was called in to a sick girl, whose only domicile was a heap of straw in the corner of a cellar used for rubbish, and who when in health had maintained herself by searching the dust-heaps and sea-shore for cinders, bits of wood, &c. The sister who visited her said that the poor girl must have had a different passage to her lair from the one through which she was conducted, for she felt the spiders' webs sweep across her face as she passed up it. This girl was brought into hospital, where she recovered; and when getting better she said, in the course of conversation with me, that by the blessing of God she should come through all her



troubles and reach prosperity ultimately, however adverse circumstances might at this time appear. She founded her confidence upon the fact of possessing a "treasure" securely sewn in a small silk bag, which on her leaving Ireland was hung round her neck by the nuns of Cork, who assured her that it must lead her through all trials, if she continued a good girl. I asked her what the little bag contained: she looked very much shocked, and said, "Sure I would not be so mighty bold as to go unsewing and gazing upon such a thing as that." Every one must be disposed to admire such an unfeminine absence of curiosity and such implicit faith; at the same time many will be disposed to question the conduct of the nun who could practise upon such simplicity, though it was done to win the dupe to her good and not to her harm.

Some months after the incident of which I am now speaking, a comely, tidy-looking mason was observed loitering round our houses, and when he saw his opportunity he stepped forward to request the sister in charge if Sister —— might visit his wife: he was asked if she were in need, but he said she was not, only she wished very much that Sister —— should pronounce upon her illness. He pressed his request so



strongly and good-naturedly, that the senior sister said she would send me on my return from Devonport. I found the man waiting at the corner of the square to conduct me to his home, a comfortably furnished room, and in the happy wife I recognized the girl with the treasure in the silken bag: there was little the matter with her, and the husband confessed that she was so constantly teasing him to fetch me that he had been guilty of this little ruse to bring me there. They had prepared a small entertainment for me; which, with many apologies, I declined, as it was against the rules to take any food out of our own refectory, unless it was sent to us. They had provided tea, together with a potato cake, and a "dram;" which means to an Irishman about two wineglasses of whisky. The mother-in-law, and several other relatives whom the girl had acquired by her marriage, came in during the ten minutes I remained, and heaped their praises upon the sisters; I shook hands all round, and so concluded a very pleasant visit. There is no doubt that, like many another prophecy, the nun's prediction had aided materially in bringing about its own accomplishment.

Probably the nun herself was first deceived in the value of the talisman; which a sister suggested might have been the tooth of some saint. The



nuns at Scutari were in possession of some part or parts of a skeleton, which I never saw, but heard of through the following occurrence:—An Irishman was brought into hospital in a state of unconsciousness, as the attendants believed, but when the doctor made his rounds at night, the patient declared that medical assistance could not avail, as a form had appeared to him in white apparel and held before his eyes a human bone. The medical officer, though exceedingly tolerant on most occasions, lost patience in a matter which might hinder the recovery of an invalid, and declared “he would have no more bones exhibited, whether they were those of saints or sinners.” The nuns must have concluded their countryman to be of their own faith; but he was from the north, and a Protestant.

An Irishman, or indeed his near relative in the Celtic branch of the family of man, the Highlander, would never deem it derogatory to the dignity of majesty itself to be offered “A dram.” The daughter of a Scottish bishop in the Highlands was on one occasion collecting payments for a weekly penny club to which the somewhat improvident Gael eagerly subscribed, knowing as they did that pennies would never accumulate in their own possession; at the same time the



Highlander, though willing to receive benefits from him, has not yet learned, generally speaking, to love the Saxon: an English person, whatever be the errand, is received rather majestically by the ladies of a highland hut, and rather gruffly by the gentleman. But on this occasion the English lady, and a friend who accompanied her, were both received at the foot of the stairs by five or six women in a state of the greatest excitement and pleasure, and were bidden to come up with the utmost cordiality. The visitors said that, as the person to whom they came appeared to be engaged, they would call another week; but the inmates could not allow them to pass on: they must step up and see Mrs. MacGillivray. Thus bidden, they suffered themselves to be ushered up in a state of considerable bewilderment, and were met at the door by a man, who, shaking the two young ladies cordially by the hand, announced to them that his wife had just brought him a "dochter," and that great luck to the bairn was involved in the fact of *one* unmarried stranger being the first to cross his threshold after the event, and unexampled good fortune when, as in their case, it was *two*. The ladies were extremely happy, no doubt, to have brought such benefits at so small an expense to themselves, though one of



them assured me that they were in a state of considerable embarrassment; however, they went up and spoke to the mother, and looked at the baby, expressing, as is usual under such circumstances, great admiration of its loveliness. Meanwhile the man hastened to a cupboard, from whence he produced two glasses of fine old Highland whisky, and presented them, with a request that they might be drained to the health of the mother, and the health and good luck of the infant. The visitors pleaded that they were quite unaccustomed to whisky, and begged to be excused; but the father affirmed if they did not drink, the luck was by no means secured: at this part of her narrative my informant was rather obscure, but it is my impression that if the glasses were not drained, they were sipped; no inconsiderable feat, when the smoky, fiery taste of the liquid is taken into consideration.

In many of the cases of cholera, the ravages of the disease were peculiarly rapid. A young Irish-woman begged admission for her husband one afternoon, and between ten and eleven the same night, I heard a tap at the door; which, on opening, I held ajar, as we could take no more in that night. With some violence the poor wife pushed it open, and, staggering in with her baby in her



arms, dropped down on the floor of the passage. As I took the baby from her, she explained that she had been turned out of her lodgings when the landlady knew the cholera had attacked her, "as the other lodgers would otherwise have deserted the house. A nurse was found the same night willing to risk the contagion and take the infant, on condition of being remunerated highly. On the next evening little Aileen was an orphan.

This child has been with the sisters ever since, having been made, when two or three years old, a "novice" of the "Order of the Sacred Heart;" and now, in common with another child of her own age (when I knew them last, about seven or eight) has the rules of the order to observe. The two baby novices were taken from different ranks in life, but both have ever been solely under the care of ladies, and are never permitted to speak to any of the servants. They are being educated to the utmost stretch of their infantine powers: the little Irish orphan, I have been told, takes more kindly to her learning than her high-born companion, but she exhibits less refinement, though she can have witnessed nothing else. Among other little vulgarities which Aileen inherits, is bad manners at table; and the lady in charge of her found it necessary to be continually reminding her of her



little indecorums. Silence is always observed at meals in the houses of the sisters, and so strictly, that you may not ask even for the salt to be passed; but the exquisite training to which these children are subjected, was not interrupted by the rule of silence, and occasionally might be heard directions for the edification of the incorrigible little Aileen. "Chew your food, Aileen," said the Hon. Miss E—— "If you please, the whale did not chew Jonah," retorted the child, with an air which implied there was no disputing such a scriptural example.

Miss Sellon was experimenting upon these two children, to ascertain what would be the character of one from whom all examples of vice had been ever shut out, and who, at the same time, was trained to a life of almost uninterrupted prayer and meditation, accompanied by great mental culture. A Scotch lady staying in the house, informed me that one of the early kings of her country, anxious to discover the primitive language, placed two infants on an uninhabited island of the Hebrides, under the care of a dumb old woman, and my informant always affected to see a parallel between the experiment of Miss Sellon and that of the Scottish monarch. I suppose the two experiments were equally ridiculous, and the results to be expected from them



somewhat similar. Persons suddenly transplanted from a desert island into the maze of common life, would be equally prepared for its temptations, with those who at eighteen or twenty emerge from the walls of a convent. The results of conventual training have proved most lamentable in the case of many friendless orphans, who at various periods have persisted in leaving the shelter of Miss Sellon's roof: to exemplify this I quote from a letter I received from a lady, who some years ago had charge of the orphans. She writes, "I have such wretched letters from some of the dear little orphans I had the care of at ——; it makes me quite sad: some have died in penitentiaries; others, after the accustomed stay of two years, have just come out, and one is actually now wandering the streets of London, creeping into a coach-house or stable, or sleeping in an empty cab. Poor little things! kept as they were so out of the world, what can they know of its ways? What marvel is it that they should be drawn into sin?"

The last work in which I was engaged at Plymouth, was teaching a school consisting chiefly of boys. Miss Sellon herself took a peculiar interest in her boys' schools, and I understood that she believed that the manners of boys under the



tutelage of women were often softened and refined : the relation in which they stood to their teacher (to whom they yielded obedience which she could have no power to enforce,) often brought out in the boys a chivalrous motive for actions, and altogether raised their moral character. It also trained them to regard women with respect. At the same time she trusted that they lost nothing mentally, up to a certain age ; and she was quite sure they lost none of that boyish roguishness, and love of daring and adventure, which, though it gives us trouble, we all admire in boys. For many months the only glimpse some of us caught of the outer world was conveyed to us by these young rogues. They never knew who was married, or likely to be ; who was rich, or who was poor ; who was degraded, or who was exalted ; and, in fact, very often they were unacquainted with even the name of their next neighbour ; but we heard of the building and launching of all vessels from the docks at Devonport, how many guns they carried, and their complement of men ; details of all shipwrecks—we might almost say in all seas ; a faithful account of many of the incidents in the Indian mutiny, which occurred at this time ; remarks on many naval experiments ; and in particular an account of the Atlantic cable,



then attracting public attention, a small piece of which was brought to us: we also heard a good deal of political intelligence; and now and then, before we could change the subject, a glowing description of a prize-fight or a wrestling match was given.

In these reminiscences of Devonport, I have but briefly alluded to such works as I myself participated in. There were many occupations for those with less robust health. Sisters of Mercy of great strength and nerve must necessarily expect to become acquainted with the rougher paths, though less self-denial is required in those that tread them.

None need enter upon the life of a Sister of Mercy from disgust of the world, by whatever occasion: the work calls for no love-lorn damsels, or women with hearts full of spleen; but women with fresh hearts, who wish earnestly to love better the Lord who bought them, and for His sake, all for whom He died. Any other motive will be found miserably inadequate to sustain the soul of a Sister of Mercy, and to prevent her, after putting her hand to the plough, from turning back.



## CHAPTER IV.

## DEPARTURE FOR THE EAST.

THE spring of 1854 found me out of health, and with a somewhat shattered nervous system, so I was sent to take charge of a small school in the village of Asherne, a little place on the Devonshire coast. The house occupied by the Devonport Sisters was built for a fishing lodge. The site of this building was happily chosen, being far more wild and romantic than that of any dwelling I have ever seen in England. A terrace was cut on the face of a high cliff, and while the rock itself formed part of the back walls of the house, a very narrow walk, bounded by a slight iron rail, was all that intervened between its front and the perpendicular rock, at whose base the stormy waves of the English Channel waged a perpetual conflict with a number of rugged rocks. A winding path led down to the sands.

Thus I emerged from the crowded, tainted



cellars and garrets of a plague-stricken district into lovely country scenes, and felt quite a child again. Those who, surrounded daily by objects of beauty, walk insensibly among them, often deploring the lack of their original freshness of feeling, should try "the power of intermitted custom," or, more efficacious still, of contrast. During the cholera, on returning home one evening, I was requested to go to a nursery garden near, and procure, at least, a single blossom, to place upon the breast of a sister that day suddenly called to her rest. The nurseryman brought to me, as I stood at the door, a flower, which he said was the most rare exotic his hothouse afforded. I received it in the darkness, and had no opportunity of examining it until my return to the sister who gave me the commission. Its surpassing loveliness breaking suddenly into the gloom and squalor with which we were almost entirely enveloped, touched us even to tears: we regarded it as an emblem of those abodes of purity and sweetness by which present misery should be superseded, and felt that that simple flower had strengthened our hearts.

During the last three weeks of my stay at Asherne there were but two of us in the house.



We had discovered in one of the rooms an old piano and a book of chants, and as we were one evening making ourselves extremely happy over our music, we were startled by a violent ringing of the bell; a very unusual sound in that house. This summons, so far from bringing us to the door, had the effect of sending us both to the most remote corner of the dwelling. The ringing continued, while we held a long dispute as to who should answer it; which ended in our retraversing the passages, and unbarring the door. I found there a carriage, the driver of which delivered to me the following telegraphic message, "Let nothing prevent your reaching London by to-morrow morning." The next day I arrived in London, with seven other members of the society, whom I had joined on the way. We had all been summoned by telegraph from various parts of the country, and were equally ignorant of the nature of the work awaiting us.

In the course of the day I received a message from Miss Sellon to inquire if I were willing to go to Constantinople and attend upon the sick and wounded soldiers. It was explained to me that the work was one of peculiar danger, and Miss Sellon would not be surprised if I declined going; but I felt no unwillingness. I had previously heard but



little of the war; for in a world such as ours was there are few opportunities of gathering information respecting transactions not intimately connected with it. Not that this is felt to be a great deprivation; a nun always considers that she is perfectly well acquainted with everything worth knowing, and is only sorry for those who know more than herself upon any subject, religious or secular: she starts with the idea that it is a virtue to narrow her mind and sympathies; and it would appear by the result that the task is not difficult of accomplishment.

The same afternoon we proceeded to Belgrave Square, where Miss Nightingale's band assembled to receive an address from Mr. Sidney Herbert. We did not go at once to his residence, but waited in a neighbouring house until summoned; and there I first saw one on whom we were all so much to depend for guidance and support under most trying circumstances — Miss Nightingale.

Mr. Sidney Herbert, in his address, gave the two classes of nurses, Sisters of Mercy and hospital nurses, their respective cautions. To the nuns and sisters he said, "Forbear teaching, and keep yourselves to the objects for which alone Government sends you out; the administering to



the bodily wants, and soothing the minds of the sick." Indeed, so careful was Government in this matter of teaching, that both the nuns and the English sisters were called upon to give their word that they would attempt no conversions. Many persons have, since my return, expressed their surprise at our giving such a promise; but I freely confess that I should never think of disturbing a deathbed by bringing controversy to its side.

On leaving Mr. Sidney Herbert's house the committee gave to each of the Devonport sisters, half in jest, as they passed out, an immense railway rug, which proved a most acceptable gift; being used by turns as a mattress, blanket, shawl, carpet and screen. As the Scottish shepherd does for his plaid, so we conceived a sort of affection for our rugs, which duly returned with their owners. I almost felt jealous when, on coming back to Plymouth, mine passed into the hands of another.

Before leaving Miss Sellon, the Devonport sisters took down from her mouth the following directions :—

“On quitting the house to mix with others, I warn you that your safety consists in adhesion (in spirit, at least) to your rule.



“In case of conscience apply to the superior I place over you, and with her decision remain satisfied, as though you had committed it to myself.

“On the journey throughout observe silence amongst yourselves; and if persons speak to you, reply shortly, but courteously. Do not converse with any one excepting Miss Nightingale, and not with her during your silence time.

“Be careful to the directions of the medical officer, but never converse with him.

“Speak soothingly to the patients, but do not talk unnecessarily. Be reserved and courteous in manner.

“Be extremely neat and clean in person, that the religious garb may be recommended by your manner of wearing it.

“In moments of excitement exercise extreme self-control. When you feel excited make an act of recollection to our Lord.

“Do not fast; and take all the care you can of your health; but do not allow a day to pass without an act of self-mortification.

“When you are attending to the wounds of the soldiers, try and think of the wounds of our Lord. Keep calm, as before the foot of His cross, and remember that you are doing all things



in Him. You will be greatly watched, and remember that upon me will fall the consequences of little indiscretions on your part."

The Devonport household received Holy Communion in the church of S. Mary Magdalene, on the last day of our stay in London. The party mustered on Monday, October 21st, at Euston Square, and Mr. — took the command; Miss Nightingale having preceded us as far as Paris, to make arrangements for our route. The friends of the poor nurses took leave of them as of those whom they were never to see again. Many of these nurses were widows, with large families, whom they found it a severe struggle to support by their labour in England. They were too well acquainted with disease not to understand the risk they ran from contagion; but they were under the impression that if their children were left orphans, the ladies of England would make them their charge. One woman who managed to conceal from the committee that she was a soldier's wife, joined the nursing staff, with the remote prospect of meeting her husband.

After a hurried journey through France, we took ship at Marseilles, in the *Vectis*; a name associated in our minds with discomforts of the most trying description. Being intended for the



transit of the mails from Marseilles to Malta, she was built entirely with a view to speed. A sailor informed me that the owners had quite a difficulty in manning her, as the beds of the crew, even in tolerable weather, were constantly saturated with spray. Matters were just endurable until we left Malta, but, afterwards, the sea became heavier, while the captain forced the ship to the utmost speed, in the hope of returning from Constantinople in time for the letters. It would almost appear to the uninitiated that we were sailing under water; all the portholes were continually closed, and secured firmly; the want of air caused by this arrangement greatly aggravated the sufferings of the sea-sick, and a fever was apprehended. On one occasion my bed being unusually wet, I left it to lie on the floor of the saloon, the only vacant place being under a skylight: I was congratulating myself on finding this dry spot, when suddenly the vessel shipped a wave, which dashed through the skylight, and stunned me for several minutes.

When persons are very ill we should imagine that their minds, if separated from the contemplation of their pain, would naturally dwell upon the most grave and important subjects; but, such is not the case. I remember that as I lay in



the cabin ill with fever, my mind was dwelling upon the delights of walking in orchards, and gathering fruit, as I fancied, from the various trees. Indeed, in my many sick-bed experiences, I have always found that the thoughts of the patient, unless violently arrested, wandered constantly to the most puerile and far-distant matters. Alas ! for the prospects of those who would defer a work needing our highest faculties—the work of repentance—until laid upon the bed of sickness.

Darkness having ushered in a violent storm, it was thought best to nail down the hatchway leading to our cabins. During its continuance, the captain, fearful that the *Vectis* might not ride out the gale, ordered the guns and a few other heavy articles to be thrown overboard. I was too ill to be much concerned ; but my fancy ran off to the idea, that as I was so hot, I should go into the sea with a hiss, like a blacksmith's heated iron at a village forge I had often watched in childhood.

The whole of my party were afterwards removed from their cabins, with the exception of myself and another ; and as a few days before we reached our destination I was able to stagger upon deck, my companion was left alone to fare,



I hardly know how : but her powers of endurance were very great. On returning to the cabin at dusk one evening, she begged me to try and procure a light, as she could not conceive what sort of creatures were racing about her ; with difficulty I obtained one, whose rays chased from her berth hundreds of young cockroaches. I suffered so intensely while below, that I never allowed the state of the weather to deter me from staying upon deck, when able to reach it. The captain on one occasion advised me to retire ; but as I entreated to be permitted to remain, he secured me behind a boat. While there, a wave broke over the opposite end of the vessel, driving before it in its course the steward's cabin, with its contents ; amongst which, at the moment, unfortunately happened to be the steward himself. The steersman, with a dexterity only belonging to sailors, caught the man ; but the house disappeared beneath the waves.

Our vessel touched at Malta for a few hours. Miss Nightingale from weakness, was unable to leave the ship, but many of us went on shore under the command of Mr. ——. This gentleman, being a major in a militia regiment, I suppose it naturally occurred to him that it would be desirable to march the nursing staff in something



like military order, about the streets of Malta. The sisters and nuns he concluded were in a higher state of discipline than the nurses, so he placed the sisters in front, to halt and advance at the word of command; while the nuns had charge of the rear. It was well for us that the special correspondent of *Punch* was not with this division of her Majesty's army, or I am afraid that we should have figured in that fun-loving periodical. We all fatigued and distressed Major —— extremely, but especially the rear; who, after incessant straggling, were finally tempted by the Jesuits to desert their ranks altogether. The remainder of the regiment then commenced a race after them, but when found, they would not return until their own time. The major was dreadfully excited, and they quite imperturbable; he had no subordinate officer, except the courier, who on all occasions was as helpless as the rest of his class. Major —— would rush towards the front, and shout, "Forward, black sisters!" but when he had fairly started us, came the word, "Halt," and then he condescended to explain reasons: "Those white sisters are gone again," and sometimes he even put a second adjective before "white." The people crowded around us with anything but reverence written in their faces;



they seemed to think it extremely ludicrous to watch the bustle and anxiety of the captain, and our straggling propensities. A smart sergeant, who spoke to the major, and listened to his complaints, remarked, "He should think them ancient Amazons we read of, took a main deal of drilling." I was so absorbed in endeavouring to comply with the directions of our commander, that this, my first visit, made me little acquainted with Malta.

As we approached Constantinople, its appearance from the Bosphorus was lovely and striking in the extreme. If this had been the nearest view I took of the city, I should have left it with the most delightful impressions; but I have traversed its streets; and now when my mind wanders to the metropolis of Turkey, I am not able to divest it of the scenes I saw there. Not that such a walk gives a stranger a fair idea of the city, as he sees only the backs of the houses; Turkish dwellings being built in such a manner as to enclose a square spot, into which the principal windows look. In this garden is usually found the fountain of the household, surrounded by trees, to keep its waters cool, as well as to afford shade to those that resort thither. Thus the houses and the mosques, with their tall minarets,



are seen from a distance peeping through a mass of foliage. We went on shore in caïques, a most luxurious and pleasant kind of boat; their motion is in itself extremely agreeable, but doubtless the elegance of the light craft, and the picturesque attire of the noble-looking rowers, add materially to the enjoyment of the ride. Since the arrival of our vessel at her port, the scenes witnessed by us had been most inspiring; the magnificent city, the gay costumes, and the beautiful waters crowded with huge vessels, with the lively caïques darting amongst them. But on approaching the dilapidated wharf at Scutari, we experienced a great reverse of feeling. In the midst of serious evils, our senses are often alive to comparative trifles, and I remember how I shrank from the sight of the carcase of a large grey horse, which the tide was tossing to the verge, and carrying back from the shore, thus tantalizing some twenty dogs, who were making efforts to reach their prey, and at the same time fighting and howling amongst themselves.

Residing in a fortified town, I had been accustomed to the sight of our smart soldiers parading along the streets; but how changed their aspect now! Small bands of our poor men, half-starved, pain-worn, ragged beings, crossed our path now



and then, as we proceeded to our quarters, raising their languid heads, to gaze upon us with surprise. A portion of the larger hospital was yet used as the barracks, and we passed the soldiers' wives, who had just received their rations, and were preparing a meal. It seemed that there were no cooking utensils for their use, excepting the small canteen and tin plate belonging to a soldier's outfit; and the meat in course of preparation looked anything but inviting.

The Devonport Sisters were the last to leave the vessel; and I afterwards understood that they were detained on board until the body of a Russian general had been removed from the apartment appropriated to our use. We had some curiosity respecting our immediate predecessor, whose white hairs were scattered about the room. The little drummer, his attendant, told me that the aged prisoner was intensely uneasy under his captivity, and that every fresh account he heard of the advantages gained by our troops incensed him more and more against his captors. A few hours before his death, he gave the boy five shillings to carry his watch and other valuables about his person, and throw them into a part of the Bosphorus within his own sight, as he stood at one of the windows.



The apartment in the building allotted to us was lofty, of moderate dimensions, containing in the only two sides having an outer wall, ten large double windows. After the manner of Turkish dwellings, a raised dais, about one yard and a half wide and two feet high, extended down one side of the room, and like the floor, was covered with a fine description of matting. In a few hours, our eight mattresses, with our blankets and counterpanes, were brought from the store: the beds covered the floor when spread down, but by day they were folded up, forming a comfortable seat. Three black leather boxes served for tables, while the recesses of the windows were converted into cupboards. As soon as we could procure a broom, which was not until several days had passed, we swept our apartment, making it look quite fresh and tidy; it was but a Turkish broom, by the way, and resembled an English besom, there being but one real brush in use amongst the staff, the guardian of which was faithful to her trust, keeping it at her bed's head, and refusing to lend it upon any terms. Our dinner and tea service consisted of a metal basin for each person, which held about a pint. Out of this we first ate our meat and vegetables, and then after wiping it as clean as paper could make it, we returned



for our allowance of porter; we also washed our faces in this hard-worked copper basin. Two knives, two spoons, and three forks did duty at a dinner of eight ladies. At the one fountain in our corridor could be seen standing, at any time of the day, many persons waiting their turn to draw water; the quantity which fell to the share of each, with one or two exceptions, even including tea, did not average a pint a day.

We had no cheese, butter nor milk, and the supply of goat's flesh was limited; but there was always sufficient bread. These petty privations were serious at the time. There were those who many years before had made immense sacrifices for the life of a Sister of Mercy, and yet failed sadly in resignation when proved by such trials as these; then it was that each party of nuns, Sisters of Mercy and nurses, in their several quarters, learned who amongst them really loved their neighbour as themselves: the damp spot on the floor for the bed, the drafty seat, their turn to use the one feeble light, &c., and other inconveniences too small to write down, were very real tests of that great virtue "Charity." Many of these discomforts, perhaps, could have been averted, though it is not surprising that they existed in the midst of such absorbing scenes.



We hear of the danger of riches and safety of poverty, but each has its temptations.

Prayers were read in the large hall of our quarters by Miss Nightingale in the morning, and by the chaplain in the evening: at the latter service we sang a hymn, which might have sounded more melodious, had it not been that in a room immediately below, a bandsman chose this hour for practising the French horn; this was the nearest approach to martial music I heard, until after peace was proclaimed. I was told that the mortality was very great amongst the bandsmen, who were less hardy than their companions, because they commanded when on stations more money, and were exempted from "fatigue duty;" but I believe also the musical instruments were lost at the beginning of the campaign.

Unavoidably, our devotions were frequently interrupted, for here came those who wished to see Miss Nightingale: military and medical officers, chaplains, captains of vessels, soldiers, their wives, porters speaking all languages and in various costumes. On Sundays, church parade was held at some distance from our quarters, in a large ante-room, off which a number of doors opened, leading, I believe, to the quarters of several officers; as braziers, and other signs



of cooking could be seen in process of removal by those who were but a few minutes in advance of the appointed hours for public prayers. But on the Sunday of our arrival, the senior chaplain assembled us for holy communion in his own room. The earnest and eloquent discourse which he then delivered made a great impression upon us.

Those very hours on November 5, 1854, which we were spending so calmly—with the opportunity given to us of prayer, of listening to holy words of comfort, and, above all, of contemplating Christ on the Cross, bruised for our iniquity—were spent by those whom we came to tend, in deadly strife with an overwhelming foe on the field of Inkermann. The men have often described to me the time that elapsed between the end of the engagement, and their being picked up. On all sides they say, arose one piteous cry for water; and they have affirmed to me more than once (though it is almost too shocking to be believed) that the wounded were passed and repassed by those in search of plunder; and were often, when possessed of valuables, and apparently beyond hope, despatched by these wretches. A soldier remarked to me, “I always think it a pity our officers believe it right to go



into battle dressed in their full uniform, and wearing their decorations and jewellery, because they thus become a mark for the enemy's rifles; while many a gallant fellow is knocked on the head in his helplessness, for the sake of his watch and ring."



## CHAPTER V.

## THE WAR IN THE CRIMEA.

THE Russians, having received their Christianity from Constantinople, consider that they owe a debt of gratitude to the city, and any attempt to recover it from the hands of the infidels, and to place it in its once proud pre-eminence as a Christian city, would be regarded by the people of Russia as a holy war. Moreover, Russia takes upon herself the protection of the Greek Christians, numbers of whom are groaning under the infidel yoke, in the fair provinces of Turkey; Russia is, therefore, always ready to quarrel with Turkey, and has often aggrandised herself at its expense. At the end of the year 1853 these two nations were again at war, and it seemed that the long-coveted city of Constantinople was within the grasp of the Russian eagle. The two powers of England and France determined to check the rapid advance of the Russians, England having entered



into the war because she deemed the acquisition of Turkey by Russia would open to this encroaching empire a highway to our Indian possessions. Territorial aggrandisement, doubtless, chiefly influenced the Russian government; but that their poor soldiers regarded the war as a crusade against the infidel, I have been repeatedly informed by those of our army who returned from a short imprisonment amongst them, or had other means of judging. Many, whom the conscription did not touch, obeyed the exhortation of their priests and joined the army, and to all who thus voluntarily took up arms was presented a small brass cross which had received the blessing of the Greek Patriarch, and which its simple wearers believed rendered them invulnerable, until a regiment of them were sadly undeceived at the engagement on the Tchernaya. As we observed the manner in which all the natural advantages of their beautiful country were neglected by the Turks, particularly when we visited the mosque of S. Sophia, the present state of which is much to be deplored, we have heartily wished, that, by some rightful means, Turkey in Europe might once again come under the sway of the Christians. We had little opportunity of examining the glories of the interior of the mosque, or of indulging in the associations



which the sight of the sacred building was so calculated to call up; for the Turks, with triumphant insolence written in their faces, followed us everywhere, and seemed determined to annoy us. I heard an English officer, one of a group who had lost all patience with the Mussulman, remark, that if these were the days of Crusades, he would join the one which had for its object the recovery of this desecrated pile from the hands of the exulting infidels.

The first detachment of our army in the East, commanded by Lord Raglan, sailed on the 20th of March, 1854. It consisted of 10,000 officers and men, but a mere handful of whom were destined again to revisit their native country; and, of these few, the majority returned maimed and shattered in constitution. "You should have seen us when we mustered to start," they said. "The French, and all who saw us, admitted that a finer little army never started on any expedition;" and the conduct of this body of men fully proved that these were true words, and no vain boast. Their first resting-place was Malta; next they proceeded to Gallipoli; and thence to Scutari; from which place, after a short stay, they embarked for Varna, and about the 14th of June were in occupation of that place, the allied fleet being stationed in the bay. I have



heard our men describe how delightful they at first deemed this spot, as it was well wooded, and abounded in vines, whose fruit fully ripened long ere their seven weeks' stay had expired. Their tents were seldom occupied, being exchanged for the greensward under the spreading trees. They did not long enjoy Varna, however; for the bright, sunny spot, with its luxuriant vegetation, proved unhealthy, and that most dreaded of all diseases, cholera, broke out among them and made wide gaps in their ranks.

It is not possible to say much for the comfort of bell-tents, but they make a pretty appearance in fine warm weather, when the canvas which forms the door is thrown back and the inside is revealed, with the glittering arms of the occupants and portions of their bright clothing hanging round the pole in the centre. After pitching the tent, the men proceed to dig a narrow trench around to carry off the water, and next, if possible, to make a pavement at the entrance; they do not always stop here, for I have seen a kind of little shrubbery extemporised with the boughs of trees, the ends of which being placed deep in the earth, their green appearance was preserved for many months. But these tents have a very comfortless appearance in wet weather; as the surrounding



mud is brought in on the boots of those who enter, and before night the earth inside is not drier than that without. In this quagmire, the twelve or thirteen men who form the complement of each tent, spread their blankets, placing their knapsacks for pillows at the outer edge of the bell; thus their feet meet round the centre pole, and their heads and faces are in close proximity to the saturated canvas. The space allotted to each man is only the width of his knapsack.

There are many military rules which offer valuable hints to those following peaceful occupations, and amongst them is this: the soldier always does what he can for the improvement of present circumstances, without considering the uncertainty of their continuance: a matter not within his own power, as his every-day duties are. And the lesson he gives is still higher, when we see him content, at the command of his general, to leave his abode of to-day, over which he may have expended much time and labour, and on reaching his next encampment, commence, with alacrity and cheerfulness, a task which before proved so fruitless.

Besides their camp duties many of the men were employed in making gabions, to be used in the siege of Sebastopol; the capture of that town being the chief object of the campaign. This port, with



Odessa and Kherson, formed the principal naval station, as well as an arsenal and garrison for the Russian forces employed on the surrounding coasts.

On the 7th of September, the English left Varna: about four hundred vessels being required for their transport. The French had preceded them by two days. On the 14th of September, a landing was effected on the west coast of the Crimea, without any interruption from the enemy. Eupatoria having no means of defence against such a force, was given up to the Allies under a flag of truce, and on the 19th they were in full march towards the northern side of Sebastopol, distant about thirty miles; but ere they could reach it, it was necessary to cross five rivers: indeed, altogether the nature of the ground was such as to afford many opportunities to the Russian army of obstructing their march. Prince Menschikoff hoped effectually to check the march of the allies when they reached the Alma, one of the five rivers; and, availing himself of the mountains and river, he took up such a position as he deemed impregnable. On the morning of the 19th, there had been a skirmish with the Cossacks, and in the evening it was generally understood by our army that the passage of the Alma would have to be forced on the following morning.



I here insert the letter of a sergeant written on that evening, which letter safely reached the hands of his widow in the Scutari barracks. I closed the eyes of this poor woman, and shall have occasion to speak of her in another place. The writer began by saying, that while occupied with his task he was sitting on a hill commanding a view of a plain which at that hour on the morrow, he had reason to expect, would be strewn with a multitude of dead and dying. "The stillness of the hour is favourable to reflection, and my whole life is passing in review before me. I have a presentiment that I shall never return from to-morrow's battle: not that these gloomy anticipations cause me to shrink from my duty. I am in love with all men, and by the power of God's blessed Spirit I pray that while fighting bravely I may keep my mind from all malicious thoughts, and my hands from all acts of cruelty. May my All-holy Creator, through the blood of His Christ, wash away the sins of my life, and receive my poor soul, though fresh from the field of carnage. My dear, dear wife, I feel you near me at this moment—I see you, not as when I last saw you in our sorrows, but as you were in your father's house. Would that I had never brought you from that roof! it was cruelty. I understood, though



you could not, the life which lay before us; my passion for you is no excuse for me. My poor dear wife and child, who is never to see its father, let me conjure you to let nothing tempt you from returning immediately to your relatives, if such a step be possible. My last thoughts are of you and my child. Good-bye."

It fell to the English to carry the main position; and, enfeebled as our men were by sickness, nobly they performed the task entrusted to them, though with the loss of 350 killed, and 1,633 wounded. Very few of the wounded, I fear, finally recovered, to glory in the scars acquired in the battle of the Alma. They were at once crowded on board the vessels of the fleet to be conveyed to Scutari; and so overcrowded were the transports ordered on this service that the captain of the ship *Kangaroo* reported his vessel unmanageable, there not being space for the sailors to work her.

The subjoined letter which I have now in my possession, written on the back of an old envelope, was received by a patient in Scutari hospital some months after the battle. It conveys a vivid picture of the sufferings of our poor fellows, and one could shed tears over a narrative of which the gallant writer strives to make so light. I was told that he died in the barrack hospital.



“DEAR OLD CHUM,

“You will probably have heard of the accommodation on board the *Kangaroo*, which was to convey all the sick to Scutari. Upwards of one thousand of us dead and dying were huddled together on board a vessel totally unprovided as a transport, and with only two orderlies to attend us; on deck, between decks, in the hold, go where you would, you had to fight your way through a dense mass of helpless or dead men. But the night was the most horrible. Lying down was out of the question; the only available places were covered with helpless, dying men; some leant back to back, and thus supported themselves, some made a pillow, others slept on the cable chain; death appeared a most welcome release. At length, when the utter impossibility of conveying us could not be mistaken, they removed one half of us on board the *Dunbar*, in which there was only a sick doctor and an orderly, a private of the artillery. The doctor could not attend us, and the orderly, therefore, made his rounds with a box of infallible pills, the efficacy of which was immeasurably superior to Parr, Morrison, or any of the famed preparations of Europe. Fever, diarrhœa, coughs, consumption, whatever your disease, you were presented with one of the invaluable globules. The only wonder



is that more of us did not 'kick the bucket.' On the 22nd, we arrived at Scutari, and, despite the usual unpreparedness of officials, we were attended better than we expected."

I have said that when the battle of Alma was fought the soldiers were enfeebled by sickness, cholera being rife among them at the time. A soldier told me that when he "fell in" that morning, he missed from his side a comrade whose place in the ranks was next his own. Shoulder to shoulder, he observed, they had marched many a weary mile, and had been a support and comfort to each other during the whole of their military experiences, sharing each other's pleasures, and having but one purse. He added, "For me he left his home, as I enlisted in a drunken frolic, and he joined to be with me." As they marched to action he inquired for his missing friend, and learnt that he had been seen carried on a stretcher into the hospital, suffering from cholera. The battle ended, my informant said that, without staying even to quench his thirst, he rushed to the hospital tent, where such had been the confusion during the day, that none could give him any tidings of his comrade: none knew anything of his last moments, none could point to his place of burial. The desolate survivor said, the victory gave him no joy, and



his only feeling was, that he was unfortunate in having escaped death in the battle.

Each soldier on the march carries his water in a small wooden barrel, holding about a quart, called a calabash, and the men have remarked that their sufferings in this battle were considerably aggravated by the fact of the Russians aiming their muskets at such an elevation as made the bullet liable to strike the calabash, and thus many of them lost their water. I afterwards saw that the gunshot wounds received on that day were peculiarly shocking in many instances, because the bullet had carried with it into the flesh splinters from these barrels. The battle of the Alma immensely raised the spirits of our men, who when next they advanced, which was not until the 23rd, believed themselves marching to the storming of Sebastopol; and great was their chagrin and disappointment when they discovered that a regular siege was determined upon. It could be gathered from their conversations that many of the old soldiers foresaw the sufferings of the coming winter. The French reported themselves ready to march the day after the battle, but care for their wounded detained the English three days. About a week after my arrival, a soldier fresh from the seat of war was detailing the successive



events to a group of eager listeners. One of them said, "We shall be in possession of the town in a few days." "No," the first speaker replied; "many hundreds must perish of cold in the trenches first. We sent in a request to be allowed to storm the town, but it was not listened to. Every day the Russians make the place stronger."

The original plan of the allies was to assault Sebastopol on its northern side, in which attack the fleet was to co-operate with the land forces, and it was intended that the communication with the supplies should be preserved by means of the river Belbec. Prince Menschikoff had foreseen and provided against this plan, by closing the mouth of the Belbec and sinking the fleet at the entrance of the harbour of Sebastopol. But the allies were not aware of this until they reached the river, and they then found themselves reduced to a flank movement, which they commenced October 24th. On the 26th they passed Sebastopol; but ignorant of its defenceless condition—to the immense relief of the inhabitants, who watched the approaching host with dismay—they continued their march towards Balaclava, and reached that village on the evening of the same day. Had the allies been aware that Prince Menschikoff, with the greater part of the Russian army, was not



within reach of the city, they might have taken it in a few hours, and thus have been spared the horrors of the Crimean winter. If we could each of us refight our battles, doubtless our tactics would be different.

The Allies had no difficulty in capturing Balacava, as there was no force there strong enough to oppose them. I have been told that the Allied fleet was supposed to be in possession of the best anchorage which the place afforded when it reached the Bay of Balacava, and that the discovery of the harbour was a surprise, being accidentally made by two or three men in a little boat. I remember my own impressions when sailing into this harbour. I was stationed at the after-part of the vessel, which appeared to me to be slowly steaming upon a high wall of rock; but just as we approached dangerously near to a formidable barrier, the head of the vessel began to turn, and in another minute a narrow channel appeared, previously hidden by projecting rocks: this led into the harbour, which was surrounded by high hills, whose bases terminated almost at the edge of the water. The barrier round which our vessel was required to make so abrupt a turn, seemed composed of a wall of rock, which nature had formed as if by piling one huge



stone upon another, so that it had not the appearance of a cliff so much as of a mighty unmorticed pile. It was not, perhaps, more than six feet in width on an average, yet it jutted out at least one hundred feet into the bay, so as nearly to meet the cliffs on the opposite shore, only leaving the narrow channel I have mentioned. Its height from the water could not have been less than fifty feet. We used to take a pleasure in getting behind an abutment to gaze down upon the water, and often imagined a goat-like descent from rock to rock. This promontory was mounted with cannon, and the garrison occupied a castle on the tongue of land, when the place was taken by the allies: the castle is approached only by a narrow path, on which two men could not walk abreast. We were shown the spot where the Russian officer in command gave up his sword; it seemed that, but for cannon, one man could there hold out against a hundred. When we saw the place, the donjon of the castle was used for a purpose very far from its original intention, as here was stowed a quantity of ice for the refreshment of those suffering from fever.

During the time we held possession of the Crimea, I often pitied the poor sentry stationed near the castle, and wondered that he was never



blown off the narrow path by the side of the wall on which he paced. The English and Irish in the army, though determined not to be outdone, if possible, by those accustomed to Highland travelling, have confessed that they were not able to acquire the desired steadiness of eye and foot; and I am aware that accidents were of frequent occurrence in consequence. A lad in the hospital, belonging to the land transport corps, raised much mirth in the ward by declaring with tears to the doctor—who hinted that his health was so far restored that he might now return to his duty—that he would sooner be torn to pieces by wild beasts than ride the mules along the edge of precipices. “These animals,” he went on to say, “will always walk along the brink; and it makes me as giddy as a goose to look down.” His previous occupation had not been one likely to prove a good training for a muleteer in a mountainous region, for he had been an apprentice to a tailor in London.

On the 23rd of October, the artillery was parked on the hills above Balaclava, and on the 26th the investment of Sebastopol began. For some months after the commencement of my war experiences, the greater part of the conversation I heard around me had reference to the trenches; and when the



name fell on my ear, I conceived of a strong wall backed by a ditch filled with water: I suppose I obtained my idea from reading of ancient castles, with their walls and moats. Should there be any of my readers as ignorant in the art of war as I then was, they may think it worth while to read my description of the trenches.

The investing force selects a dark night on which to send out a company of sappers, for the purpose of throwing up the first parallel, as it is termed. At a considerable distance from the town these men place a row of gabions, or wicker baskets, about five feet high, and taking pickaxe and spade commence to dig a trench, and to fill the gabions with the earth thus dug out; thus raising a parapet by the side of the trench. When morning dawns, a bank of earth flanked by a ditch, intervenes between the workers and the town. This first parallel, after being strengthened on succeeding nights, becomes a starting-point for the other trenches, which are carried on towards the town in a zigzag direction.

I have often heard descriptions of the night duty in the trenches, where those hardships were encountered which produced such terrible calamities. The most fearful wounds I witnessed were the frost-bites, sufferers from which were gene-



rally young lads. The medical men were shocked when the first party of these cases arrived at Scutari. An officer observed, "It is too hard a fate, that our gallant army, after all they have accomplished, should lie down in ditches to perish in this manner." Large linseed meal poultices, spread on tow, were placed over the whole foot and ankle, and on being taken off, pieces of decayed flesh, and sometimes toes, were found in them. In one case care was required lest the bones of the leg and foot should drop asunder. Of course, the poor creature thus afflicted died; but at that time he was beyond the severest agony, which is suffered while the flesh is actually rotting. Those who had seen long service affirmed that while the slighter frame of the younger men was more susceptible of cold, they were also, being less disciplined, without that hardihood which bore up to the last; and, therefore, notwithstanding the remonstrances of the veterans, they persisted in lying down in the snow, not resisting, and in some instances even courting death. In this way they accounted for the youths being more frequently sufferers from frost-bites. But the oldest campaigners spoke of those months of night-work as having tried their powers of endurance far beyond anything they ever experienced before; and that



not only on account of the inclemency of the season, but also because of the unceasing vigilance it was necessary to maintain.

The sorties of the Russians, aided by the ravines with which the Crimea is intersected, and by the absence of the moon, were almost perpetual, and conducted with such secrecy and quickness, as to secure frequently the sentry being disarmed and the embrasure reached before the least alarm was given. Then would ensue a hand-to-hand fight in the darkness,—a handful of men thrusting back with the bayonet hundreds of the enemy, as few at a time they climbed the bank of earth; by this means keeping them at bay until reinforcements could be brought up. To use the expression of one of our soldiers, the Russians literally swarmed upon the points of the bayonet, wholly regardless of the certain death awaiting them. Some said this ardour was the result of drink, but it seemed generally believed that they were not careful of a life which was passing in so much wretchedness; for, whatever were the sufferings of the allies, those of the enemy were at least equal.

Several of our younger soldiers became imbecile, and it was believed that this affliction was often caused by fright: not that they were



cowards on the field of battle ; it was the effect of out-post duty. A young fellow fresh from his own fireside, is taken in his turn by the guard, and left for many hours to pace alone in the gloom three hundred yards in advance of the trench and of his companions ; knowing at the same time that he is between them and an enemy whose approach it is difficult to detect until close upon him—as the Russians crawled rather than walked in their grey garments noiselessly over the snow—and whose object was in the first place to despatch him. These advanced sentries, when suspecting danger, were not supposed to make a retreat until they had fired their musket, the report of which would cause all to be on the alert ; when he reached the trench those within would expect an explanation, and woe to him if he had roused those worn-out men causelessly.

The shell wounds were peculiarly frightful in appearance ; large pieces of flesh being torn away by the nails, jagged bits of iron, &c. with which the shell was filled. When a missile of this description alighted in the midst of a group of men, they threw themselves on their faces, as, on the bursting of the shell, its contents, while dispersing around, took an upward direction ; thus in this posture they would only receive



a blow as the destructive shower fell to the earth.

In the latter part of 1854 were fought the two battles of Balaclava and Inkermann, the one on the 25th of October, and the other on the 5th of November. Prince Menschikoff devised an admirable plan for the retaking of Balaclava, and had he succeeded the besiegers would have been converted into besieged ; but the allies were too brave for him. This attack upon Balaclava led to the battle which takes its name from that village. It was here the British committed that fatal mistake, the famed Balaclava charge, which, however much to be deplored, at least tended to show the unexampled discipline attained by our army. The Light Brigade were perfectly aware that they galloped to certain death, when they obeyed the order to advance between the two batteries of cannon and to spike those on the hill before them. In hearing the conversation of the men about this charge, it was observable that they never dwelt upon the mistake ; their whole attention was turned upon the gallantry of the action : and the eye of the sick soldier, whether cavalry or infantry, would kindle at the remembrance of the Balaclava charge.

One of the Light Brigade who had escaped



unhurt from that deadly rush, received a kick in the chest from a horse, while in barracks at Scutari, long after the battle of Balaclava, and came into hospital from the hurt. He was depressed in spirits, which prevented him from throwing off the disease engendered by the blow. The doctor remarked that he wished the soldier could be roused, and amongst other remedies leeches were prescribed. While watching them I tried to enter into conversation with him, and spoke of the Balaclava charge, but could elicit only monosyllabic replies. A copy of Tennyson's poem having been lent to me that morning, I took it out, and read it aloud:—

“Half a league, half a league,  
Half a league onward,  
All in the valley of death  
Rode the six hundred.  
‘Forward the Light Brigade !  
Charge for the guns !’ he said.  
Into the valley of death  
Rode the six hundred.

“‘Forward the Light Brigade !’  
Was there a man dismayed ?  
Not though the soldier knew  
Some one had blunder’d ;  
Theirs not to make reply,  
Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs but to do and die.  
Into the valley of death  
Rode the six hundred.



“Cannon to right of them ;  
Cannon to left of them ;  
Cannon in front of them,  
    Volley’d and thunder’d.  
Stormed at with shot and shell,  
Boldly they rode, and well,  
Into the jaws of death,  
    Into the mouth of hell,  
Rode the six hundred.

“Flashed all their sabres bare,  
Flashed as they turned in air,  
Sabring the gunners there,  
Charging an army, while  
    All the world wonder’d.  
Plung’d in the battery smoke,  
Right thro’ the line they broke:  
    Cossack and Russian  
Reeled from the sabre stroke  
Shatter’d and sunder’d.  
    Then they rode back, but not,  
Not the six hundred.

“Cannon to right of them,  
Cannon to left of them,  
Cannon behind them  
    Volley’d and thunder’d.  
Stormed at with shot and shell,  
While horse and hero fell.  
They that had fought so well  
Came thro’ the jaws of death,  
Back from the mouth of hell,  
All that was left of them,  
    Left of six hundred.

“When can their glory fade ?  
Oh ! the wild charge they made !  
    All the world wonder’d.  
Honour the charge they made !  
Honour the Light Brigade,  
    Noble six hundred !”



The man at once forgot his pain, and entered upon a spirited description of the terrific gallop to and from that cannon-crowned height. He asked to hear the poem again, but as by this time a number of convalescents were gathered round, I slipped out of the ward. In a few days, the invalid requested the doctor to discharge him for duty, being now in health; but, whether the cure was effected by the leeches, or the poem, it is impossible to say. On giving the card, the medical man murmured, "Well done, Tennyson." The chaplain who had lent me the poem, hearing of the enthusiasm with which it had been received, afterwards procured from England a number of copies for distribution.

The portion of ground over which the six hundred rode, was pointed out to us. The spot where fell the greater number of men and horses, when we saw it, was remarkable for its rich verdure; but we could not linger there on account of the effluvia from the bodies in their shallow and undistinguishable grave, over which the turf, sprinkled with wild thyme and many lovely flowers, looked so green: we did not fail to notice that the dear familiar forget-me-not was very abundant there.

The Russians, still anxious to defeat the allies



in the open field, and thus save the city from a protracted siege, made an attack upon the right flank of the English, which was ill-defended from the Inkermann road. There a number of ravines afforded a cover, by which the enemy stealthily brought up their guns, and when day dawned, on the 5th of November, these guns were ready to play upon our tents. In the midst of fog, rain, and sleet, was fought the battle of Inkermann, in which for some time the British, 14,000 strong, withstood repeated attacks from an army of 50,000. The Russians behaved with great cruelty in this battle, giving no quarter, and taking diabolical pleasure in inflicting stabs and cuts upon the wounded lying helpless on the ground. One man of the Scotch Greys, a patient at Scutari, to whom I spoke morning after morning as I passed the bed on which he lay in evident misery, asking if I could attend to his wounds or help him in any way, invariably returned a gruff "No, thank you." One morning I saw that he was suffering excruciating pain, and determined not to be repulsed, when he gave the usual answer, I smiled and said, "How long have you been such a cross man?" He replied, "It is more than I can bear: I have thirteen wounds, into several of which those blankets are



eating; for I have no shirt." I brought him one when I next came, and while washing his wounds, asked him how it was that he did not sooner lay down his arms; he told me that a sword cut had disabled him, but that the ground on which he lay had been contested by portions of the two armies. Twice the English gave way, and the Russians passed over the spot, being in their turn driven back; and while making the retrograde movement, they at the command of an officer stabbed our men, who lay helpless in their path. He ended his tale by saying, "I have more than once stayed a thrust in pity, which, perhaps, ought to have been made; but I will return to the Crimea, and never again give quarter to a Russian." I begged him then, as well as many times after, not to be so cruel; but it never appeared that my words moved him from his purpose. More than twelve months after this, when passing down a corridor, a fine looking soldier accosted me, saying, that having called at Scutari on his way from the Crimea to England, he had come to the hospital to see me. I did not recognize him, but he made himself known as the man of the Scotch Greys, who had received thirteen wounds. I asked him if he had carried out his threat, and believed him



when he said: "No; though I have had many a Russian in my power."

Our men, as they themselves have observed, did not war in such a manner as to deserve this treatment from their antagonists: the following anecdote may tend to show this.

An English sergeant, severely wounded in the battle of Inkermann, was lying in a part of the field where few of his countrymen, but many Russians had fallen. The soldier having preserved his calabash of water, was doling it out to himself in drops, each of which was inexpressibly grateful, when his attention was attracted to a wounded Russian, whose glazed eye was looking wistfully at the wooden bottle. At the cost of some pain to himself, the sergeant managed to turn so as to place the water to the lips of the man with whom he had lately been contending. Revived by the draught, the implacable Russian raised himself on his elbow, and discharged his piece at the head of his restorer; the aim was inaccurate, but a *mêlée* ensued amongst the wounded, in which the Russian lost his life.

I remember one morning in the depth of winter, entering my ward and observing a peculiarly hushed expectant manner in my patients. A few moments elapsed, when I heard a volley of mus-



ketry in the direction of the barracks. "There he is," they exclaimed, in a tone of satisfaction; and then they proceeded to explain that a court-martial had been held over a Russian officer, who had been taken prisoner, and was found guilty of giving orders for despatching their wounded enemies as they were passed during the battle. The report of the muskets announced to us all the punishment awarded him.



## CHAPTER VI.

## THE HOSPITAL AT SCUTARI.

As I have before said, the nursing staff reached Scutari the day before the battle of Inkermann; and for about a week after our arrival we were occupied in our several quarters, in making shirts, pillows, slings, &c. We thought this time very long, but at length we were summoned, and distributed each to one or other of the almost countless rooms of that gigantic hospital, to seam up the beds. A coarse wrapper, sewn up like a sack on three sides, was hastily filled with chopped straw; our work was to sew the fourth seam, and thus complete the pallet. The beds were then laid on the floor about a foot apart, the line extending round the apartment and leaving a small space in the middle. As we laboured, the wounded were arriving from the vessels which brought them from the field of Inkermann. The scene baffles description: horror upon horror



crowds upon my mind as I revert to those hours, almost to the exclusion of sober thought. It is possible that if any warlike monarch could have seen this one hospital on that day, he might for ever have eschewed conquest. Stretchers were provided for the wounded who were quite disabled, but many walked from the ship to lie down on the straw pallets to die; they would have said, "in comfort." A man remarked, that to be in the Scutari hospital was like being in heaven, such had been the hardships undergone.

On this, our first day's experience of nursing in a war hospital, the scene which the memory calls up, though vivid in its horribleness, is, generally speaking, mixed and confused in its details; but there are one or two cases, which are even now as clear to me as if I had only witnessed them yesterday. A soldier had had his leg amputated on the field of battle; and the dressings having been suffered to remain too long, the removal of them *sure* would cause him ~~exquisite~~ pain, unless the whole of the bandages were wetted until thoroughly saturated. While I was attending upon this patient, several medical men gathered round a bed a very short distance from me. It was usual for us to leave wards during an operation, but at this time the calls upon us were too urgent, and I remained.



The doctors were about to remove a right arm from its socket, for the purpose of extracting a bullet which was supposed to be lodged in the socket of the arm. Chloroform had been administered, and while the operators were busy with knife, probes, &c., the poor fellow (he belonged to the cavalry,) was waving his uninjured left arm above his head, as if it held his sword, and shouting, "Come on, boys; one more dash and we win it." The right arm must have been thus elevated when the wound was received. The bullet being removed, together with some diseased bone, the arm was replaced in its original position. After the operation the patient was compelled to lie with his face turned towards the wounded shoulder, otherwise as he lay on his back it would have borne part of the weight of his head; at the same time the discharge was so offensive as to nauseate him, and prevent him taking nourishment. His bedside was visited in the course of the following night, and the nurse, supposing him to be insensible, silently spread a handkerchief scented with eau-de-Cologne over the loathsome wrappings. He looked up, and smiling pleasantly, said, "It is like the visit of an angel." He lived only about twenty minutes longer.



The Queen, having been told that eau-de-Cologne had given great relief in cases of this description, sent out a large supply; which, unfortunately, did not reach the wards of the hospital until many months after. The misery of the dying was also greatly aggravated by the vermin, with which their very beards were filled. All the men who came in were emaciated to the last degree: no painter would imagine human forms exhibiting a more woeful spectacle than did those of some English soldiers. The case I have before mentioned was not the only one in which the wounds were extremely offensive, even to those who were suffering from them. A nurse on approaching a patient after a short absence could perceive that his wounds had taken a bad turn; as she drew near his pallet, he exclaimed, "Sister, you must get away from me; I am so loathsome that even my *own mother* could not approach me." "Oh! yes, she could," she answered, "and love you more than she ever did before in her life." "True," he thoughtfully murmured; "when are we so loathsome as to be beyond a mother's love, a mother's hope, and a mother's prayer?"

A lad, who had lost both his arms, must have remarked, when bidding me good-bye, that my glance dwelt upon his maimed body and pale



face, for he added, cheerily, "Never mind, sister, we may be thankful, if, like the wounded beasts, we can only crawl back into our old, familiar haunts, to die: we should all like to lay our bones in old England."

After undoing the bandages, the nurses washed the wounds, thus laying them open for the inspection of the medical officer; when, if the case was of a simple description, the doctor gave directions and the nurse applied the dressings, and again secured the bandages. But for cleansing the wounds it was extremely difficult, in the first place, to procure water, and secondly, any vessel in which to wash them; so the copper basin was again in requisition. It must be understood that those soldiers suffering slightly were attended by the orderlies; our time and care were devoted to the extreme cases.

During the day scarcely a sound was heard in the wards or corridors (for the passages also were filled with patients) save the step of the orderly or the voice of the doctor. Night is especially trying to the sick and wretched; and then on all sides arose the moan of pain, or the murmurings of delirium. At this period there were no night nurses; but Miss Nightingale, lamp in hand, each night traversed alone the four miles of beds.



How many lives this lady has been the means of saving during these rounds, by calling medical aid or by administering little alleviations, is fully known only to herself, and to the Unseen who watches our steps. She was peculiarly skilled in the art of soothing; her gentle, sympathising voice and manner always appeared to refresh the sufferer. It was generally far into the night before she again reached her quarters.

“Noiselessly moved about the assiduous, careful attendant,  
Moistening the feverish lip, and the aching brow, and in silence  
Closing the sightless eyes of the dead, and concealing their faces,  
Where on their pallets they lay, like drifts of snow by the road-  
side.  
Many a languid head, upraised as Evangeline entered,  
Turned on its pillow of pain to gaze while she passed, for her  
presence  
Fell on their hearts like a ray of the sun on the walls of a  
prison.”

Several medical officers declined the assistance of nurses in that portion of the hospital under their charge. A lady returning from her duties took a wrong direction, and passing up a corridor not open to us, stopped to close the eyes of one whom she thought just breathing his last, and whom she supposed unconscious; but after staring a little time he, to her astonishment, exclaimed, “Woman!” and then added, “my mother was a midwife.”



We often thought it curious that the last words of a great number of the men were of their mothers, though many of them must have left a wife and children. We speculated whether this resulted from the fact of our being elderly women, and therefore bringing the memory of this parent more vividly before their fading faculties; or whether it was true that a man's highest, strongest, most enduring earthly affection is his love for his mother. A soldier, though often the scapegrace of a family, is, perhaps, none the less near to the heart of those at home on that account; long illness not only brought down bodily strength, but also turned their thoughts and feelings to early childhood; and while in this weak state they spoke so frequently of their mother, as to make us seem quite acquainted with that parent.



## CHAPTER VII.

## HOSPITAL DEFICIENCIES.

HITHERTO I have been speaking of the sufferers brought from the field of battle, but as the season advanced the never empty pallets changed occupants. The soldier's most dire enemy, privation, with its attendants, began to send in its victims. Thus many who were recovering from the prostration consequent upon amputation, &c., were attacked by disease, to the contagion of which their enfeebled constitutions rendered them peculiarly liable, and whose ravages their strength was unable to resist. It seemed very sad, after all the severe pain and alternations of hope and fear they had undergone, and when they were just beginning to have visions of home, to see them a second time stricken down, and perhaps the letter written, which acquainted friends with their restored health and near prospects of return. One instance is before my mind at this moment, where the joyous letter, in which minute directions were



given to his mother regarding certain things to be prepared for him, was taken out of the collecting bag to be superseded by a lock of hair and the sad announcement of the writer's death. This letter-writing was one of our most painful tasks.

At a time when the whole hospital was reduced to the very extremity of suffering, the Queen's message to her troops, transmitted through Miss Florence Nightingale, was posted up. As we made our rounds we could only think of their diseased forms, for whose pains we could offer no alleviations; but they themselves seemed to have forgotten their miseries in dwelling upon the goodness of their Queen, and a look of cheerfulness lighted up countenances upon which death, in many instances, had set his mark. As I asked one poor fellow how he was, he drew himself up, and, forgetting to answer me, said, "Victoria is a queen who is very fond of her soldiers."

I fear that I should scarcely be credited were I to attempt to describe in detail the noble manner in which the army behaved under their unprecedented trials; and I am sure that I could not do justice to those who composed that gallant  
They were thankful for the slightest attention. They frequently did all in their power to conceal the pains they endured, lest we should be distressed



In one division of the hospital Miss Nightingale, accompanied by the medical officer, went to the bedside of each man, and found the patient's diet to be only bread, and a something meant to represent tea; both the bread and the "tea" stood at their head untouched, as they were too reduced to take nourishment of this description. She inquired of the patients what they would wish to have in lieu of this diet, and in each instance asked the doctor his opinion as the reasonableness of the request. I fear none ever saw the good things asked for, such as an egg or a little broth, &c.; but, however anxiously these were expected, we were not reminded of their absence: if we brought into the midst, perhaps of thirty, a portion of arrow-root, &c., which would barely serve ten, those were most distressed upon whom we forced it, grateful as it would have been to the sinking frame of any one of them. And what made their heroism, as shown in endurance, so delightful to witness, was the simplicity and resignation with which their sufferings were accepted, and their unconsciousness of the state of things being peculiarly remarkable.

"Meek souls there are, who little dream  
Their daily strife an angel's theme,  
Or that the rod they take so calm  
Shall prove in heaven a martyr's palm."



I think the military are rather misunderstood by civilians; their dress is conspicuous, which causes the bad conduct of two or three in the public streets of a town to bring obloquy on the whole regiment quartered there, while probably the great majority of the soldiers are thoughtfully and industriously occupied in barracks. The men themselves have often, in my hearing, deplored this. Remarking on the general conduct of the troops, we all were convinced that the discipline of a military life is elevating to the character in a very high degree.

Generally speaking, the chief medical officers resolutely closed their eyes to the great want in the hospitals of every comfort for the patients: they would have said, from time immemorial a prescribed course has been resorted to in order to meet certain exigencies, and if it did not meet them, it was *supposed* to do so; which was, they persisted, as far as they were concerned, the same thing. For instance, shirts were needed: a requisition would be written, calling upon the appointed official belonging to the commissariat to provide them; if they did not appear, and the chief was again applied to, he would treat the matter precisely as if the patients were enjoying their comfortable garments: he had written the



order, and so far as he was concerned the men were clothed. Again, upon one occasion, only three small spoons could be found for fifty men, whose diet was supposed to be arrowroot. The orderly officer was appealed to when making his rounds of the hospital, and calling out at each ward these words, "Any complaints?" He replied, "Every soldier has a spoon, knife and fork, comb, razor, &c. in his knapsack." When timidly asked where the knapsack could be found? he answered, "I have not charge of them." It is in this way that the men are SUPPOSED to be furnished with needful comforts. The whole of the kits belonging to these men had been left on the field of Alma, to which engagement the army was led accoutred as on the march; and a man who was carried insensible off the field was not likely to bring away his knapsack.

A medical officer, of whose kindness of heart there could be no doubt, was explaining that Government in its zeal for economy in the War Department, had been so strict with regard to the most trifling sum expended out of the regular course, that whoever had ordered any articles (spoons, for example) would have done so at the risk of having to pay for them out of his own purse. While in the West Indies, this officer said, the



stationery he used for official purposes became a serious item, on which he thought he would try if anything could be allowed: so he put down two shillings and sixpence for quill pens, but it cost him three pounds for correspondence before he could get the requisition passed. He remarked further, "Miss Nightingale, with the purse of all England opened to her, might indeed order shirts for 2,000 men on her own responsibility." The cost of the spoons in the end came out of the "purse of all England;" into which, after all, no serious inroad could have been made in consequence, as they were not a farthing each. Miss Nightingale gave her word to the medical chief that she would not send anything into the wards without it were first requested by a doctor; therefore, she directed the nurse to ask one of the gentlemen to make a requisition to her for the spoons. The nurse applied to a general doctor, who thanked her for calling his attention to the matter, but said, "I will first write a requisition upon the commissariat, and then, should the articles not be forthcoming, give you a paper for Miss Nightingale." This lady sent to Constantinople the same afternoon and bought the spoons. The medical gentleman to whom the nurse appealed, was known to act upon the system of first applying to the legitimate source



for whatever might be needed ; but he allowed no man to lack what was needed merely because he wished to prove that the existing arrangements were perfect.

A lady who was much distressed at the sufferings in her wards, thinking that if she made an appeal to a relative in England some relief would be afforded, to the saving of many lives, wrote a hasty letter, which was indiscreetly published. It was not worded carefully, and gave rise to exaggeration ; the deaths in a *division* being understood to have occurred in a *ward*. A gentleman sent by Government to report on the state of the hospital held an examination, and the lady was dismissed to England at two hours' notice : not that the amount of destitution had been overstated ; this was impossible. As she truly said when we again met, though she was grieved that in a moment of excitement she had been inexact, God in His mercy had brought good out of evil ; for many boxes arrived with the address she had desired, whose contents relieved hundreds of suffering soldiers.

During my stay at the Barrack Hospital, I was sometimes despatched with assistance to the sick in the women's quarters. I felt greatly touched with the misery I saw there, but especially with the case of the widow of the sergeant who fell in the battle of



the Alma, and whose last words to his wife appear in the former part of this narrative. The portion allotted to her of the spacious room, crowded with some hundreds of both sexes, scarcely sufficed to hold a few raised planks, which formed the bedstead. A ragged dress and shawl suspended on a string formed a screen, which gave her all the privacy she could command. Her face, whose regular features proved that it might once have been handsome, looked haggard and aged; ravages not the work of time, but of sorrow, want, and disease, her age being about twenty-six. Amidst all her squalid wretchedness, when addressed by a lady, she at once showed, both in aspect and language, traces of the station in which she had once moved, and from which she had descended to follow the fortunes of her husband the sergeant; a man of some education, and possessing, I was told, in his regiment, a high character for intelligence, steadiness, and bravery. How great must have been the mental agony of the noble-hearted soldier, when sitting on the lonely hillside writing the letter I have quoted, and feeling powerless to shield her whom he had tempted to unavoidable contact with the most debasing scenes! He also must have seen many times how daily familiarity with vices which we dare not even discountenance, gradually wears



off the edge of abhorrence; overclouding even the most refined minds, and the highest principles.

Two of us went to the bedside of the suffering woman to execute a direction from the medical officer, but found that a soldier's wife had undertaken the task. This person, though attending the invalid with kindness, was eager to resign her post of watcher, that she might join in the revels going on in the room; which, as the night moved on, became the scene of a perfect Saturnalia. Dragging more closely around us the few rags which formed our screen, we knelt beside the dying woman, who one moment followed our prayers, and the next the obscene songs ringing in her ears: not that she did so voluntarily, but she had not power to call home her mind in the midst of these distractions. I left her bedside and appealed to the female revellers several times, beseeching them to cease singing at least; but I spoke as to the deaf: none answered or attended. Hours rolled on, and I again went to the revellers, but, instructed by past failures, I addressed a group of men gathered round a girl who, with a cup in her hand, was singing a drinking song. I touched the arm of a man to gain his attention, and said,—“The woman is dying very hard, and she cannot disentangle her thoughts from what she hears around her.” He



bowed respectfully, and answered,—“ We will stop it directly.” The men throughout the room became quiet; though not without many threats, and some blows, were they able to restrain the women. It ever appeared to us, while working in the sunless paths of human existence, that when a woman once commences a downward course, her descent is more rapid, and she arrives at a depth of wickedness positively not attainable by men; it does not seem in the power of men so utterly to divest themselves of all good influences. Our patient died in the gray of the morning: and thus were passed the last hours of one delicately nurtured, and probably accustomed, up to a few months of her death, to refined society. On the small piece of wood, which stood at her head in Scutari graveyard, were written the words, “ A woman.” As amidst scenes of suffering ludicrous incidents often occurred, I may be excused for describing a droll incident.

A certain number of the nurses, though quartered at the barracks, attended the patients in the general hospital, distant about half a mile. As this short walk twice a day, in addition to their work, was seriously fatiguing to several, Miss Nightingale hired a Turkish carriage to ply to and fro. The windows of these covered vehicles are



about as high and not larger than those of a cab ; at the same time, as there is no door, through these apertures you make your entrance, and, worse still, your exit. There are no steps, so, in order to enter, the wheel is mounted, and, after putting inside the head and one foot, you shut your eyes, and precipitate yourself in, generally alighting safely on the cushioned seat. It is impossible thus to dash out recklessly into the road ; therefore when wishing to alight it is necessary to get out backwards : a spectator would perceive a foot making eccentric evolutions in space until it could hit upon the wheel ; this task accomplished, the body gradually came out, the head being the last portion. All this was a work of time, and not performed without little misfortunes ; more especially as those who preferred riding were generally some of the stoutest of our band. If a group of men, on our arrival at the gate of either hospital, perceived the nurses' carriage, they were considerate enough to walk away ; but on one occasion two officers, strangers in Scutari, were standing at the porch of the barracks in conversation. As they appeared on the point of moving off we resolved to wait ; the Turkish driver exhibited no impatience, as waiting is a task for which the whole nation is ever ready ; so he drew his hookah from its place in his sash,



and sat down on the pavement with an air which implied that this state of things might continue for an indefinite period. During a break in the conversation, one of the gentlemen saw the carriage and politely stepped forward to open the door. The sister who had charge of the party, while repressing her laughter, found it impossible to explain the dilemma, which would have been the signal for a loud peal from the nurses. The officer at length said, "I really cannot find the door." The sister managed to reply with great gravity, "Thank you, there is no door." A little chagrined at her seeming want of courtesy, he turned to his friend and said, "These ladies were built in the carriage, and we must go at once and order out a company of sappers to take the concern to pieces." "REELS in a bottle," murmured the other, and they walked away without a smile on the countenance of either.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## CHRISTMAS AT SCUTARI—HOSPITAL INCIDENTS.

CHRISTMAS day, that season of festive mirth and reunion, bringing with it strong remembrances of home and comforts, made sad hearts sadder in Scutari hospitals; yet we all struggled against the feeling, and with voices as cheerful as we could command, exchanged the salutations of the day. It is a great rule in the army that every member should resist depression; personally first, of course, then in his sphere: as they express it, "A man must keep up his heart, or the battle is lost." As we passed from bed to bed to lay open the wounds, the pain-worn face of the occupants brightened, and we were greeted with, "A merry Christmas to you." We returned the greeting as cheerfully as we could, strangely as the words sounded in that corridor of suffering; though indeed there were those there, for whom we might expect a happy Christmas in the highest sense of the words: ere



the day was ended they would have crossed the dark valley into whose shade they had already entered, and have reached

“Those blissful realms  
Where Christ exalted reigns.”

The “Roast Beef of Old England” was out of the question, but, with the aid of a good deal of imagination, it seemed possible, at least, to secure the Plum Pudding; and I think I might with safety affirm, that as the doctor left the ward, every man drew from under his pillow a small portion of flour and fat, with an egg and some plums, and began to concoct a Christmas pudding. I assisted many to make the pudding whom nothing short of a miracle would enable to eat it; still they must have the thing. I was not there when the puddings were brought, smoking hot, into the wards, but several small pieces were saved for me under the pillows and presented on the following morning. For some days previously I had been asked for pieces of linen, which, without dreaming of the use to which it was to be applied, I took to them; thus they were provided with pudding-cloths. The ladies in England who so kindly furnished the bundles as little thought of the linen being used for such a purpose.



The value of the old linen in the hospitals can hardly be estimated: to wipe off the death dews; to keep the cheek, and sometimes a raw spot, from coming in contact with the blankets; to cover the faces of those suffering from excessive weakness (by this means shielding them from the rays of the sun, or from flies); to form a covering for small cushions, the shifting of which afforded change of posture, and thus relief in cases of amputations, or support to the back and hips: they were not, that I saw, used in the dressing of wounds, because for that purpose the lint from the medical store answered better.

The Christmas of 1853 and that of 1854 will never be forgotten by me. In '53 I was at Plymouth attending the Irish suffering from cholera, and the relatives of our patients were besieging our doors the whole day with inquiries as to whether the hopeless cases were likely to breathe their last on that holy day; because, they said, "On Christmas day the gates of heaven are so wide open and unguarded as to allow of almost any one pressing in." The heaven of these poor people would appear to be one of material objects, and they were under the impression that the angels were all so absorbed in joy as to neglect this part of their duty. On the death of an aged



Irishman, the wife and sister dressed the corpse in the best suit of clothes they could procure ; and they performed this office some hours after dissolution, as they were not able to get the articles sooner, though at this period the body could only be approached at imminent peril : getting on the boots and lacing them up appeared likely to prove a work of considerable time, so we suggested that possibly this part of the apparel might be dispensed with ; but the wife and sister could not hear of it ; they declared them most necessary : “ How can you tell,” they argued, “ the length of the journey or the kind of road ? besides,” they said, “ poor Terence would be ashamed in that strange country without brogues.” Another girl remarked of her departed brother, “ Bill is gone to the right place, for I saw him in my dream looking so airy : he was dressed all in cloth clothes, with a beautiful new pair of brogues on his feet, and dancing with a nice young woman.”

Our sick and wounded at Scutari were in possession of three hospitals : the largest, termed the Barrack Hospital, was on the verge of the village of Scutari, and thus on the edge of a large common, which bounds that village on one side ; the area of this piece of pasture land cannot be less than five or six miles. The one next in size was



named the General Hospital, because it was at one time intended to reserve it for fevers and other epidemics, and by this means to preserve the hospital for wounded in a more healthy condition; but it was found impossible to preserve this arrangement. These two hospitals were distant from each other about half a mile, and behind the latter lay the strip of ground appropriated for the last resting-place of those of our countrymen who expired at Scutari; it was bounded by a steep green bank, whose base was laved by the rippling Bosphorus. The third and smallest hospital, called the Palace, because it had once been a summer residence of the Sultan, was about a mile from the General Hospital, and situated on a third side of the common. At the commencement of my nursing experiences, I was employed at the Barrack Hospital; but after a short time, resided there while working at the General Hospital.

About New Year's day, seventeen of us took up our abode at the General Hospital, where three rooms and a kitchen were set apart for our use. One of these apartments was occupied by two lady volunteers and three of us from Devonport: Sellonites we were sometimes termed; but the medical gentlemen, when needing us, generally sent for Dr. A. or Dr. B.'s Protestant nun. Five



Roman Catholic sisters occupied another room, and six hospital nurses, with the housekeeper, dwelt in the third. Our quarters were excellently situated, as they all opened upon a thoroughly ventilated hall, into which the principal entrance arch of the building led, having a corresponding arch opposite, leading into the garden which the hospital enclosed. The spacious, marble-paved hall had a very imposing effect; indeed, we resided in the palatial part of the General Hospital. It appears, that, when grandeur is studied, the Turks employ a multitude of windows; there were, in each of these rooms, nine, where we should have considered three or four of that size sufficient. This multitude of windows, with their badly fitted frames, increased the excessive cold; while, at this time, we had no stove. The Turks do not use fire for warming their dwellings, but in severe weather put on additional garments; a long fur coat with wide sleeves being then worn by both men and women. By degrees we were creeping on in luxury, as five now occupied a room previously considered large enough for eight; we had also been elevated to bedsteads: the spot covered by this piece of furniture, together with a space around about two feet wide, constituted our own peculiar little domain, all other



parts of the room being in common ; thus we could pay and receive visits from each other. There were those amongst us who were desirous of shutting their eyes by day to the fact of this article of furniture being a bedstead, so, turning up the ends and concealing the whole by a railway rug, a kind of ottoman was formed.

There was also in the room a closet, which was set apart for the lady whom Miss Nightingale appointed as superintendent, and into this she retired if at any time she felt disposed to give herself out as, "Not at home this morning."

At this period there was no place set apart for public worship at the General Hospital, but the chaplain was kind enough to read the prayers in our quarters. It was suggested, that, possibly, the convalescents would like to attend, and all who were able gladly availed themselves of the offer. One evening, a lady, being indisposed, requested the superintendent to dispense with the service, as she wished to retire to rest ; the superintendent left the room for the purpose of telling the chaplain, but stopping to speak with the patients as she passed along the corridor, her first object escaped her : eight o'clock, the hour for assembling, came, and all were out of the room except the invalid and myself. In a few minutes the clergyman



arrived, followed by his congregation, who generally waited in the hall until they saw him pass in. As it usually takes me some time to consider before I resolve what ought to be done under difficult circumstances, all were assembled, and the minister had opened his book before I made up my mind how to act. The lady in bed, on the first alarm, had covered her head, and being very slight and spare, was undetected, so I now concluded it best to leave things as they were; but it was usual for the housekeeper to come in late and tired, and I was afraid that she would at once, in whatever posture others might be, sit down upon this very bed, which stood nearest the door. It fell out according to my fears: for as we were repeating the Confession she entered the room, and her portly person came down upon the invalid with a great crush; but, quickly starting up again, she loudly exclaimed, "Dear, bless my heart and soul alive! how should I know you were here! have I squashed you?" It was a ludicrous incident; but the officiating minister did not raise his eyes or suffer it in the least to interrupt him, while the convalescents were so decorous as to remain kneeling with unmoved countenances.

Having access to windows commanding two



wharfs, we often saw the sick and wounded from Balaclava brought on shore: this was indeed a piteous spectacle. A long file of stretchers, each with a gaunt soldier clothed in his tattered gray coat, lying helpless (and very often senseless) upon it, being borne by noisy, careless Turks, who really appeared to resort to little expedients in order to increase the sufferings of the soldier: such as placing the taller of the four bearers at the feet rather than the head; when about to rest, allowing the framework to fall with a jerk; or lifting it up unevenly, and thus rolling off the bleeding burden. On one occasion a wounded man was brought in, and two of the bearers had rested their poles on the ground, while the other two still retained theirs, thus causing the patient to lie upon his head and shoulders; on releasing him we found that he had fainted: a few moments longer would probably have placed him beyond recovery. On another occasion the Turkish bearers, while jesting amongst themselves, threw a sick man off the stretcher, cutting his face and giving him a severe shock. When able to speak, his first words were, "Those frightful men have murdered me." He did not live long; though the fall would not have killed a man in health.

We were frequently saddened by seeing shoe-



less invalids tottering past our buildings on their way to the Palace hospital. One snowy day, in particular, we observed a small band, who, having left the direct path, were straggling hither and thither, and fast becoming unconscious with cold and fatigue. Almost in every case, on reaching their bed, they rallied for a short time, but relapsed again, even if they finally recovered; which at this time few did.

Wretched as was the state of the hospitals, the new arrivals from the seat of war felt them to be a haven of rest; one soldier uttered the sentiments of many of his fellows, when he said with delight on reaching his pallet, "Here we can lie down out of the mud and snow, to die quietly." The greater number were too much reduced to crave for food; yet they spoke cheerily to us, and on leaving them at night, it was difficult to realize that in the morning we must look in vain for many familiar faces.

Occasionally, doubting the vigilance of the ward orderly, we have risen to visit those who were suffering peculiarly, where nearly all were dying; and then it appeared impossible to leave again. There were, perhaps, a hundred beds in the part of the building visited by one nurse, and, for each languid sufferer, some trifling thing could



be done ; either to moisten the parched lips, to adjust the blankets, to help the restless to turn, to change the position of the cushions which supported the crushed limb, to find the lost handkerchief, or to wet the lint which covered the inflamed wound. The following anecdote will serve to show the comfort afforded by these womanly attentions. A patient, slightly delirious with fever, was most unwilling that the nurse should ever leave his side ; it was at a period when no other case in the division required her constant care, therefore she was able to spend a considerable portion of her time with him. A convalescent from a distant ward, who belonged to the same corps, was thoughtful enough to come at the hour appointed for our refectations, when he would remonstrate with his friend on his thoughtlessness in making such demands upon the nurse. The sick man would say, " Let her go, then ; and if I can possibly bear it, I will not send for her ;" but on the return of the nurse, she generally found her patient with his eye fixed on the door to watch for her entrance, and in a most excited state. He would generally greet her with : " Stop it at once, nurse ; stop it this moment. I must have gone mad if you hadn't come." She then used to bathe his head, and gradually he



would become calm. On his recovery he explained, that during his illness, he conceived that there stood in the corner of the room a steam-engine, which in some manner was connected with machinery in his head; and none, he thought, had any power over this engine except the nurse, as she alone knew how to turn the taps, &c. The poor fellow had, indeed, a great commotion in his distracted head, and there is little doubt but that the wet lint constantly applied did, in a degree, relieve it. It is curious to observe even here, how a modicum of truth is associated with unreality, for it was from a pail in this corner that the fresh water was brought, and in this circumstance probably originated the sufferer's notion of a steam-engine. This incident may tend to show that it is positive cruelty to demand any great amount of self-control in a sick person, who may be quite insane on one point, through disease, without the nurse being at all able to understand the crotchet: at the same time, it is abundantly necessary that she should at all times act with such firmness and decision as will cause the weak mind to rely upon her, and trust in her; as thus the patient will be saved the weariness of having at all times to think and choose for himself: an effort which, in sickness, we are sometimes thankful to



be spared from making. To many of the lady volunteers, who came to the work under the impression that strength of constitution and kind feelings were the chief requisites, their nursing experiences taught the fact, that tact, training, and judgment, are essentially necessary for those who fill the office of a nurse.

And while thus striving to relieve material sufferings, the bruised heart and wounded spirit may also have been strengthened and comforted: when all but those equally weak with themselves were sleeping or absent, the pent-up feelings gave way, and the soldiers were glad to speak of things near their heart, and to receive at least the consolation afforded by the sympathy of the listener. Two, at least, of the several chaplains, who at various periods had the spiritual charge of the inmates of this building, understood the preciousness of these silent hours, and were frequently to be seen, until far into the night, kneeling by the couch of mental and bodily suffering. This time, when all sounds were hushed, save those of pain, was sometimes selected for administering the Holy Sacrament: it was a most impressive scene in the dim light which just sufficed to bring out the worn countenances, upon which, as they were turned towards the sacred elements, anguish,



reverence, and often intense blessedness were written. "With the cold wind which foreruns the morn," most frequently the angel of death enters where he has been probably watched for and expected since midnight. It is hard to be alone in that hour of nature's greatest agony, and the most sturdy veterans shrank from it: though they themselves considered it weak to indulge in such feelings, they would often ask us to be near them in their last moments.

Immediately after death the bodies were removed to a room appointed for the dead, where they remained until the following morning, and were then taken to the place of burial. One morning when assembled in our quarters for breakfast, we heard a party of Turks vociferating under our windows, and on rising to ascertain the cause of the tumult we found that two oxen had drawn their burden into a hole, and were unable to extricate it, while four or five of these men were shouting at and goading the beasts with the spiked sticks they carried. The carriage, which we believed laden with meat for the hospital, was similar in construction to those used in England to carry timber, consisting merely of wheels and axles, with poles reaching from axle to axle, supporting what we deemed the carcasses of



beasts carelessly heaped together, and covered partially with cloths. A great effort on the part of men and animals released the carriage with a jerk, which shook off, not the carcasses of beasts, but the unclothed bodies of men, many of whose faces we might have recognised had we not at once turned away. It was not usual for the dead to be taken out on this side of the building, or possibly such a scene might have been more familiar to us.

A nurse having promised a lad that she would follow him to his grave, on the morning after his death she went behind the Turks who were performing the rites of sepulture. A large square hole of no great depth had been dug, and into this the bodies were tossed, until they came up level with the soil; she observed a head protruding beyond the rest, which, when the Turk saw, he jumped in amongst the dead and stamped it down; then a mound of earth was heaped upon the whole. Hundreds of our soldiers were at this period stationed at Scutari, but the living English were literally unable to bury their dead: I was told that a fatigue party could not be mustered whose strength was equal to the task of digging the pit. I speak from memory, but I think that in the season of greatest mortality the deaths, for



several weeks at Scutari, averaged fifty in the twenty-four hours. The number of killed in the battle of the Alma amounted to 353—the same number that disease cut off during one week in one station alone: truly the pestilence in the rear of war is more blood-thirsty than the sword in its front.

The eyes of one soldier, and of one alone, I suppose, of all who expired in those vast hospitals, were closed by his wife. As I mentioned, a nurse, concealing the fact of her being the wife of a soldier, obtained an appointment in the nursing staff. Her work lay in the barrack hospital, but her husband was discovered in a dying state in the general hospital, where she at once went to attend upon him, and stayed with him until his death. She begged very hard to be allowed to accompany the corpse into the dead-room, and watch by it until carried to the grave; but for her own sake this request could not be granted: though I was informed that, out of respect to her feelings, a coffin was provided, and the soldier was not laid in an undistinguishable grave. In the first transport of her grief, she appealed to one of the nuns, whose judgment she probably felt to be decisive in such matters, if she should not meet her husband in Heaven?



Though the nun had previously exhibited great feeling, her answer was true to the spirit of her stern creed when she replied, "You will meet God there, and that ought to be enough for any of us."

On one occasion also, in that world of sickness, a son had the comfort of a mother's presence beside his bed of pain; and, contrary to the expectation of the medical authorities, he so far recovered that she had the unspeakable happiness of taking him home with her. He was a lieutenant in a cavalry regiment, and on receiving notice of his dangerous state, his parents came out to Scutari. The poor mother was so excited when she inquired at the hospital for her son, that the chief medical officer feared even to tell her, until she grew more calm, that he lived. Her presence in the war hospital was exceedingly embarrassing to the very excellent, but systematic old Scotch doctor then in charge. 'What was he to do with her? If he gave her a room, it would be establishing a precedent, and there was no telling what the English women might take it into their heads to do in this war. There were those nurses, an everlasting bore: the sight of them militated against all preconceived notions; and now possibly this lady might be the fore-



runner of a thousand mothers.' I am writing down his thoughts as though I heard him give them expression, when I must confess that I could only guess at them by studying his perplexed countenance. The mother did not take his hesitation in this light, but supposing it to proceed from doubts of the quality of the accommodation he was able to offer, she pointed to a vacant pallet in the corridor, and said, "May I only lie down there?" A bed was found for her in our quarters. As may naturally be supposed, in her loving anxiety for her son she rather tried the patience of the doctors, and on one occasion she was gently remonstrated with. "Ah, doctor," she said, "you never had a son!" "A son of my own," he replied, "would be treated by me precisely as I am treating yours:" words, the truth of which none who knew him could doubt: and he might have added, 'If I myself were sick, I should not give myself so much indulgence;' for he voluntarily shared the privations of the general army: his dinner, carried along the corridor in the soldier's tin plate, often amused us, as it invariably consisted of a small piece of scorched mutton and two or three potatoes. The young officer himself was not the man to shrink from the soldier's great duty, obedience to regulations; for though only



nineteen, he had greatly distinguished himself, and had received among other testimonials a letter of thanks from his commander-in-chief for his gallantry in some affair.



## CHAPTER IX.

## SCENES IN SCUTARI HOSPITAL.

AT the commencement of the great mortality in the months of December, 1854, January, and February, 1855, the troops in the Crimea were paid their arrears; thus they came into hospital with a considerable sum of money in their possession. On entering hospital, every soldier is supposed to give his money in charge to the hospital sergeant; but, if they could conceal it, the men preferred keeping it about them; this often caused us a painful task. The sick man would say to us, if anything happens to me you will find such and such a sum under my head, and at the same time give us the address of the relative to whom they wished it to be sent: the orderly men appeared to consider their perquisite anything they found about the person of the dead; and would, indeed, scarcely scruple to take it before death, if there seemed little likelihood of the sick man



ever needing it again. The lady superintendent was particularly anxious to fulfil the dying wishes by transmitting the money as directed, so we became, among our other offices, a kind of police.

A non-commissioned officer whose time of service, twenty-one years, had nearly expired, being unequal to his duty in barracks, came into hospital to wait until a vessel should sail for England. As we had seen occur in many instances, a violent illness attacked him shortly after his admission, and when the *Homeward Bound* steamed out of the Golden Horn, he himself and those around him were alike sensible that but one more voyage lay before the soldier—that by which he should cross the River of Death. After the departure of the ship, he prepared to send, through us, directions and loving remembrances to those he felt to be nearest to him. Now in middle life, he had been engaged from his youth to a respectable person who was maintaining herself by keeping a little shop of some kind, and who deemed his return so near and so certain that the savings of years had been expended in furnishing anew the small place which was to serve for their future home. Taking from under his bolster the letter in which she enumerated her purchases, and described minutely



the humble home in which they were to "settle down" after his long wanderings, and many perils and privations, he expressed a wish to hear it read. Poor fellow ! he had it by heart, already ; for when I, from unacquaintance with the handwriting, faltered, he immediately supplied the word or passage. When I had concluded, he called my attention to a ring he wore, and went on to say, " This is a present she made me twenty years ago, and I promised never to part with it while I lived ; when I am dead will you take it off and send it to her, and at the same time tell her that in whatever part of the world I might be quartered I never forgot her, but loved her to the end, as when we were boy and girl together." He lived about a week after the conversation I have narrated, but never again made any allusion to the subject. To my great disappointment, the ring was stolen during the unconsciousness immediately preceding death. The tale was told to the ward doctor, who joined most vigorously in the search to recover the token of the dying ; but we could obtain no clue to it.

An officer told me that it was invariably the worst men of their respective regiments, who were found, to use his own words, " Skulking in hospitals as orderlies, or in offices of that description ; and



therefore, he hoped none considered the orderlies fair specimens of the English soldier. There was one man known to be particularly active in this pilfering, he having been seen more than once taking money from the beds. Changing my corridor, I lost sight of him for several months, when on passing round one day, I observed him as a patient; he called to me as I passed his bed, and wished to speak to me about the distribution of a sum of money which he had amassed: that is, he desired me to name some charitable institution. I could not forbear telling him that I felt the possession of his property would be impoverishing to any society.

At one period, the Scutari hospitals had become so extremely unhealthy, that there were many cases, like that of the sergeant I have mentioned, of convalescents being stricken down while waiting merely for the vessel to convey them to England. There appeared to us something peculiarly touching in these disappointments; the patients' thoughts had been directed to home, and it cost a severe struggle to resign themselves to dying away from relatives and friends, and to be laid in a foreign grave, in a heathen land. Possibly by some the feeling may be deemed morbid, but I believe the sick men desired to get home as much for the



sake of an English grave as for almost any other reason. After giving us such directions as involved the consideration of their death, it has occurred that they remained silent for a time, as if in thought, and then would abruptly make some allusion to the churchyard of their native village; or in the case of those brought up in towns, to the spot where the bones of their deceased relatives were gathered. I remember the exact words of one patient, "Two of my sisters are buried in the churchyard at M—— by the side of the path which leads up to the belfry-door, and mother always goes into church that way."

A convalescent waiting at Scutari for the next transport whose destination was England, lost strength day by day, but persisted in dressing, that he might spend his hours watching at a window for the vessel. After an unusually long interval the wished-for sail arrived. The pay-sergeant visits those who are invalided the evening previous to embarkation, for the purpose of settling accounts, as well as ascertaining if they have the full complement of clothes; without which they must not leave the hospital. The lad of whom I am now speaking had given notice that he required boots, but by some means the sergeant had not received the communica-



tion; however, impressed with his anxiety, the official promised, if he could procure them in time, to walk across the common with them in the morning. Group after group left the hospital, many looking in as they passed the ward, to say, "Come on." At length, the boy determined to make an attempt to pass muster in his slippers, and had reached unchallenged the outer gate, when the sentry reminded him that he retained part of a patient's dress. With heavy heart and weary limbs, he retraced his steps to meet the articles in the corridor—five minutes too late. He thanked the kind sergeant, and on reaching his bed, died in a few minutes, without uttering another word. It is doubtful if his little remaining strength could have borne the voyage, had he been in time. A week before the vessel came, the doctor wished me to try and reconcile his mind to waiting longer; though he did not like to give him the pain which the erasing of his name would cause him. I repeated the lad's reply (he was not more than eighteen) to the doctor, and he reluctantly consented to allow him to make the trial. The sick boy's words were, "If I could reach our little cottage, where a pleasant breeze is always to be felt, and get plenty of eggs and milk, I should get strong again immediately."



Next to the frost-bites, the shell wounds were of the most grievous and lingering description. When suffering severely with a wounded limb, the patient looked forward eagerly to the amputation, considering that with the diseased member he would lose the pain it caused him: this is a mistaken idea, as the bad symptoms generally appear again after the operation; moreover, comparatively few recover from the shock which the whole system sustains by the loss of a limb. A general doctor, whom I have heard other medical men declare to be one of the best surgeons in the army, after his compeers had decided upon a case, would make any excuse, at least to defer the use of the knife. In this respect he was not fast enough for the men, but in all others he was as great a favourite as his kindness of heart deserved he should be. Three men, at different periods, have pointed to a useful limb, saying that this gentleman's obstinacy, as some termed it, had preserved it to them. Perhaps the deferring of amputations may have shortened life in a few cases; but so small a number recover from them, and those who do are often such great sufferers for the remainder of their days, as to justify risking a little in order to spare the injured limb.



An Irishman, who had long endured great pain from a shell wound in his leg, desired to have it taken off; the ward doctor believed that the case could never be cured, as it had spread over the whole limb and eaten down to the bone; but the consent of the general doctor was necessary, and his leanings were well known. The surgeon attending the man spoke to his superior of the case, and when he received the expected answer, "We will see in a few weeks," he lost patience, declaring that he could do no more, and bidding the poor fellow doctor his leg himself. The general doctor inspected the whole hospital once a fortnight, when any soldier has the right of speaking to him if he wishes to do so. The Irishman was allowed a small quantity of port wine each day; borrowing a bottle, he saved up the daily portion until it amounted to, perhaps, nearly a pint, which he drank on the morning of inspection, to raise his courage sufficiently to enable him to speak to his officer. The man being very weak, the wine made him excited, and when the medical gentleman reached that part of the hospital, and stopped to ask him how he was, his state was at once perceived. The officer spoke most severely, giving the man to understand that he couldn't grant him the favour



of cutting off his leg after such conduct. They were both Irishmen, and the scene was in some respects ludicrous, for it was easy to see that the officer, with all his seeming heat, truly felt for the man, who kept repeating the expression, "Sure, if I asked you to give me a leg you couldn't be more angry. Sure, I do not mean any disrespect to you, sir; but it's my own leg after all." The doctor commanded the patient to be silent, and calling the nurse—who was trying to appear busy at a short distance, but was in reality watching the issue of the altercation, in some anxiety for the man, whom she truly respected notwithstanding this present little break out—he gave directions as to the treatment he wished adopted; particularly charging her frequently to bathe the whole limb with warm water, and, above all, to take care that he drank his wine in small portions. The gentleman passed on; but when he again went his rounds he had the satisfaction of finding that the wound was decidedly beginning to close. He made no allusion to his former visit; did not even profess to know the case, but merely remarked carelessly, "That is doing very well." A person meeting the soldier some weeks after, walking, with the assistance of a stick, tolerably well, repeated to him his



own words, with a slight alteration: "Sure, that is not your own leg now; it belongs to Dr. O'Flaherty." The man, with all the warmth of a true Irishman, exclaimed, "He should have it, and my head too, if they would do him any good, God bless him!"

The patients were so emaciated, that after any length of time spent on the straw beds it was very difficult to prevent the skin on their back and hips from rubbing off; and if this occurred, unless the patient could leave his bed, the raw spots could not be healed, as the constant pressure and rubbing prevented the new skin from growing. These bed-sores, as they were termed, exhausted the system to a great extent, and prevented the recovery of numbers. The few days passed on the bare decks of the tossing vessels which brought them from the seat of war through the Black Sea, caused wounds of the description I have named, which could never be relieved; and from these many died, who to all appearance would have survived those acquired on the field of battle. The agonies of one man who was brought in after a stormy passage were most fearful to witness. The doctor proceeded to take off the bandages which enveloped the part from whence his leg had been cut off, but he cried, "Not



there: it is my back." The medical gentlemen spared us generally from witnessing the more dreadful sights; but in this instance it was necessary I should see, that I might understand better of what shape to make various little cushions, and how to adjust them. The recent amputation had prevented the poor man from changing his position during the voyage, and his whole back, together with his two shoulders, and even the back of his head were divested of skin: he lingered but a few weeks.

A lad, who was suffering from bed-sores on his back and both hips, remarked to me one morning, "I have had a most comfortable night; you will find my wounds much better." On taking off the poultices a perfect steam ascended from the sores, which were almost black in appearance; I called the doctor's attention to this, and he immediately ordered the boy to be removed into a ward appropriated to those who were afflicted with hospital gangrene: for such was the name given to the disease which had appeared in the poor boy's wounds. He shed tears at leaving the doctor and others to whom he had been accustomed; but he did not at all understand his danger. The next morning the doctor desired me to go to the boy and break to him the awful fact that



he couldn't live twenty-four hours : " I have seen him," the medical man added, " and as the dangerous appearances do not yield to any treatment, but are rather increased, there is no hope." I went and was received most joyously. " I have had," were his first words, " a letter from my mother containing postage stamps, to purchase little comforts on my passage home ; for I told her in my last letter that my soldiering was over and she might expect me." He added, " I showed the money to the doctor, who was almost as glad as I was, and, because you hinted I was worse, I asked him if he thought I could not live, and he does not say so." I told him that I now came by the direction of that gentleman, and gradually gave the dying boy the purport of his words. Poor fellow ! his release from the pains which had been so severe and constant, together with the kind letter and present from his good old mother, as he termed her, had made him very happy ; and he would not contemplate the great change drawing near. I now spoke plainly of his danger, trying, at the same time, as well as I was able, to raise his thoughts to the heavenly mansions filled with the company of the blessed. His answer was, " You are the right sort of woman, sister ; you'd take a man the right way if he'd listen to you." Immediately after, he said,



“I am sure to be invalided home: how glad the old woman will be to see me!” I was anxious that he should understand his state, and said, “You will never see her on earth; but to meet our friends in that home above will indeed be joyous.” I bade him good-bye, and saw the effect of my words when he asked me, “Will you get leave to come into this ward, and help me to learn to read as you did in the other?” A gigantic task that of learning to read, for one whose span of life was not to extend beyond twenty-four hours; but, perhaps, not more impracticable than the schemes and projects of many a philosopher and clever man of the world. When I visited him next morning he knew me, and said, feebly, “Write to my poor mother.” In the interim the chaplain had spent some time with him.

Hospital gangrene, I was informed, is liable to appear in a building which has been used any length of time as a hospital for the wounded, and is fearfully contagious; even the dressing of the sores not being unattended with danger. The nurse must be careful not to approach her work with the slightest puncture in her hands, or she would be liable to painful gatherings. Miss Shaw Stewart, in the Crimea, suffered exquisite pain for months, and finally lost the use of a finger, from dressing



a wound after she had been engaged in needle-work ; indeed, it was at one time feared that she would lose her hand.

Soldiers, owing probably to the peculiarity of their social position, frequently form lasting and disinterested friendships with their associates. It was beautiful in many instances to observe their readiness to make any sacrifice for their comrade, and the tenderness with which, while they themselves could scarcely drag about their feeble forms, they waited around his dying bed. They would hold the most earnest consultation with us about the adjustment of the straw bolster, and such trifles ; standing like little children to hear what we (whom, as women, they deemed so wise in such matters) had to suggest.

In our worst of times, two men arrived, both dangerously ill, one evidently near death, and a convalescent belonging to the same regiment came to apprise me of their cases. This man told me they were both excellent fellows, none better in the whole army ; desiring no doubt to heighten my interest in the two patients : though their misery was, I hope, recommendation enough. The greatest sufferer was an immense man, longer than the bed provided for him ; his feet extending beyond it as he lay perfectly straight upon the unyielding



hillock of straw. His red beard was remarkably long, and over his whole face were crawling countless insects, which I had the greatest difficulty to prevent getting into the nourishment I soon brought him. I turned to the stronger one first, saying, "How are you?" "I am pretty well," he said, quickly; "but nothing has crossed my comrade's lips for three days." The lady superintendent, considering the case peculiarly distressing, with the doctor's leave gave me an egg beat up in a little sherry and water. The sick man seized the cup I put to his lips, and could have drained it had it been twice the quantity; but in the midst of his draught, suddenly checking himself, he took it from his mouth, and looking into it with a sigh, said, "There is a man named Valentine come in with me, who is a great deal worse than I am: could you find him, and give him the remainder of this?" He was unconscious that his comrade was in the next bed. Valentine seemed quite touched with the love his poor dying friend showed him, and his voice was husky as he bade him finish the wine.

The man, Valentine, was in a critical state, but there appeared to be a chance of his recovery with great care. His friend survived about three days, and during this time, his rest was much broken,



while the last night he took no repose. In the morning, I found in one bed a lifeless body, and in the other the surviving comrade in a state of utter exhaustion. The corpse presented a shocking spectacle, as this patient's state of weakness during the short time he lived had been so extreme, that I scarcely dared attempt doing more for him than merely wiping his face and cutting off his beard and hair. The dying would often request that we would give them a shirt in which to die, and thus, it being without the mark of the Board of Ordnance, it was not taken off the body, but they were buried in it. Valentine asked of the lady superintendent this favour for his friend. He never rallied again, but sank so gradually as to linger some weeks. I knew nothing of his former life, but, during this time, he showed all the virtues within his power; unselfishness, patience, and gratitude. An orderly came to me one day, while in another part of the building, to say that Valentine, whose last moments were drawing near, wished me to stay by him, and also that he had something to tell me: it was a message to his mother, whose address he gave me. His bed was in the middle of the corridor; and on either side there appeared a long vista of pallets, with forms wasted by starvation, pain, disease. He was above



all this now, and looking intensely happy: even those standing near caught a gleam from the soldier's ecstatic joy, and seemed to feel, "This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven." "Valentine," I said, "you are nearly home: I wish I was going with you." He gazed into my face with a look of affection and pity, such as he would have given to his own mother had she been there, and replied, "I wish you were." As he ceased speaking, his soul, I trust, entered upon glory unspeakable. We returned to toil and sorrow for a brief space; but whether pleasure or pain were awaiting us is of little moment, if when the end of all approaches our "Robes are found washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb."

It was a great mercy that in this extreme destitution there was preserved to the poor men a spirit free from all bitterness. I saw but few instances of this painful state of mind; where, perhaps, considering the circumstances, we might have expected to find many. One was an aged man, who on his arrival, being offered nourishment, pushed it away, saying, "What is the use now?" Many times during a day and two nights I visited his pallet, on which he lay in agony, sullenly waiting for death: he made a gesture of impatience when-



ever we approached him ; and thus he died, conscious to his last moments. Another was in the ward many weeks, whose grumbling disposition alienated his companions, and they teased him I fear. During the few weeks immediately preceding his decease, he scarcely spoke, save to a strange little black cat belonging to the ward ; and the shielding of this animal became an important part of my day's business. She was brought when a kitten off the field of Inkermann, having been found in the knapsack of a slain Russian. The sick man solicited my protection for his favourite, and when on my return to the ward one day, I found the patient dead, but not yet removed, I made a careful search for the cat : on taking the blankets from the corpse in the dead room, she was discovered on the chest of her master. I took her to our quarters, where after some repulses she gained the good graces of the lady superintendent, and became more than merely tolerated.

The Russians, it would appear, were in the habit of indulging in pets, as I have known several animals which had stood in this relation to them among the spoils of war. When in the Crimea, we were in possession of a cat which our men brought out of a Russian fort, into which they effected an entrance, but held only for a few minutes during



a nocturnal mêlée ; and in the vessel which brought us home, was a ram, perfectly saucy and tame, which was found wounded in the Malakoff when Sebastopol was taken.

In the midst of those struggling between life and death as are the inhabitants of hospitals, the baneful effect of causes which render the air impure is more evident, because it is sufficient to turn the balance, and to produce not merely disease, but its fatal issue. A bed in a corridor in which I worked was so situated that its occupant was near the current of a draft of impure air, which, having travelled up a passage, crossed the corridor to escape through a doorway. Of a number of patients, perhaps twenty, who were assigned this couch, none left it but for their final resting-place. It was at the end of the corridor at which I entered, so that the first face which greeted me each morning, would be that of the soldier on this fated bed ; then, in a few days I should have to pass his lifeless body : again, after a short interval, some new tenant would receive me cheerily ; perhaps remarking, as so many of the arrivals did, how happy he felt in being from under canvas and having a house over his head once more ; adding possibly, with a dash of gallantry some may say, that it was very comfortable when a



man was sick out there, to see the face of an English woman. As I stopped to speak I used to feel unable to look the poor fellow in the face: there seemed in my heart a dreadful secret, which I was keeping from him. At length to my great relief, the bedstead was taken away and that part of the corridor remained unoccupied.

The soldier makes a great point, as he expresses it, of "keeping up his heart," endeavouring to feel that he shall ultimately surmount existing troubles, whatever they may be; and the men value this quality of character, not only on the field of battle, but also when beset with pain or privations. When a soldier visits a sick comrade, he is careful not to tell him of any reverses our arms may have sustained, and tries to turn his mind from the contemplation of his maladies, if he sees it running that way. Passing round to receive directions from the doctor, who was attending a number of patients then arrived from the Crimea, my attention was particularly attracted to a feeble little drummer, who, notwithstanding his weakness, tried to answer the officer in a brave tone. Being both on duty, we could not speak then; but his pain-worn, baby face, in the midst of the bearded men, was too striking to be forgotten, and as soon as I was released I returned to the ward, which



was filled with convalescents. The boy and a corporal next him were the only two not gathered round the stove listening to the latest news from the seat of war. The child lay just behind the door: passing round without speaking, and almost without thinking, I put back the hair from his face, and kissed him. Bursting into a flood of tears, he threw his arms round me, and said,—“What would mother say if she could see me in this state?” The corporal, looking at us both most benignantly, patted the boy, and bade him “keep up his heart.” “And so I did,” he replied, with some temper, “until *she* came to me.” From that hour, the little fellow, evidently considering that I had injured him, treated me with marked coolness.

Each man is provided with an account book, which also contains a number of rules regarding the duties devolving on a soldier. If my memory serves me aright, No. 1 is thus worded, “The first duty of a soldier is Obedience.” And it is thus paraphrased by the Poet Laureate:—

“His not to make reply,  
His not to reason why,  
His but to do and die.”

In affairs of moment where great sacrifices are involved, it is probably not so difficult to act



in conformity with this rule, as in the minutiae of a sick man's day; yet even here it was nobly carried out, without murmuring or questioning: both the medical directions, and anything connected with ward arrangements. One invalid could find in his bed no position which gave him ease; and having an afternoon to spare, I spent it with him in devising little plans to alleviate his restlessness. From a spare bed we removed the blankets, placing them at his back. We had just finished, and were congratulating ourselves on the happy expedients which had occurred to our minds, the patient declaring that he had not known such comfort for months, when the hospital sergeant, making his rounds, pronounced the ward not neat, and said things must resume their proper places: as I took down our handiwork my countenance must have shown vexation, for the sick man remarked, cheerfully, "The first duty of a soldier is obedience."

As I am now speaking of those points in the character of the soldiers, which so lightened our work in hospital, I may perhaps mention that I never once heard a profane expression while abroad; and having been so long utterly unused to bad language, it seemed peculiarly shocking, for some time, to hear the oaths which fell from



the lips of many around us, as we travelled by rail from Southampton to Plymouth, on first reaching England.

There is a generally prevailing impression, though one not usually expressed, that in some unexplained manner the bed of sickness will change the whole disposition and habit of mind. In the paroxysms of a violent disease, the sufferer certainly thinks of nothing but his pain; but when that has subsided, and during the lull which precedes death, predominant ideas resume their sway. Dr. Johnson remarked a few hours before his death, "There will be no letters in heaven;" and we read constantly of artists requiring the pencil they can no longer guide.

After a tedious illness, a soldier was informed by the doctor that his end drew very near, every remedy having been tried in vain. An orderly came to our quarters to say that the dying man wished to see me immediately; I hastened to his side, and, with the solemnity which might be expected, he informed me of the medical man's opinion, adding, "He says, sister, I may have anything I should like." I was still waiting for some important charge, when he resumed: "Of all things I should enjoy to be propped up, with Fred" (a comrade) "to come and yarn a bit: and



could you get me a draught of beer and a pipe?" Having begged a small quantity of tobacco from an officer, I stood by the patient several times during that, his last day on earth, while he with thorough enjoyment took a few whiffs of the pipe.

In another case, also after protracted illness, a patient, feeling his end approaching, desired to have a clean shirt, &c. Having washed his face, and at his request taken some pains with his whiskers, his head was shaved, when I placed a linen handkerchief, which I had previously sprinkled with eau-de-Cologne, on his pillow; he seemed quite relieved, and, being full of gratitude, poor fellow, he said, "If there were ever any chance of my recovery, I should like to take you for a walk in Phoenix Park," and then he added, "I always managed to have a little scent on Sundays." He appeared still to consider that a walk with him in Phoenix Park must be a great treat for any lady. He was an Irishman and a Romanist, and when I next entered the ward the crucifix was hanging before his eyes; but, for all this, he might have been thinking still of Phoenix Park: it is so difficult, when the body is weak, to control and direct the mind at will.



## CHAPTER X.

## TRAITS OF NATIONAL CHARACTER.

NOT very long before I left Scutari, I was attending to my work in the ward, when I became aware that there was some object in the corridor attracting general attention ; and at the same time it appeared, on looking at their countenances, that the gazers were not only surprised, but this feeling was mingled with pleasure and respect. Not being able, at the moment, to ascertain what was coming, my first thoughts were of flight ; for I concluded that some military chief was paying a visit, as the Duke of Cambridge and Lord Cardigan had done during my sojourn at the hospitals. But there was no need for me to flee ; for I found in the corridor an old, white-headed, clean-looking English labourer, who greeted us all with a trusting, pleasant, simple look. What added to the fascination of the old man was the fact of his wearing a tall black beaver hat ; and how this article



had escaped the voyages and the campaign, was a mystery to us all, which was never unravelled. The venerable owner belonged to the Army Works' Corps, and ever, in the ward, was known as "grandfather with the hat." When the hospital sergeant, as was usual, came to take possession of the patient's effects, the old man desired him to be sure and take care of the hat, because it was his Sunday one: the sergeant looked aghast at such a charge, declaring that he had nowhere to stow it unless he first cut it in pieces. At this juncture, "Black Tom," the orderly, came to the rescue, saying, "The old cove is but a civilian, after all, so he need not be tied up so close as we are; I should think the hat can stand on the window sill over the head of his bed." The sergeant offered no opposition, and the arrangement was an immense relief to us all. At the suggestion of the patient, a red cotton handkerchief was spread over it, and then, as he remarked, it was as safe as though it were standing in its ordinary place upon the chest of drawers. He often spoke of "his old woman," as he always termed his wife, and of the trials and comforts they had shared together during an union of more than forty years. I asked him what could have induced a man of his years, more than sixty, to venture out to the



Crimea. "Why you see," he answered, "I thought I would try and make something comfortable for my poor old woman; I was always dreading a time when I might be taken away or unable to work for her, and so she be obliged to spend her last days in the workhouse:" he had, he went on to say, paid some years to a benefit society, but the club broke; and, when engaged on a railway, had saved a comfortable sum; but a son met with an accident, which, after a long illness, ended in his death, and thus a great expense fell upon him during the illness, and, finally, in the bringing up of grandchildren.

Those working about the poor, cannot fail to be ashamed of their own petty self-denials, when they observe the great sacrifices which this class, quite as a matter of course and without giving it a second thought, are prepared to make for each other; and that not only where the ties are those of consanguinity, but merely those of neighbourhood. The cholera, I believe, is the only disease with regard to which they are not ready to risk contagion and nurse each other, [however ignorantly. It would seem that hundreds must starve in any large town [each winter, notwithstanding all the distribution of alms practised by the wealthy, were it not for the way in which the poor, regard-



less of what they themselves must do to-morrow, share their daily bread with those who have no sustenance.

The patient walked into hospital, but in a few days was confined to his bed, where he lingered some weeks, the progress of the disease being most gradual. His military associates were uniformly attentive and kind, for, as some of them said, he reminded them of the old governor at home; the medical gentleman also had a little extra tenderness for him, and even the stern old chief winked at the hat iniquity, of which we deemed him ignorant, until he was overheard remarking to the ward doctor, that he feared the old man with the hat was gradually sinking. Each week a cheerful letter was written, at his dictation, to his wife; for he positively forbade his amanuensis telling her how ill he was, because, as he explained, he had two sons in the Crimea, and the blow would be less severe, if when they saw her they broke the sad news. When I perceived him drawing near his end, I suggested that perhaps his letters had better be written in rather a different strain: he replied, "If she knew I was lying here in this state, she would have no rest, but always be trying to come out and nurse me:" and then he added, "She is very fond of me; we were never separated before,



since our marriage forty years ago." I remember my last visit to his bedside. Although there were no hopes of prolonging his life by means of medicines, the doctor sent up a draught which he trusted might stop a hiccup, from which the old man was suffering when he left him. The phial was labelled "immediate," but perceiving the dying man apparently lost in meditation, I felt unwilling to disturb him: after some minutes, during which I looked into his placid countenance and regarded him as one whose mind had soared beyond things earthly, he awoke from his reverie, and said, "This is Saturday night, sister?" I assented. "Just about this time my old woman and I would be starting off to market; I had used to leave work about four o'clock, and she would have my clean things for the next week ready for me, so after tea I had used to jog off as clean as a new pin, arm in arm with the old woman: that was always a very comfortable time."

For some months I was occupied in the ward appropriated to the Polish Legion, amongst whom were some fine specimens of that unhappy people—men, who had joined the English under the conviction that if the Poles served bravely, the Allies would remember Poland when the treaty of peace should be signed. I believe the detachment never



reached the seat of war; and at this time they were encamped in a most picturesque but unhealthy spot, situated about a mile from the general hospital. Passing the gloomy wood of cypress, which formed the common cemetery of the Turks, around a narrow path running along half way up the bank of a ravine, you came to a clear space surrounded by trees, where stood the Polish tents.

It was usual, should the nurse perceive a patient to be suffering peculiarly, to speak to the medical officer of the case as he made his evening round of the beds; the nurse requested him one night to look at a Pole who had only that morning arrived, and whose fever, it was feared, was making rapid progress. As the orderly threw the rays of the lamp into the dim corner where the pallet stood, the doctor involuntarily changed his tone, to address the sufferer as a gentleman. On passing out he asked the nurse if she knew anything of the man; who, he remarked, had the noblest-looking head and face he ever saw. She had learnt the tale: the soldier had held a commission in the Polish Legion, but had been degraded to the ranks for striking his major: the latter had used insulting language at the mess, and, sheltering himself under his position as a senior officer, refused to give any



satisfaction; whereupon this young fellow had deliberately walked up to him while on parade and struck him with a cane.

The patient spoke Polish, Latin, German, and some French, but little English; therefore, it was with difficulty that the conversations between him and the nurse were carried on: at the same time he was extremely anxious to talk, now that he had found some one who would listen and sympathise. He said that he could have borne all the work and privation which his punishment entailed upon him, but the being condemned to such society as was found amongst the common soldiers, without being able to command a minute's privacy, was almost intolerable. At the crisis of the fever, the doctor, who had serious apprehensions, requested the nurse not to leave the ward until a change should take place; more particularly because his countrymen crowded excitably around him, his father being a well-known patriot. As she sat on the side of the bed, the Pole was desirous of taking the opportunity to express what he considered to be a dying request, while she was anxious to keep him composed; but it was soon found that it would be better to try and understand him than attempt to defer his communication. He wished that a clear account of the circumstances which led to



his degradation should be given to his sister, because, if she heard it as conveyed by the official report, she would suppose that her only brother, to whom from his childhood she had supplied the place of a mother, had deeply disgraced himself; but while he gave the address, he warned the nurse that the letter must not be sent in the ordinary way, or the Austrian government would discover that he was in the Polish Legion, and thus suspicion would rest upon his father. He recovered, and after a long and tedious convalescence, left the hospital a wreck of his former self in mind as well as in constitution. Through the Queen's gift he was furnished with warm clothing; and thus his attenuated frame had a better chance of resisting the damp and cold of a winter encampment. The doctor thought him too weak to leave the hospital; but he begged earnestly he might be allowed to do so, that he might seek an audience with a Polish prince who at that time was at Scutari.

Just as he began to mend, a small piece of fowl was one day carried to him, which was the first time since his illness that he had been allowed anything but "slops" (as arrowroot, &c. are very generally termed), and at the same time the nurse took with her into the ward, tidings—which it afterwards appeared were without foundation—



of peace having been proclaimed; the Pole was very deaf, and the good news, which was making us all so glad, was shouted into his ears; but when he asked, with great anxiety, "And what has England done for Poland?" the nurse at once felt she had been thoughtless: his dinner was removed untasted.

In this portion of England's army were to be found soldiers taken from a most unlikely class of the Queen's subjects, viz. the Jewish pedlars. The change of employment did not develop other characteristics in this race, for their reliance seemed still on cunning rather than bravery or any other quality. It is difficult to conceive what could have induced these men to join the army; but perhaps a clue to the temptation was given in the complaint of one of them, who said, "We were told that, besides our pay, there would be many ways of turning a penny to be found by those who knew how to avail themselves of a chance; but," he added, "we have never discovered this means of profit, and I heartily wish myself back in White-chapel." These men, who could make themselves understood in several languages, often acted as interpreters when the German officially employed was otherwise engaged; and a habit they had of communicating only so much of the request or



answer as in their judgment was sufficient, was very trying to the patient. A Jew, named Isaac, was particularly provoking in this respect, for he would get behind the doctor and make grimaces at half the poor fellows said; and if the officer inquired what the patient wanted, Isaac would merely say, "Oh, nothing, sir, nothing." On one occasion when the Jew, with his usual self-complacency, was attending the doctor, his eye caught a most ridiculous yet unmistakable caricature of his own countenance placed on the ledge at the head of the patient's bedstead. The German occupant, with a face which seemed incapable of smiling, gave as usual sentences for Isaac's interpretation; the Jew endured it for a moment, and then to the doctor's great astonishment, who had not seen the sketch, he plucked him by the coat, and pointing to the portrait, screeched, "Do you see that, sir?" The doctor, taken by surprise, obeyed an irresistible impulse, and, forgetting official dignity, laughed heartily.

It was curious, surrounded as we were by people of so many nations, and with an opportunity of perceiving them in every-day life, to observe how, under all circumstances, national characteristics are preserved. Without partiality, I think it must be granted that the Englishman was the greatest



favourite with the inhabitants of those foreign countries in which the allied army was stationed : unbounded trust was reposed by Greeks, Turks, and even Russians, in the kind-heartedness of the English soldier. But for one vice our men had a sad character everywhere, and that was drunkenness. A bright, intelligent little Turkish boy was fond of frequenting our quarters, and amused us by a power of mimicry which he possessed. At one of his visits he reminded us by signs of the fact of England, France, and Turkey being united in the war, and then immediately after assumed the majestic walk of the Turk, next the excessive action and polite smiles of the Frenchman, and lastly, the thick, stammering speech and reeling gait of a drunken man.



## CHAPTER XI.

## CHOLERA AT SCUTARI—THE PRODIGAL SON.

THAT most dreadful disease, the cholera, visited Scutari but once during my stay there. Whether it resulted from the mode of treatment, or from what cause I cannot tell, but the sufferings of those attacked did not appear to be so great as that of many cases I had witnessed in England, though death ensued more quickly. In the midst of the severest privations endured in the Scutari hospitals, those of the patients at all able to leave their beds gathered in groups for conversation; but during the continuance of the cholera the buzz of voices was entirely hushed, and an oppressive and death-like stillness pervaded the whole of that immense building: the men were utterly cast down, so great was the dread of that malady after the experiences at Varna, &c. As in England, for a certain time none recovered, and then, after the climax of the pestilence, few died of those afflicted.



A medical gentleman of great scientific research, meeting a nurse returning from the wards, inquired of the state of things there; she informed him that the men were coming in very fast, while almost all the cases were deemed hopeless; on which he uttered words which she deemed very remarkable, "After watching this disease in all quarters of the world during the eighteen years I have belonged to the army, I know no more of it, or how to relieve it, than I did when a boy at Bartholomew's. If we think we have a theory to-day, a case to-morrow overturns all the premises on which it is built."

A case of cholera occurred amongst the nursing staff, and, strange to say, this lady was the only one of us whose occupation did not call her into the wards. The soldiers showed us the greatest sympathy, and the chief medical officer himself undertook the case, pacing the hall with the sentry the whole of one night, that he might be within instant summons. For a short time but slight hopes were entertained of her recovery, collapse having set in; but the medical man was there on the instant, and had the patient conveyed immediately to the bath-room. Being very strong, I was selected to accompany the sufferer. We passed gradually through a series of little rooms, each



hotter than the one preceding, until finally her mattress was deposited on a marble slab, in a chamber heated to almost a fabulous extent. The patient remained there more than an hour, but I was relieved every twenty minutes for five minutes, when I stayed in a room of the next degree of temperature. This bath was supposed to have saved the lady's life, as she acquired heat and suffered no relapse on returning to her quarters.

Many of the doctors delayed sending cholera patients into this bath until there appeared no hopes of otherwise saving their lives, because they were doubtful as to its safety for those who had to be taken back to a large ward, which could not be constantly kept at an even temperature, while, if they relapsed, the bath had so exhausted them as to leave but little hopes of their rallying a second time.

At the period of which I am now speaking, the hospital was supplied with every appliance and means calculated to alleviate suffering. I saw a doctor uncork a bottle of champagne for a patient who was in the fever which follows cholera: it might have been a solitary instance of so refreshing a draught being administered. The progress which the hospitals made with regard to cleanli-



ness and comforts of every description, was so gradual as to make it impossible to point out any date when the change was made. Miss Nightingale gave the impetus a few weeks after her arrival, and then day by day continued, as silently and unobtrusively as was possible, watching for those trifles which only the eye of a woman was likely to observe, and yet were all-important amidst so much sickness.

For some time I attended those who were very ill in a part of the hospital divided into districts for three medical men, each of whom, of course, confined his visits to his own division; thus I had an opportunity of observing the amazing extent to which "doctors differ." At a certain period it happened that I was with a doctor who placed great reliance apparently upon drugs, for there would be two or three bottles standing at the head of each man; and, at the same time, with one who seemed to have no reliance upon medicines, for I cannot recollect a bottle appearing in his wards, and only at irregular intervals one or two pills. If a man complained that he got no medicine, this doctor would send up a little effervescing powder, as I believe, to reassure the patient and convince him that now he could begin to mend, having taken his medicine. The cases under these respec-



tive treatments were very similar, being chiefly fevers ; and during the months I administered these medicines, or attended upon those who did without them, I was never able to form any conclusion as to whether, if I were ill, I should prefer taking my chance without drugs or with them, the result in each instance appeared so nearly similar : indeed, I should not have cared which of the two gentlemen had appeared at my bedside, for I thought them both very clever and kind ; but it would have been very embarrassing if in an illness both had come. It is not surprising that under such difficulties we became sceptics in pharmacy.

I have before alluded to the great trouble our men's propensity for drink caused the authorities. Probably on a foreign station they sometimes fly to inebriety as a relief from ennui ; indeed they constantly choose that liquor which will soonest cause oblivion. I overheard two soldiers discussing the comparative merits of the several countries they had visited ; they enumerated various evils peculiar to Turkey, but the crowning fact in the demerits of Scutari appeared, in their opinion, to be this : " A man could not get drunk at that place for a smaller sum than 1s. 6d." There are no pleasant occupations at which to wile away



the considerable leisure a soldier can command, and there are few amusements within his reach; doubtless, also, over-exertion and excessive excitement, such as the military are subjected to when on a campaign, have a tendency to enervate the mind and induce an intense craving for stimulants.

It was a favourite mode of passing the time for groups to collect and listen, pipe in mouth, while one of their number “spoke of moving accidents by flood and field; of hair-breadth ’scapes in the imminent deadly breach,” or, as they expressed it, “yarned.” I believe the orator was allowed considerable latitude in the way of embellishment, but the leading facts of the tale were supposed to be true: indeed, if scope for the play of fancy were not allowed, it was certainly taken; and judging by the exploits described by the various speakers, it might have been supposed that the Russian nation, large as it is, had been destroyed many times over. They spoke of themselves as eye-witnesses rather than actors in these dramas, for their audience were not disposed to listen to a man who bragged of himself; he was only permitted to boast of the English army. But there was one thing I never failed to remark, as, while watching by a bed in the vicinity of the quiet



murmur, the tale has reached my ear: deeds of cruelty or wickedness were never boasted of, and, if related of others, they were invariably held up to execration and strongly animadverted upon by the whole group; while, not only acts of courage, but also those of mercy, were applauded: such as when, at the taking of Sebastopol, a man, at the risk of his life, rescued a Russian child from the bayonet of an intoxicated Frenchman, and, restoring the boy to his mother, guided them both to a spot which appeared less exposed; or when a wounded soldier, lying on the field of Alma, shared that inestimably precious treasure under such circumstances, the water in his calabash, with one of the enemy near, whose sufferings appeared more intense than his own.

Not the men only, but also the officers, are afflicted with the torments of ennui; as the practical jokes, for which they have gained some notoriety, prove. Our hospitals being infested with rats, the authorities permitted an unlimited number of cats to be retained; the convalescent officers having sufficiently recovered from fevers, &c. to gain the garden in which the cats were often to be seen, by great exertions, caught, in the course of one evening, every cat in the building, and having thus assembled these creatures in their



quarters, the gentlemen, in the midst of the direst confusion, proceeded to shave them in fancy patterns : on some were to be seen the V.R., on others the Prince of Wales' plume, and so on ; blackey escaped with the loss of the hair on her tail.

We observed the Romish chaplain for some months to pass away the time in tending a pet lamb, which he led about by a scarlet string, and in the early morning he could be observed gathering the rose-leaves with the dew yet upon them, as a breakfast for the gentle creature. We were quite concerned one morning at perceiving the priest about to take his walk unaccompanied by his favourite, and passed in haste across the hall to inquire for it ; to our great grief, he informed us that the lamb was killed. We waited for the particulars of its untimely fate, concluding the savage dogs to be guilty ; but the most unromantic father went on to say, " I found it in excellent condition : feeding an animal on rose-leaves certainly improves the flavour of the meat." Thus prosaically concluded that little bit of romance.

Any gentleman among the hospital officials who was particularly happy in his cook, seemed to consider it his duty to invite frequently his less fortunate brethren to dinner. I have heard that



it would not be possible for persons of nice feeling again to enjoy their refecton if they once saw the iniquities of a kitchen, and certainly this holds true of those over which these Greek cooks presided. The English chaplain was the envy of the whole hospital, on account of the merits of his cook Vedo. Passing one day along the corridor, I perceived Vedo dart out of the kitchen, with a frying-pan in his hand, into which he deliberately emptied the oil remaining in a lamp which had been burning in the corridor the previous night; as I reached him before the oil was separated from the wick and other extraneous matter, Vedo explained in his broken English: "Master has friends to dinner, and gives them fish fried in oil."

The evening prayers, when better times came, were held in a room set apart for a chapel, and no longer in the sisters' quarters; the attendance of the men was regular, and they appeared to join in the services with heartiness and devotion. The singing was led by one of the sisters, and everybody joined as well as they were able; but I fear few of us at that period of our lives were "in voice." A sister from the same home as the choir leader, found one day that the convalescents in her wards had an important communication to make. At length the spokesman,



with many apologies, asked if it were possible for her to hint to the "old lady" who led the singing that she began the tunes too high for their voices; she at once expressed her willingness to undertake the task, but asked, by the way, how old the soldier supposed that "old lady" to be: he said, "Bordering on sixty, perhaps," and then apparently considering that he ought to say something polite, he added, "She has had a good voice in her day:" this was ever after a great joke against the sister, who had not seen half that number of years. The musical exertions of the ladies in chapel caused the convalescent officers to speak of them in a general way as the "*Young Nightingales*."

While attending these services, we believed ourselves to have proved beyond doubt that it is possible to have too much of even a good thing; for none can deny the exquisite beauty of the parable of the Prodigal Son, and yet the slightest allusion to that portion of holy writ came at last to call up even angry emotions in our breasts. I will explain how this came about: Scutari was a kind of halting-place merely for chaplains on coming out from England, and therefore, with one or two exceptions, they stayed but a short time; thus we had a succession of ministers,



each of whom joined the army with the parable of the Prodigal Son in his mouth, and before he could exhaust his subject it has sometimes happened that he was called away, and then we began again at the beginning under our new expositor. But our indignation reached its climax, when, after about fifteen discourses from an Irish gentleman on this subject, he was succeeded by a countryman of his, who took it up again, and promised to give us "a series of discourses on the parable of the Prodigal Son." We really began to deem that our pastors intended to be personal, and felt sure that they looked upon us in the light of prodigal daughters.

Some of the younger clergymen complained that neither the privates nor the officers showed them that reverential respect to which they considered themselves entitled, in virtue of their office I suppose, and they suggested as a remedy that Government should allow them an uniform. Of course there were their clerical vestments for church parade, but they could not attend balls and wine parties, or ride at races and steeple-chases, in the surplice; therefore they urgently implored to be allowed a uniform, because they said a military man ever respects a uniform. I fear these young men were sometimes addressed roughly, for as



they were generally engaged in the afternoons and evenings, they selected the early morning as the time for sauntering about the wards. It was then the doctor was making his rounds, and often, in order to relieve patients, he had first to put them to great pain; meanwhile those waiting for their turn were striving in silence to nerve themselves to meet unflinchingly the probes, forceps, or caustic; the doctor, too, was in no humour to stop to be polite. Most of the medical men had their own nerves wrung to the utmost during the rounds, and left the ward with anxious hearts, aching heads, and weary limbs; and possibly those against whom the pastor complained for churlishness were ready to excuse themselves with Hotspur:—

“ Out of my grief and my impatience I answered neglectingly,  
I know not what,—he should or should not; for he did make  
me mad,  
To see him shine so brisk and smell so sweet,  
And talk so like a waiting gentlewoman——”

The sick officers were not ordinarily attended by nurses, but by the orderlies and their own servants. I have been told that Miss Nightingale, on her arrival at Scutari, employed the chief strength of the nursing staff rather to the relief of the men than the officers; because, as the latter



occupied separate rooms, only one could be attended by the same person, who could wait upon many privates lying in close proximity, and also, among other reasons, because she believed the needs of the men were greatest. I am not sure, however, that the officer was in all cases in as good circumstances as the private soldier, because the latter frequently had a comrade less weak than himself near his bed, while the officer was completely at the mercy of his servant, who, generally speaking, was not a good specimen of the military; escaping, as he did, great part of that discipline which makes the soldier.



## CHAPTER XII.

## TURKISH CEMETERY—SHEEP AND DOGS.

I ALWAYS considered that I owed, under God's blessing, my exemption from attacks of illness to the fact of my every day taking a short walk: however weary or engaged, the other Devonport sister and myself, as directed by our superior, contrived to find a short hour in which to carry out this plan. Not only was the fresh air invigorating, but the new and interesting scenes which our walk brought before us called off our minds from our work, and refreshed them. Before the General Hospital lay a plain of considerable extent, bounded on one side by the Turkish burial-ground, and we frequently penetrated the gloomy shades of the cypress wood which formed it, in order to reach a small brook on the opposite side, where we could gather watercress, a valuable addition to our table.

Vast numbers of Turks were buried in this ceme-



tery, it being used as a place of sepulture not only by the Turks on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus, but also by many of those dwelling in Constantinople. The Mahomedans have a tradition that their possession of the capital will not continue for any great length of time, but that they shall be driven back into Asia. More than once, as we traversed these abodes of the dead, we have disturbed dogs who were feasting upon corpses which they had exhumed; for the Turks do not commonly bury their dead in coffins. The body is carried to the place of burial in a coffin which opens at the end, and on being tilted, its inmate slides into the shallow grave; then the coffin is carried back to be used again for the same purpose. The Turks have little variety in their tombstones: those for men and boys have a stone cut at the top in the form of the fez, and this is painted red; while those for the females terminate in a kind of plume. Though unable to read the characters, a stranger could guess at the age of the person to whose memory the stone was erected, as there is one height for those who had reached maturity, and that of the others was graduated according to the age of the child. The cemetery of which I have been speaking is the usual place of burial, but it is not uncommon for dwellers



in villages to appropriate a small portion of the garden adjoining their houses, to this purpose. We frequently noticed in our walks an aged man, tending, as we supposed, the graves of his household. There were five graves in the little plot of ground, over which he spent much time and pains; one was that of a woman; another of a boy, probably about fourteen; two were those of girls; and one by the side of the woman had a stone at its head about two feet high. We thought that the old man looked grief-stricken and lonely when at this labour of love.

Watching the large flocks of sheep and goats which were scattered over the plain, afforded us much pleasure, and we have many times sat upon one of the little mounds which abounded there, to read again those images of Holy Writ borrowed from scenes so very like those around us. Before my visit to Scutari, when reading these portions of Holy Scripture, my mind reverted to the pastoral life in our own country, and thus they lost much of their force and beauty. The relation between the shepherd and his flock is altogether different in Eastern countries, and the animal itself is very unlike our own, being both sagacious and affectionate. The Eastern sheep are graceful creatures, with remarkably expressive eyes, and as



they followed the shepherd home from the pastures in the evening, I have seen them press forward and playfully thrust each other aside that they might obtain an opportunity of receiving a caress from him : they would lick the hand he held out, looking at the same time into his face, as a spaniel is often seen to do into that of his master. The sheep would never permit us to approach them, but the shepherds would sometimes laugh and hold us up the face of a little lamb or goat to kiss. We stopped one day to observe a flock being led across a ravine where some large stones offered an impediment to their progress, and the little lambs appeared to expect and to wait for the help which in their turn they received from their master. The mode of carrying them was to arrange that the feet came on each side of the shepherd's face, while the body of the creature rested on the back of his neck, and its head on his shoulder. Dogs were never employed about the sheep, or, indeed, ever domesticated at all in Turkey.

Many packs of dogs dwelt by day in the little dells of the downs ; and at night they prowled about the streets of a neighbouring town in search of food, constituting its only scavengers. So important are the services considered which



these dogs render, that the Sultan sent to request that our soldiers might not be allowed to destroy them. Frequently on crossing the brow of a hill, we have found ourselves in the midst of perhaps twenty of these animals, who all arose as if about to commence an attack ; but we were acquainted with their cowardly nature, and aware that when boldly faced there was no danger : the slightest start back, however, would bring them all upon you. If a horse or camel was in a feeble condition, they would worry him until he dropped with fatigue, and not till then would they actually touch him ; they never molested these creatures when in health and vigour. Sometimes a young dog would be tempted near the flocks, but a long pole which the shepherds carried was aimed at him so unerringly as to send him howling away.

These communities of dogs had their laws and customs ; each pack or tribe keeping itself distinct, and holding possession of a certain part of the common, upon which no dog belonging to another tribe was permitted to encroach. Each separate community was governed by the strongest dog in the pack, who regulated their movements, and exacted implicit obedience from all. Occasionally there would be a great battle between a young dog who had attained his full strength,



and the patriarchal dog, for the sovereignty: the canine monarch, like many a human ruler, often held an uneasy sway. While the war waged the subjects would gather round, but not interfere until the trial of strength and courage was at an end; but when it was decided who was the victor, they would one and all, even the young puppies, give a snap at the vanquished, after which they would gather round the conqueror, as if to congratulate him upon his superiority. The disappointed claimant, after an unsuccessful effort, held a sorry life for some time, as the meanest cur in the pack would exact what we term "homage" from him whenever he felt disposed.

Several of these dogs attached themselves to us, and waiting at the gate for our appearance to take our usual walk, would accompany us the whole way; but they were not to be altogether depended upon, and I was told that, even if taken when puppies, they can never be perfectly trained, but always exhibit a treacherous nature. We considered our canine attendants a certain amount of protection, as one of them, whom we called Shag, was not merely king of a territory but emperor of the whole plain; thus no dog ever looked at us when under his escort: he was one of the largest amongst them, and about the size of our own shepherd dog.



Seeing him one day peeping into the hall, I gave him encouragement to enter our quarters, and on lifting up the mat which hung before the entrance, I perceived, and so also did Shag, that the joint of mutton for dinner was on the table; he at once seized and carried it off: I went to the farther part of the hospital, from whence I returned after some time with as unconscious a look as I could assume. As our walks were, necessarily, somewhat lonely, we felt that the dogs were an intimidation to the Turks or Greeks whom we met, if they were disposed to molest us.

Many of the more strict Mahommedans eschew all approach to European dress and customs, such as were adopted under the auspices of the Sultan by their less conservative countrymen. We once met a Turk of the old school, walking with slow-paced dignity; he gathered his robes around him, and turned away his eyes to avoid encountering even the sight of infidel women; but the dogs, nothing awed, gave a snarl as he passed, which caused him to start back, when, in an instant, five of them were tugging on all sides at his flowing garments. We flew to the rescue, beating off the dogs with the umbrellas we carried for shade; but this act of courtesy only incensed him the more, as, I believe, after receiving a kind-



ness from a Christian, he could not again, for some time, be admitted to the full exercise of his religious rites: his violet-coloured robe was much torn in the fray.

Five times during the twenty-four hours, the Imaum ascends the minaret of each mosque, and passing out on to a slight balcony, turns to each quarter of the heavens, and with a loud voice proclaims the creed of Mahomet. This sound at once arrests the strict Mussulman, and if the spot in which it finds him is clean and retired, he immediately commences his devotions. We often came upon the shepherds while thus engaged, and were much struck by the reverential and expressive gestures they employed. As, unobserved, we stood at a little distance, we fancied that we could understand the various parts of their form of prayer, by watching the movements of the worshipper. First, we supposed, came his creed, as, with his face turned towards Mecca, he stood and repeated something with a determined air; next, the confession, uttered with his forehead touching the earth; then the solemn litany, kneeling with clasped hands and bowed head; lastly, the thanksgiving, still kneeling, but with his face wearing a cheerful expression and raised towards heaven.

The fasts of the Turks are excessively strict, and



most rigorously observed. Soon after my return to Devonport, a Turkish vessel came into the docks for the purpose of being fitted in a more skilful manner than any known to the Turks, as the Sultan was very desirous of improving his navy; or, rather, more correctly speaking, of forming one, for his people knew little of ship-building, I was told. While the Mussulmans were staying at Devonport, the Fast of Ramadhan occurred, and numbers died of starvation; the amount of abstinence observed in Turkey being fatal in our climate: yet none dreamed of departing from their rule. Though not deeply read in the "Fathers," I believe that St. Chrysostom alludes to a sect who deemed it a sin to kill a flea on the Sabbath: our men were sometimes very indignant with the Turks during the Fast of Ramadhan, because they might be seen taking these insects with great gentleness off their own persons, and placing them comfortably down on the grass, or any place near which seemed to offer a secure asylum. When not engaged with the Russians, our soldiers maintained a perpetual warfare against this minute foe, and though they had a great deal of toleration, it seemed to them going a little too far, when their allies, on religious grounds, held aloof from this strife.

There were many beautiful shady nooks, with



a well of water in their vicinity ; and a temporary building having been erected, the opium-smokers here dreamed away their hours. We passed them as quickly as possible ; for the wretched, idiotic look of those who give themselves to the influence of this drug is very distressing to behold. But these little sheds were sometimes unoccupied, and we have then stopped to purchase a halfpenny-worth of the delicious water sold there. The water-drawer first entered a chamber excavated in the side of a hill, where was the deep well, out of which it was drawn : this cave-like place is intended to preserve the coldness of the water, which was brought fresh from the well for every purchaser ; here, again, we were aided in appreciating more fully many beautiful figures of Holy Scripture. For a few pence we could procure grapes, water-melons, and cucumbers, at a pretty little house standing in the midst of the garden in which they flourished ; visiting this dwelling late in the season, with a view to making a purchase of some figs, we found it “ left like a lodge in a garden of cucumbers.”

The neighbourhood of the common roadside fountains, erected by the pious for the relief of the wayfarer, often presented a most animated and interesting scene ; surrounded, perhaps, by a



party of horsemen with their gay trappings, and with a string of camels standing near awaiting patiently their turn. There is a proverb, not more homely than true, which says, "Idle persons work hardest," and it was singularly exemplified by this people. They crossed the plain, of which I have so often spoken, in many directions, with their arabas drawn by oxen; if these animals felt great resistance when pulling, they would immediately cease to make any effort. A large hole was worn in the centre of one of the roads, and on nearing the hole, the Turk riding on the araba would heartily wish, no doubt, that the wheels might have the good luck to escape it by a few inches; but he did not move from his seat, or make any exertions to avoid it; and when the wheels were fixed in, there ensued a great squabble between men and oxen, ending frequently in the araba being unloaded and lifted out. Stones, sufficient to close the hole, could be found around, and the task would not have taken longer than they were detained by the halt; yet these accidents occurred to some of them two or three times in the day. Indeed, evidences of the excessive idleness of its inhabitants are met with everywhere in this country.

We had some opportunity of observing the



manners of the Greek Christians, by extending our walk to a large village inhabited by them about a mile from our hospital. This village was burnt down so completely in one night as to make it difficult, a few weeks after, to distinguish the site; and so frequent are these fires, that a man is esteemed extremely fortunate who has not been burnt out three or four times.

Several homeless creatures visited our hospital after the fire, and received medical aid for their burns from the doctors, and linen rags from the lady superintendent; a few articles of clothing were also given to them. The pecuniary loss to a Turkish tenant from a fire, however, cannot be considerable.

Another village some miles distant was destroyed by an earthquake; it was in the winter season that this occurred, about two o'clock in the afternoon, at which hour the hospital was generally very still, as invalids then frequently get a little sleep. Four of us were in our quarters, one of whom was in a state of semi-insensibility from fever; we first observed a tremulous motion, but none spoke, as each was trying to persuade herself that she was nervous; after an interval of two or three minutes, the swaying motion beneath our seats became more unmistakable, and then was



heard the rush of many feet, and several voices shouted, as they passed the door, "An earthquake! make for the open space." The sick sister was aroused and called out, not to be left to perish, and in the strength given by excitement, another sister took the invalid in her arms and carried her to the door; but, by this time, the chief medical officer was in the midst of the panic-stricken crowd, and loud and clear came the word of command, "Back to your beds and wards: the danger is not imminent." But the getting back, now that the excitement was in part over, was an impossible task to many of the poor creatures; for even the dying had thrown themselves out of bed, and crawled at least a short distance: it was said, that of the 1,500 sick and wounded, one only remained in his bed.

It was rather curious to observe, as we often did, a Turk of the lower orders changing his habitation, and carrying with him his household goods. I remember, in particular, one instance of a middle-aged Turk who had placed, doubtless, all his earthly treasures on the back of a lean, wretched-looking horse, upon which he himself was also seated; besides the master, the animal carried his master's two wives, one old and one young, who looked as if they did not love each other.



A large brown porringer, in which the stews were both cooked and served up; a brazier for the charcoal fire, and a thick rug to serve for a mattress; a large spoon, the knife in the Turk's girdle, and the wardrobes of the three riders on their respective backs, would complete the list of necessities.

During the early part of the summer, when the grass was abundant, our plain was visited by a tribe of nomades. We hastened to visit the encampment under the impression that we were now about to behold a peaceful, patriarchal scene: flocks and herds grazing quietly, shepherds lolling and chatting under the clusters of trees, women spinning at the tent door, with children, lambs, and colts sporting around them. No ideas could have been more illusory; you might as well have looked for calm repose in a Manchester mill: the women were scolding, the men were vociferating, the children were fighting, and so were the cows and horses.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE WAR IN THE CRIMEA.

OUR stay at Scutari was drawing to its close (I speak of myself and one other Devonport sister, now alone remaining in the east, of our original party of eight), and we prepared for a journey to the Crimea. I was told that Government, at this period, was undecided whether or not nurses in war hospitals should cease with the Crimean war; if any were retained, it was proposed that they should be sent to a few of the foreign stations esteemed less healthy. Miss Nightingale, believing that a peace would probably be the result of negotiations then pending, was desirous of having a little band of her strongest and gravest old nurses upon the spot from whence our regiments would embark for such stations. Moreover, at this time, nurses were leaving the Crimea, so that there was as much work for us there as at Scutari.

I will here therefore drop my narrative, and give such particulars of the war as centre round it.



When last I touched upon the subject, our army was commencing the siege of Sebastopol; which, as had been foreseen by many of the common soldiers, proved very long, and entailed upon the besiegers suffering almost unparalleled in history. England lost a gallant army before Sebastopol by disease, brought on by cold, hunger, and fatigue. At one period so weakened and dispirited were our troops, that it was feared Russia would obtain information of our condition, and making a great effort, drive us from the Crimea. The nurses there, when we afterwards met, told us they were bidden to hold themselves in readiness to go on board the transports at a moment's notice. They had little preparation to make for the journey; though an old nurse obeyed the mandate after her own manner, for she slept with her pattens (it was winter) by the head of her bed: it does not give one an idea of a very precipitate retreat, an elderly lady traversing mountain paths in pattens.

Our soldiers did not prove themselves greater heroes in the three great battles the allies fought and won, than by the manner in which they bore the hardships of the subsequent winter; but here the career of the gallant fellows was ended, as I said before: nearly all perished during that winter



before Sebastopol. The place of these trained and disciplined men had to be filled up by raw levies, who in their turn succumbed, before they could be made into soldiers; thus it is not surprising that the lustre of our arms became somewhat dimmed, and the French ceased to have that respect for their allies which they once entertained.

From October, 1854, to September, 1855, we (as also the French) were gradually bringing our guns nearer and nearer the town, until finally they entirely commanded it so that only one building remained untouched. But while we were advancing upon the town, the Russians were building forts for its defence, which experience proved to be nearly impregnable. The names of two, the Malakoff and Redan, are the most familiar. Our troops, from the first, were excessively chagrined at not being permitted to storm the place; they lost confidence in their commander, and, forgetting former achievements under him, affirmed that he had property in Sebastopol, and therefore his measures were not vigorous. It was more than once explained to me, that the soldiers mistook the humanity of the Commander-in-Chief, and his excessive anxiety to preserve life, for supineness; though even those who were in a



position to be better informed than common soldiers could be, doubted if Lord Raglan did not carry his benevolence too far: especially considering the character of the foe with whom he was dealing.

I am now merely retailing camp-gossip, and am anxious that my readers should take my information only for what it is worth. It was said that the besieged one day sent out a flag of truce to request Lord Raglan to spare a building over which they would cause a white flag to wave, as it was a church set apart as a hospital for the sick and wounded. Lord Raglan acted as he would have done had he been warring with an honourable enemy, and not with such barbarians as the Russians had proved themselves at Inkermann: he at once said the church should be spared, if possible, and gave directions to the army he commanded in accordance with his promise. Whether by design or accident on the part of the gunner it would be difficult to determine, but a missile from one of our guns struck the building, which blew up with a terrific explosion; thus proving that if it were a hospital, it was used as an arsenal.

Following up a series of smaller successes, the Allies, on the 18th of June, 1855, made an attack



upon the two principal forts—the Redan and Malakoff, which were regarded as the keys of Sebastopol. The two forts were to be assaulted simultaneously, the former by the English, and the latter by the French. The besiegers were repulsed, as the French affirmed, because they were so feebly seconded by their allies; and it seemed that even our own officers scarcely knew how to contradict the assertion. I remember the day on which the mails from Balaclava brought the news to the general hospital. At the time the letters were delivered, the Scotch doctor I have before mentioned had gone on his awkward-looking, vicious grey charger—a Russian spoil—to take his accustomed daily ride. We saw and heard but little of the convalescent officers, but on this day they were gathered in the hall, looking very restless and excited; when the doctor appeared they rushed tumultuously to the entrance, and ere his feet was out of the stirrup they all began to address him at once. We, the nursing staff, had heard no news from the seat of war, and could only fancy that the officers were in a state of mutiny: “Perhaps about the arrowroot,” as one of the nurses suggested. With all his stoicism the eye of the old doctor kindled, and he warmed towards a young lieutenant who begged



to be discharged from hospital, declaring that every man must hasten to the camp, and, if it were the last remaining effort of his strength, raise his arm once more. The doctor told them that they were fit for their beds, but not for battle; and after inquiring the particulars strove to calm down his young colleagues.

On my return to England it seemed strange that the repulse of the 18th of June had been thought so slight an affair at home, when it cast such a gloom over us all near the scene of the disaster. Nothing else was thought of for weeks in the hospitals. I subjoin a specimen of the kind of gossip current there; which, whether altogether true or not, at least tends to show the serious view the common soldiers took of the subject. It was said that there was a general belief in our army that the Redan was mined in such a manner that those leading the attack must be blown up; and also that Lord Raglan himself had this impression, and acted upon it by reserving his best troops. Thus, when the order to advance was given, the brigade on duty remained immovable. Knowing that a single act of heroism will sometimes inspire a whole army, an officer commanded a little bugler to advance a certain distance and "give the call;" the poor little fellow, with-



out hesitation, stepped out, and three times sounded the charge, when he fell, pierced by many bullets: still the battalion stood like sheep. Next a number of officers—I believe I heard 300—advanced to the front, and saying, “You will not leave your officers to perish,” rushed on, and were nearly all cut off; being entirely unsupported. As a last resource, the best regiments were brought up; but the chance was lost, and though they behaved most gallantly, nothing was effected: they were obliged to retire. Ten days after this disgrace (as our soldiers termed it) Lord Raglan died—of grief it was generally reported in the ranks—and the command of the army was conferred upon General Simpson.

The next grand attack was made on the 8th of September, and this time the French obtained possession of the Malakoff; our arms assisting materially by calling off great numbers of the garrison for the defence of the Redan, which we were attacking. After the loss of the Malakoff, the town being no longer tenable, the Russians set it on fire, and retreated on the north side, which had never been invested. Shortly after the fall of Sebastopol, negotiations for peace were entered into, under the arbitration of Austria; and Russia perceiving that if the terms then offered



were not acceded to, she would have to war not only with England and France, but nearly the whole of Europe, subscribed the articles, on March 30th, 1855.



## CHAPTER XIV.

## BALACLAVA.

THE evening before our departure from Scutari we paid a last visit to the graveyard, which at this date was dotted with tombstones. The white crosses which marked the faith of those that slept there (a symbol detested by the Turks), could be discerned, I should suppose, both from Constantinople and the immense Mahomedan cemetery on the other side of the plain. A tall cross erected to the memory of a young officer who was drowned in crossing a swollen brook near, occupied a most conspicuous position, and I was told served as a landmark for small Turkish vessels navigating the Bosphorus. We lingered a long time, for before our "mind's eye" many a well-remembered face rose: we seemed to think we had been near them until now, and were taking a farewell—leaving them alone in the midst of strangers, indeed—heathen strangers.



One of the poor fellows, whose grave on that lonely little headland we were able to distinguish, while in hospital asked me for a sheet of paper, and the next morning had given it back with the subjoined lines written upon it :—

“I entered once a peaceful grave-yard :  
Earth’s turmoil came not near;  
No restless feet of busy worldlings,  
Intent on gain, on pleasure, or on sin,  
Tramp’d o’er the dead.  
And yet no stifling silence reign’d around;  
Sounds there were, but all spoke of repose;  
The murmurs of the rippling waves,  
The sighing of the wind, which bent the cypress  
in the distant grove.  
And who sleeps there ?  
There lies encamped the soldier rude, a sleeping host,  
Whom no loud clarion wakes again  
To weary march or deadly strife;  
When next they hear the trumpet call,  
’Twill be the Archangel’s blast  
On the world’s Easter Morning.”

On one occasion we went to see how our favourite spot looked by moonlight. The beams streamed down and brought out every object with marvellous distinctness; but at the same time threw over each a softness and beauty not to be observed in the glare of the sun. I never remember such moonlight evenings in my own country as those of Turkey. This cemetery was most carefully kept when we last saw it;



and amongst our pleasantest reminiscences is the thought that we helped to chant the psalms at its consecration.

When we arrived at Balaclava, January, 1855, happier days had dawned upon this place, in common with all our other stations in the east. We made the voyage, which proved a rough one, in one of the finest transports in her Majesty's service. This vessel had been employed for some time in the conveyance of the sick and wounded from the Crimea to Scutari, and was fitted up in such a manner as to render a sea voyage as little trying as possible to invalids. All vessels remained in the bay of Balaclava until the appearance of a small tug, which preceded them into the harbour, as I conceived to point out the place of anchorage, for it did not take us in tow. We were detained but a short time, for, having gained the bay a little before daybreak, by ten o'clock the tug signalled us to follow: sometimes vessels had to wait two or three days outside the harbour.

Miss Nightingale being at this time in the Crimea, her Mercury—a little orphan drummer named Robert—soon arrived to say that his mistress would fetch us if possible in the evening; and a little after nightfall, Robert, bearing a lantern before Miss Nightingale, again appeared, and we



were conducted by them along the mountain paths which led to the Castle Heights. We found our hut, which was partitioned into four divisions, tenanted only by two nurses, as the main party had been drafted off to the camp of the Land Transport Corps, many of whom were at that time suffering from fever. The hut was built in a healthy but extremely exposed situation, and the boards which composed it had, in the course of twelve months, so arranged themselves as to form numerous passages for the admittance of drifting snow, and (worse still) the piercing mountain gales; so the roaring little stove that had been put up was very acceptable. It having been found necessary to run up a verandah round the hut as a protection from the wind, but little light found its way into our apartments, and we were obliged to use a candle to work by in the middle of the day. I never before understood how great must be the punishment of criminals from whose dungeons light was excluded, or the sufferings of our own poor, dwelling in ill-lighted cellars. Partial as was the deprivation in our case, it had a great effect upon our spirits; we suffered from it but a short time, and then some men from the Army Works Corps put windows into the roof.



There was another evil connected with our new home which lasted much longer, and that was, the presence of innumerable rats, the largest and sauciest of their kind, who held nocturnal levées upon the rafters a few feet above our heads. These meetings frequently ended in fight, and then down came the creatures, bump, bump upon us, as we lay in our beds. The soldiers made us a present, which at the Castle Heights was esteemed a gift for a king; it was a little sandy cat. Any speculating "Whittington," who chose to send out a cargo of cats, could have found eager customers; but his vessel would not have returned from the Crimea laden with treasures. Above the head of each bedstead a shelf had been put up, and upon this each piled her carpet bag, shawl, bonnet, and umbrella: in short, all her estate, real and personal. We were glad that our cat should sleep in our room, for the rats were audacious and very troublesome. A nurse, a remarkably stout Scotchwoman, who had returned from the hospital huts breathless with the walk up a hill, on gaining her room sat down upon the bed, and when a little recovered, she rose to resume her work; I, being in the next division, was alarmed by her cries and hastened to her assistance, but could not for



some time understand the cause of her fright, as she gave no explanation further than was conveyed by the words, "I shall faint quite away." At length she pointed gaspingly to the bed, and there I perceived five or six young rats, crushed as flat as a plate.

I had full leisure to look around our new residence, and also to embellish it; which, as spring advanced, we did not fail to do. So little sickness prevailed at this time among our troops, that a nurse for the men, and a cook for the officers, were sufficient to answer all the calls upon the nursing staff at the Castle Hospital. As our superior had requested that the two Devonport Sisters might not have work assigned them at different places, Miss Nightingale permitted me to be housekeeper and general servant at the hut. I thought that, with the exception of the hospital hut tenanted by the invalids of the Artillery, our habitation was the neatest in the neighbourhood; and there was considerable emulation amongst us in this matter. Raglan Castle—for that was the name written upon the building which, notwithstanding all my efforts, eclipsed the nurses' hut—was whitewashed inside and out once a week, and was as healthy as it was clean.



Ladies generally find pleasure, or, at least, comfort, in narrating their domestic experiences, and I may be permitted to indulge myself in this respect. My washing I performed in a saucepan set apart for that purpose, and then I laid the clothes upon the hill side among the wild thyme to dry. We possessed two flat irons, the gift of a lady, but could seldom retain them more than an hour or two at a time; which was very annoying. However, the two flat irons were the means of securing to us an immense amount of patronage, as constantly a servant was calling with Major A.'s or Captain B.'s compliments, and would we lend him our flat iron for an hour or two. During the afternoon almost every private soldier in the camp was scattered to one or other of the many little pools, and engaged in washing articles of their own or their master's apparel; there were cases in which hot water was secured, and the more elaborate process gone through, but the plan I have described of taking a single article to a neighbouring stream, was the most general.

The culinary art is in every land a great source of vexation and anxiety to those upon whom the responsibility rests; but when the cook is ignorant, and there does not at the first glance appear to be anything to dress, the burden of



the office is a hundred-fold increased. I was not remarkably successful in this department of my household duties. The mutton was such as to require a trooper's appetite to relish it, and as we were in the process of being acclimatized we were not strong. I often gathered the wild herbs with which the hills abounded, and they imparted a grateful flavour to our soup; and a medical gentleman who had studied botany, later in the season pointed out a species of wild spinach, which became a favourite vegetable with the whole camp: indeed, it was the only vegetable we tasted during our stay in the Crimea; but potatoes were among the rations of the men.

Having procured three pennyworth of raisins and some flour from Balaclava, I was intent one morning upon making a pudding, with which to surprise the other members of our household on their return to dinner. The egg depended upon a turkey, who, having constructed for herself a nest in the vineyard at the back of our huts, had marched up in good time that day to deposit an egg. I was in the midst of my preparations, intending shortly to visit the turkey, when two Frenchmen sauntered by the little building we used as a kitchen; as they had no business in this path, I at first suspected them to have inten-



tions hostile to a barrel of onions which stood there; but immediately afterwards a sense of the bird's danger became present to my mind, and I hurried out only in time to see the men cover the turkey with the folds of their great coats; and, what affected me more nearly, the egg also disappeared.

The French troops were notorious amongst their allies, and also amongst the camp followers of every description, for their pilfering habits; but their rations, I have been told, are regulated with the view to their picking up a good deal for themselves. Whether resulting from the fact of the Crimea being exhausted or a derangement in the commissariat I have no means of knowing, but they were in fearful distress the last year of the war; and their tall, gaunt figures, wrapped in the long gray coat, were to be seen in all directions, searching the hill sides, with feeble steps, for wild herbs. A chaplain informed us that he saw them frequently, among the mountains nearer their own camp, drop down while in the act of plucking the plant, and, turning on their sides, place the right hand in the breast of the coat and give up the struggle for life: on the very morning he told us, he had passed several bodies in this position during his ride to the Castle Heights.



That the discipline of the British army utterly discountenances pilfering or dishonest habits in the soldiers, was, I think, shown by the manner in which they carried on their little dealings with those around the camp offering things for sale ; indeed, the Greeks, and all with whom the soldiers dealt in the Crimea, knew that any proof of a contrary mode of dealing would meet with redress, if laid before the authorities. When quite a child I used to hear over and over again anecdotes of the Peninsular war from an old pensioner who had served under the Duke of Wellington, and I remember hearing the case of a soldier who was hanged by order of the provost-marshal for stealing a cabbage. In that instance unusual strictness was observed, in order to win the confidence of the Spanish peasantry ; but at all times little licence is allowed to our soldiers in this respect. But delinquencies of this description do not come frequently before the authorities ; and I observed, that if a young soldier were disposed to cheat the Turks, out of an orange for instance, some of the older soldiers, on hearing the dispute, would interfere and put the matter right.

The barrack-room has its code of honour and its rules of social life, to which the recruit must conform, or, to use the words of an old soldier,



“He would not get the life of a dog.” For instance, should the recruit exhibit selfishness and a desire to get the best of it where he can, he is at once subjected to discipline by his compeers; he finds himself obliged to take the worst on all occasions, and any temper he may show only serves to raise the mirth of his companions. Many excellent social habits were attained by such means as these; and when the veterans of the regiment have a strong religious element, a very high standard not only of social duty, but of moral conduct, is attained; of which we saw evidence. There was one regiment which almost invariably sent us good and pleasant men—men with a high moral and religious tone. This was the pet regiment with us all; though we judged of it, I must confess, not by its annals (for of them we knew nothing), but merely by the conduct of its sick men. And, possibly, this barrack-room influence may be one reason why the army proves a school which can convert the disorderly, self-willed blackguard, into an intelligent, self-controlled man.

On the first tenable ledge of the mountains rising abruptly from the harbour of Balaclava, were perched the huts of the Castle Hospital; the nurses’ hut stood a few yards above the others



on a very narrow shelf with a steep hill to the back, looking down on one side to the Bay of Balaclava far beneath, on another to a deep ravine through which the mule path to the mountains ran, and on the third to the hospital huts. Our next neighbours above us were the Sardinians, distant not more than half a mile, but which half mile took more than half an hour to accomplish; indeed, we often preferred making the walk of two or three miles in order to avoid the excessive fatigue of going straight up the face of the mountain. Above the Sardinians again, on another terrace was an English regiment, and still higher, I was told, though I never reached such an elevation, a Highland regiment was encamped.

We congratulated ourselves on having the Sardinians for neighbours, as the discipline in that little army was very excellent: we had no reason to fear their proximity; which is more than could have been said had the French occupied that station. It seemed to us that the whole Piedmontese army, excepting those required for daily military duties, were constantly engaged upon public works; such as making a good road for the waggons from the camp to the harbour, a task of no small toil; building a monument to the memory of the four generals who fell in the engagement on the



Tchernaya ; raising a good substantial wall around their cemetery, as well as cutting and erecting stones to the memory of the departed : then, when off duty, they were blacksmiths, tailors, shoemakers, &c.

We conceived that a great many effective men were added to the number available for public employment, by the fact of all work of the camp any way within a woman's province being performed by the Piedmontese Sisters of Charity ; such as the mending and washing of shirts and socks, superintendence of the cleaning, keeping the accounts of the clothing, making up the diet lists for the sick, and many such things which in our own army would occupy a whole host of sergeants and commissariat clerks, with a number of orderly men attached to their respective departments.

These excellent women, the Piedmontese Sisters of Charity, belonged chiefly to the middle and lower classes, but not exclusively ; they appeared generally very cheerful, and their merry laugh could be heard ringing from hill to hill, when they were taking their evening walk ; but at one period of our stay a gloom fell upon them, as many were stricken down with fever, and deaths were frequent in their band. My companion visited them at a



time when the lives of two were despaired of, and one was lying dead ; but she found the others pursuing their occupations with their usual alacrity. The Devonport sister wondered if there were loving friendships among them, or if they lived above such things (as nuns are told they ought), so unimpassioned did they all appear at the first glance ; but her mind was set at rest upon the question when she observed a sister, as the superior left the room, come to the bedside of a sufferer then unconscious and fast sinking, and pressing a kiss upon her brow, hastily resume her work with a look of unutterable loathing. It requires a fearful amount of self-control to work steadily, when the heart is very heavy ; the poor are to be pitied in this respect, who, though their hearts may be breaking, must go plodding on : they can find no time to indulge in their grief, yet it is impossible to work it off ; for those who say we can, perhaps have never tried the method.

Our first acquaintance with these Sisters of Charity originated in a ludicrous blunder we made : they had sent to request ice, which through the forethought of the chaplain was stored in the donjon of the castle ; but the messenger spoke neither French nor ordinary Italian, and his patois was



quite unintelligible to any one there, so to make us understand, he put his hands to his head and repeated the word "*Blanc.*" After a good deal of consultation, we sagely concluded that the sisters needed our two flat irons, for the purpose of getting up the white head-dress a Sister of Charity wears; the poor Sardinian made resistance, but as we were confident and imperious, he suffered us to place the irons in his basket, and patiently started with them up the mountain to fetch one who could make known the true want,—ice to lay upon the heads of the fever patients: we suppose that he had seen snow used for this purpose, as ice could hardly be called white.

Our daily walks were not discontinued, neither were they less devoid of interest than those we enjoyed so much at Scutari. The sides of the mountains, as summer advanced, abounded in the most lovely flowers, whose species differed with the aspect of the slopes on which they grew; thus a short walk would exhibit to us a great variety: the wild iris was to be seen in great beauty. But what seemed peculiar to these hills were little spots among the grass of the greenest moss, sprinkled over with blossoms of the most minute description, and yet unrivalled in form and diffusion, and brilliancy of colour; the little forget-me-not was



one of the largest. Ariel's lawns was the name we gave to these miniature garden plots. The sight of a bed of violets looked so homelike as to give us more pleasure than any of the less familiar blossoms, and we secured a box of roots, hoping to be able to gather violets at Christmas, should we spend another winter abroad. Our tame goat one day came bleating home from his pasture in such a hurry as to cause me to expect that an approaching storm would be violent, so I took up the box of violets to bring them into shelter; as I passed along the verandah, I was startled to perceive a pair of green eyes peering at me from among the leaves, and on putting down the box, a frog leapt out, whose colour so closely resembled that of the plants as to make him almost secure of escaping detection.

We were alarmed one dark night by what appeared to us to be a lantern, carried along the slopes of a ravine, where we knew the path to be rather dangerous when traversed by mountaineers in broad day; we watched the light, which one moment was to be seen upon the verge of a precipice, and then to recede again, until we could bear our anxiety no longer, and sent for the sergeant of the guard: a step we should have taken earlier, had we not supposed the light to



be carried by one of our men absent without leave. On pointing the object out to the sergeant he said that doubtless it was a soldier, who had been to the Sardinian camp for wine and had chosen that dangerous path to escape the sentry ; but a picket was sent into the hollow, who shouted to us that the luminous appearance was given out by an insect, which we afterwards supposed to be the lantern fly.

A reading-room had been provided for the orderlies and convalescents, and was well furnished with volumes. Miss Nightingale desired me to attend this room of an evening for the purpose of giving instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic to any who desired to improve themselves in these subjects ; she also wished me to make myself acquainted with the catalogue of the books, as she had observed that when men of that class were placed amidst a number of books whose backs only they saw, they seemed unable to secure the kind of reading they desired. The books sent out from England helped to wear away many a long hour, during which, but for these volumes, a sense of pain would never have been absent from the invalid's mind.



## CHAPTER XV.

## PEACE.

AFTER the proclamation of peace, Miss Nightingale sent the nursing-staff, a few at a time as they could be spared, to see Sebastopol. We rode in the Russian carriage ordinarily employed in conveying Miss Nightingale on her various journeys from one hospital to another; this chariot was drawn by two of the land transport mules, fine sleek creatures, while our postilion was in the dress of that corps, with his bayonet at his belt. The roads were excellent, and our well-trained steeds trotted along them as gaily as any pair of horses in Rotten Row. But our journey led us through scenes which called up sad reflections—many resting-places of such of our army as were destined to lay their bones far from those of their forefathers. A few days before we left the Crimea, fatigue parties erected for each little knot of mounds a rude wall of stone. Perhaps



it could scarcely be supposed that the whole of these enclosures would be respected when the inhabitants returned to take possession of their vineyards and gardens.

After a slow drive through the town of Sebastopol, in which huge heaps of stones only showed us where the streets had once stood, we proceeded to the inspection of the trenches. So frequent and vivid had been the descriptions given us of them, that we expected them to prove quite familiar to us; but we had not realized them in their length and intricacies, neither were we prepared for the seeming frailness of the screen they afforded. Leaving our mules and carriage in the vicinity of the advanced trench, we crossed over to the Redan and Malakoff. Though the Russians had not been subjected to the hardships of nights in the trenches, they had by no means enviable quarters, dwelling as they did in subterranean passages where scarcely a ray of light could penetrate. We did not explore them in all their windings; indeed, it would have taken us many days: and moreover, it was deemed dangerous, as various missiles were still at times exploding.

Miss Nightingale intended us to have a little picnic, so she sent refreshments with us, which we left in the trenches; but when we returned



we found a little surprise awaiting us. Some soldiers on duty there had kindled a fire, and having boiled some water in their canteens and begged some tea from the store of an officer, we found added to our own provisions a comfortable cup of that refreshing beverage. When we thanked them they said, "We know that ladies always like tea." They had also rolled up some cannon balls and arranged them so as to form seats, while a cannon served for a table; we did not at first discover the warlike nature of our seats, as they had spread over them the ample cloak of the officer on duty. It appeared afterwards that the sergeant had been a patient of ours many months before at Scutari, and he asked permission to introduce his lieutenant, who took tea with us: the men were a detachment of the Guards. Never could an officer in any drawing-room have more exerted himself to give pleasure than this young lieutenant of the Guards did when the ancient dames in black serge took tea with him in the trench. We returned to our hut, much gratified with our day's jaunt, and released Miss Nightingale from the charge which she had undertaken for us, that of keeping house in our absence. Doubtless she had also enjoyed herself, for she was there alone; except that at intervals the



nurse passed into the hut from her work. A few hours spent where she was not in a position to be disturbed must at this time of her life have been a great relief.

The regiment of the line stationed above us had been ordered to Canada; but one of their officers was suffering from fever, and when the day of embarkation arrived, the captain was too ill to be removed, and therefore was obliged to be left in his hut in the now lonely camp. The colonel left two orderly men to attend him; but as he thought when all oversight was removed they could scarcely be depended upon at such a time of licence, he felt anxious about the sick officer, and requested, as the case was peculiar, that a sister might be quartered in an adjoining hut until at least the crisis was passed. This became my task; but I returned every other night to the Castle Hospital.

Like our own, this encampment was formed on a terrace on the slope of the hill, into which the men had dug before they began the erection of their dwellings; by this means increasing the warmth, as the end and two sides of the hut were enclosed by the bank. The door, over which was the light, looked down the hill; a short distance before this entrance, a bank of



earth was again thrown up when practicable, and when not, a row of small firs (without roots, I fear) afforded some protection from the mountain gales, and also from the rays of the sun. Two barrels placed one on the top of the other formed the chimney, whose top was exactly level with the surrounding hill; when the camp was again inhabited I was in hourly dread of some one falling into the fire: it appeared to me to present an ingenious trap.

The floor of this habitation was the bare earth; its furniture, the camp bed of the officer, a three-legged table, and, as the owner would have designated it, an easy chair. The two last-named articles were specimens of the captain's skill as a carpenter, and in the merits of the chair he had especial confidence; but a stool was borrowed for me. At the most critical period of his illness he would awaken from his doze, and, forgetting how many times already he had made the same suggestion, beg me to try that chair: as he was quite distressed—I must be so tired, and I should find it rest me much more than the stool I occupied. He had arranged that the chair should allow of his feet hanging down, while his knees were on a level with his face; and as his height was more than six feet, there was poor



prospect of comfort for me in that seat. At length, over-persuaded and anxious to meet his wishes, but quite against my own judgment, I with some difficulty placed myself as recommended, and positively found myself a prisoner, for my feet barely reached the part which would have been occupied by his knees, and it seemed impossible that without assistance I should be able to leave the chair: even at this distance of time I cannot think of my predicament without recalling my extreme embarrassment, for I was aware that the hut would not be visited until the morning, when the medical officer of the 42nd, an exceedingly officer-like and handsome man, of whom I stood in great awe, would visit his sick friend. Happily, while the captain dozed, I threw myself and the chair on one side, without making a great noise, and thus escaped. I felt a little nervous at night, as I had been told there were occasionally parties of camp followers, Frenchmen, &c., in the habit of searching deserted camps; and my fears were not lulled by the officer inquiring, on being aroused by some slight noise, if I could see his pistols. I made a search, but did not find them; and if I had, I am sure his strength was not sufficient to hold the weapon.



I spent a Sunday in this little hut, and it was one of the most peaceful and calm I ever remember to have enjoyed ; so unlike those to which at that time I was accustomed, that it seemed peculiarly refreshing and almost home-like. After his breakfast, the sick officer reminded me that it was Sunday, and requested an addition to be made to his usual daily prayers ; especially he wished me, as he felt much better, to read one of the Psalms of thanksgiving. I chose the *ciii.*, and when that was concluded, he desired me to go on with the *civ.* ; and then he talked of the beautiful scene spread out before the spectator when standing on the terrace before his hut : we were as happy as possible, perched on that lonely hill.

During my journeys to and from this encampment, I experienced the strength of a mountain gale. Though advised one morning not to attempt the walk, I started on what proved a toilsome and somewhat perilous journey, which occupied me three hours. I carried an umbrella as a walking-stick, and was obliged continually to fix it on the ground, and then with difficulty saved myself from being carried along by a gust. At some of the more dangerous spots I waited for a brief lull, and then crawled up them ; once



set rolling I should not have stopped until I fell into the harbour of Balaclava. I had been made aware of this, for when the regiment were removing, they started some barrels, which we had the misfortune to meet in a narrow path where there was no turning aside. Of course we fled, but our pursuers gained upon us every instant, and we only avoided them by clinging to a tree which grew out of a bank that could not be mounted without its aid. The discomforts of my journey were still further increased by the multitudinous loose articles set in motion by the wind, and which were all hastening down the hill : now an iron hoop came tumbling over a bank, then an old hat or a cast-off garment would give me a buffet as it hurried by.

But my stay in the Crimea now drew near its conclusion, and the other Devonport Sister and myself were in hourly expectation, for some weeks, of an order to embark for home. We thought our turn very long in coming, as day after day we watched the vessels leave the bay laden with troops, who cheered heartily as the scene of so many triumphs and so many hardships receded from their view. The ship in which we at length began the voyage brought away the last batch of invalids, and therefore



some were on board who otherwise would have been considered unfit for a journey by sea: thus, on the whole, we were not a very cheerful party on starting. Moreover, though we were glad to be on our journey home, painful retrospections crowded upon our minds; though, at the same time, we could not look back without seeing many causes for deep thankfulness.

We landed at Southampton, and, taking the train, reached Plymouth at midnight; weary in body, but with fresh, joyous hearts, and expecting to meet old faces, and to resume old habits. Like many wanderers before and since, we were doomed to be disappointed; as, during the twenty months we had been absent, strict conventual rules had been developed. So, with heavy hearts, we, who had shared so many privations,—and nothing endears persons more to each other,—bade each other good-bye in the corridor of the Abbey; to meet henceforth as strangers, and to pass each other without even exchanging glances: for that would have been considered a breach of convent rule.

THE END.



LONDON:

PRINTED BY SMITH, ELDER AND CO.,  
LITTLE GREEN ARBOUR COURT, OLD BAILEY, E.C.



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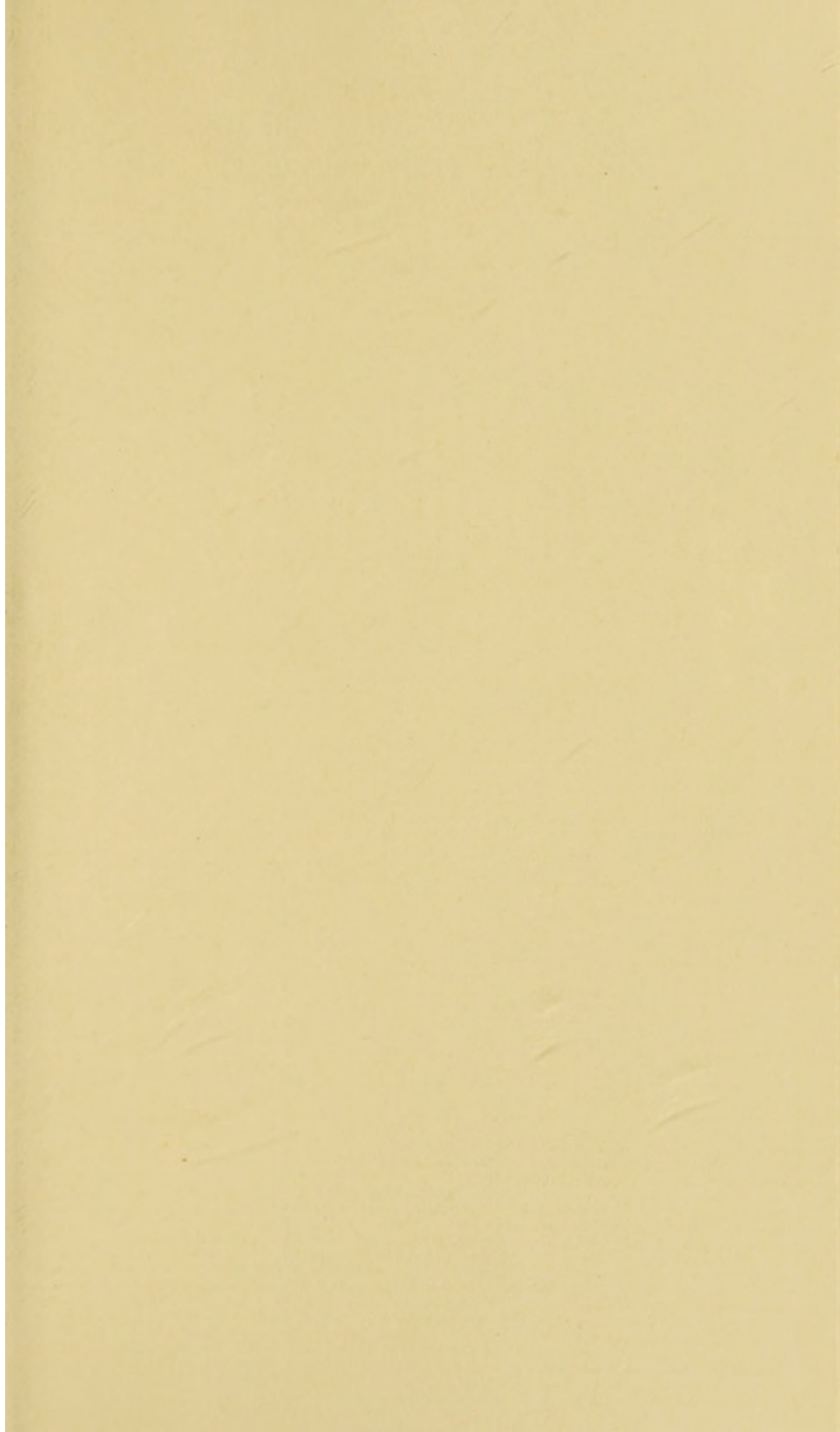
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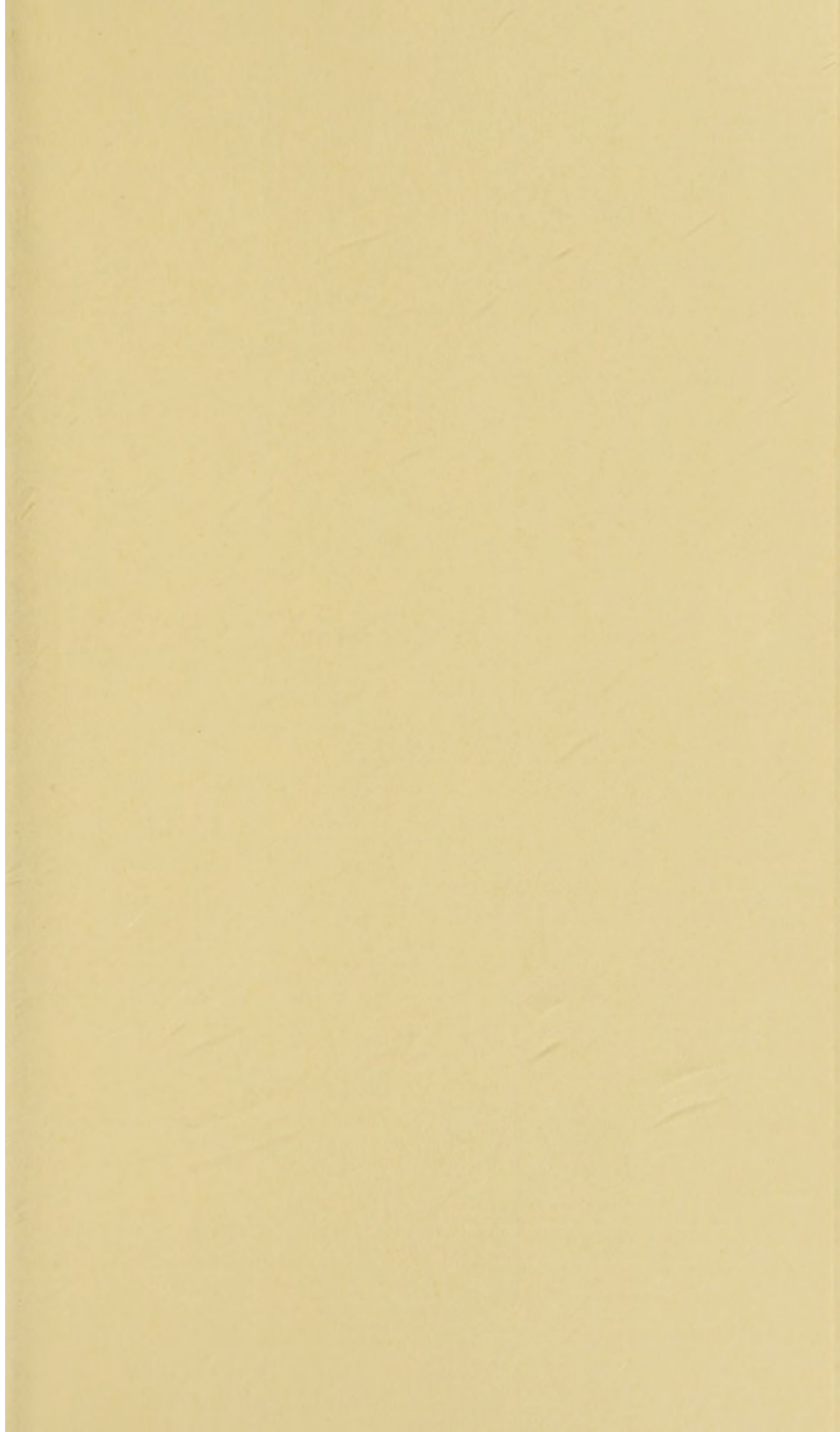














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