

Is that lamp going out? : to the heroic memory of Florence Nightingale / by the author of Where's master].

Contributors

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IS THAT LAMP GOING OUT?

To the heroic
memory of

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Florence Nightingale

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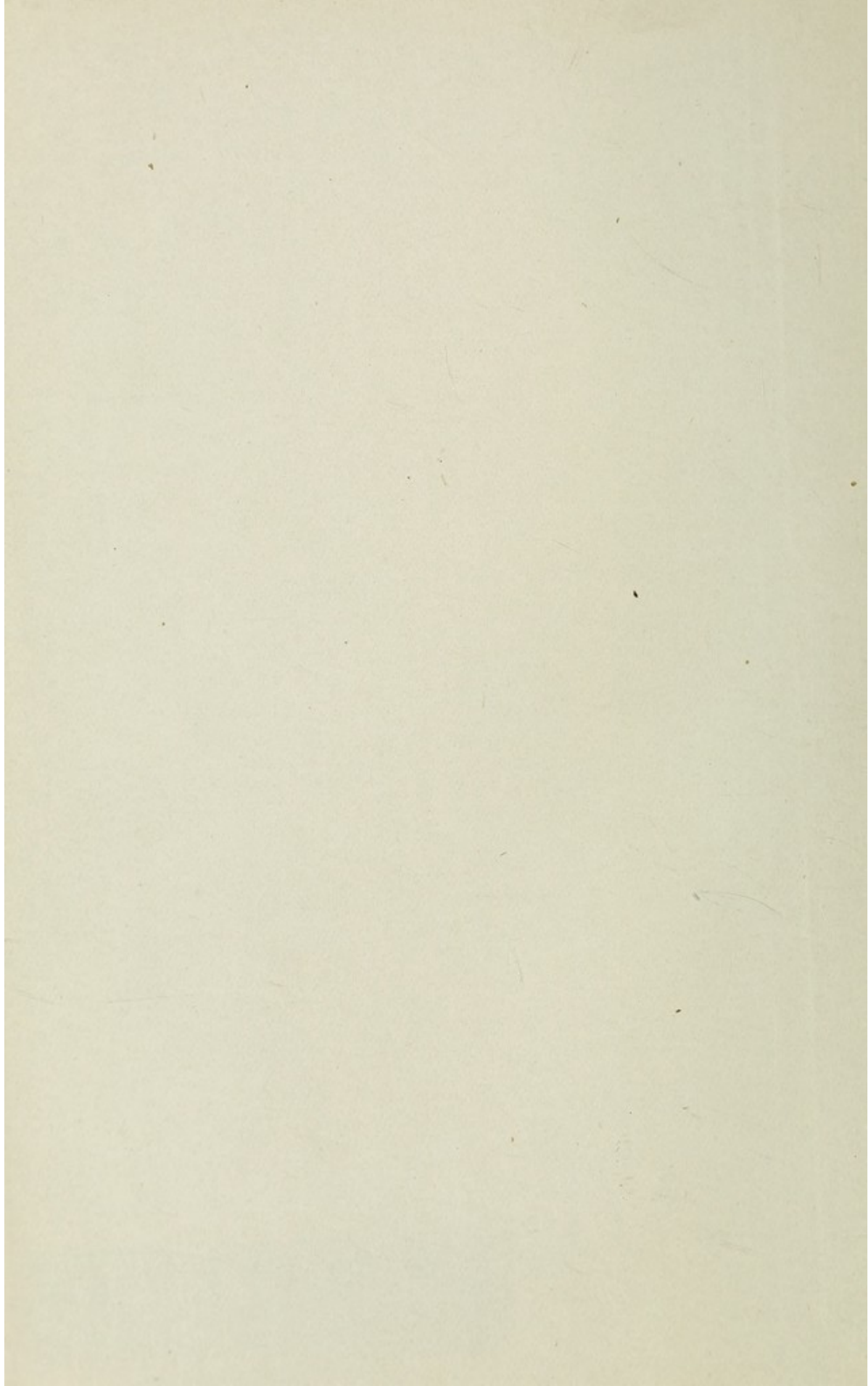
By the author of *Whimsical* 2

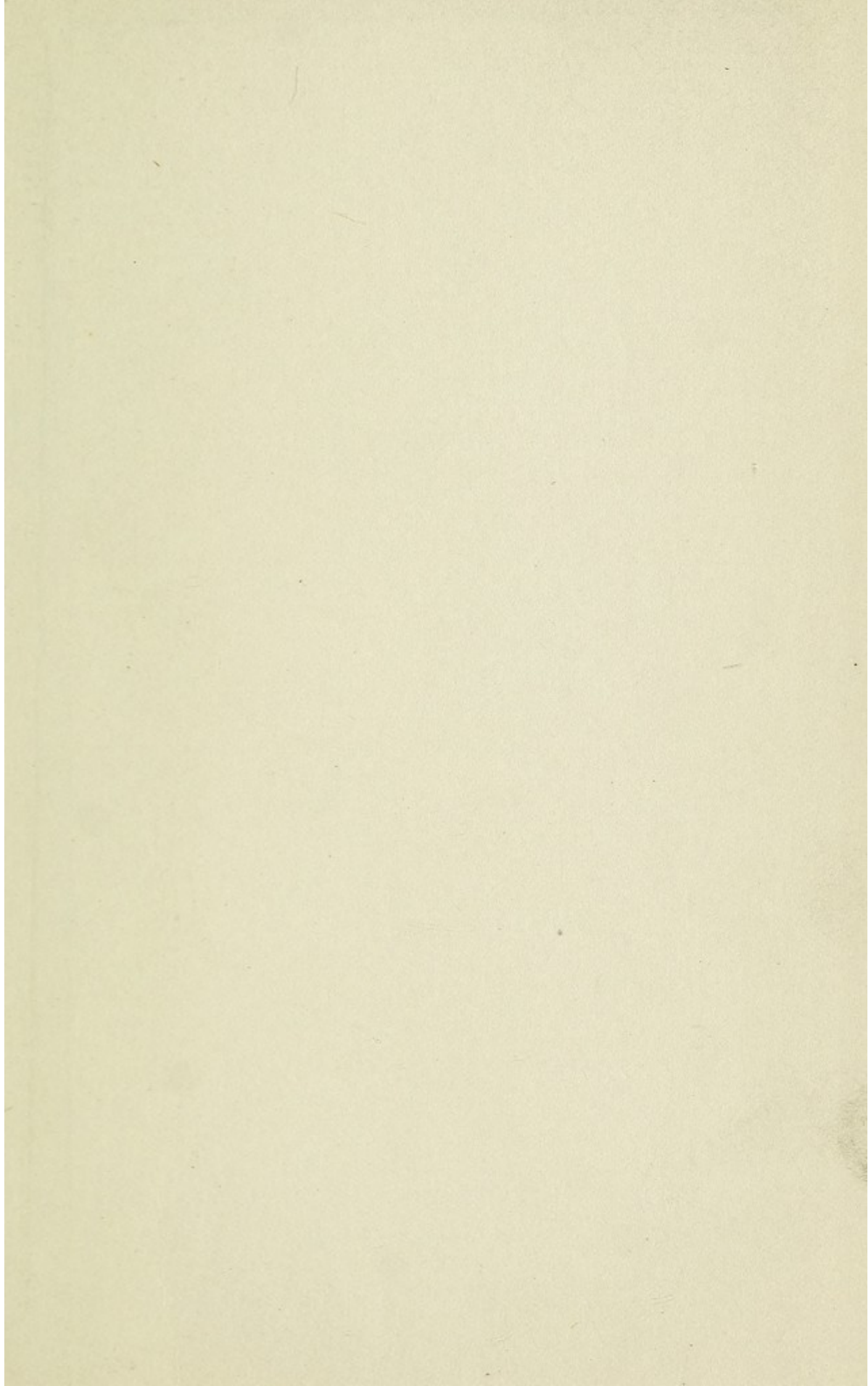


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THE LADY WITH THE LAMP

A Painting by Frank Dadd, R.I.

Is That Lamp Going Out?

To the Heroic Memory of
Florence Nightingale

*"A lady with a lamp shall stand
In the great history of the land."*

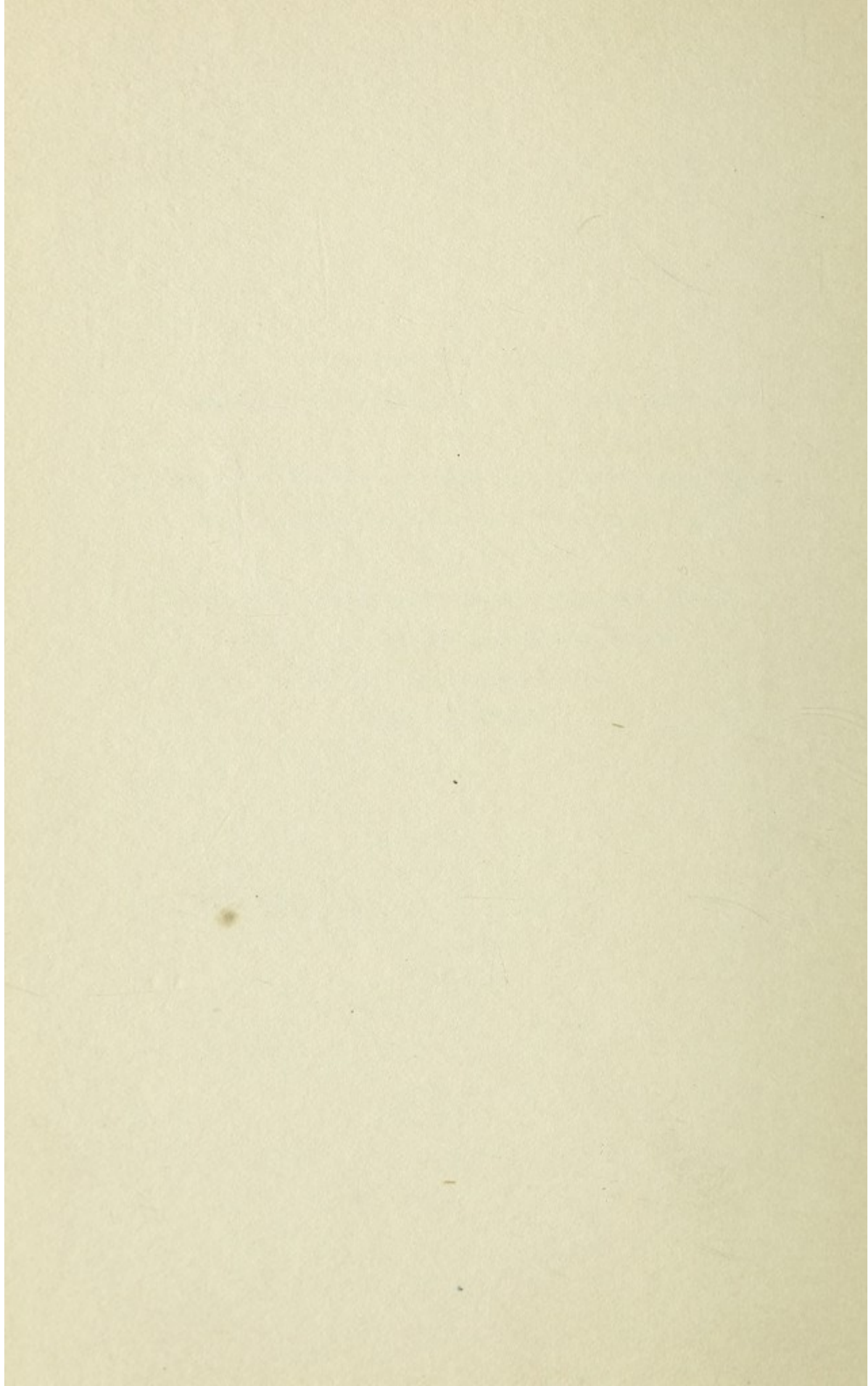


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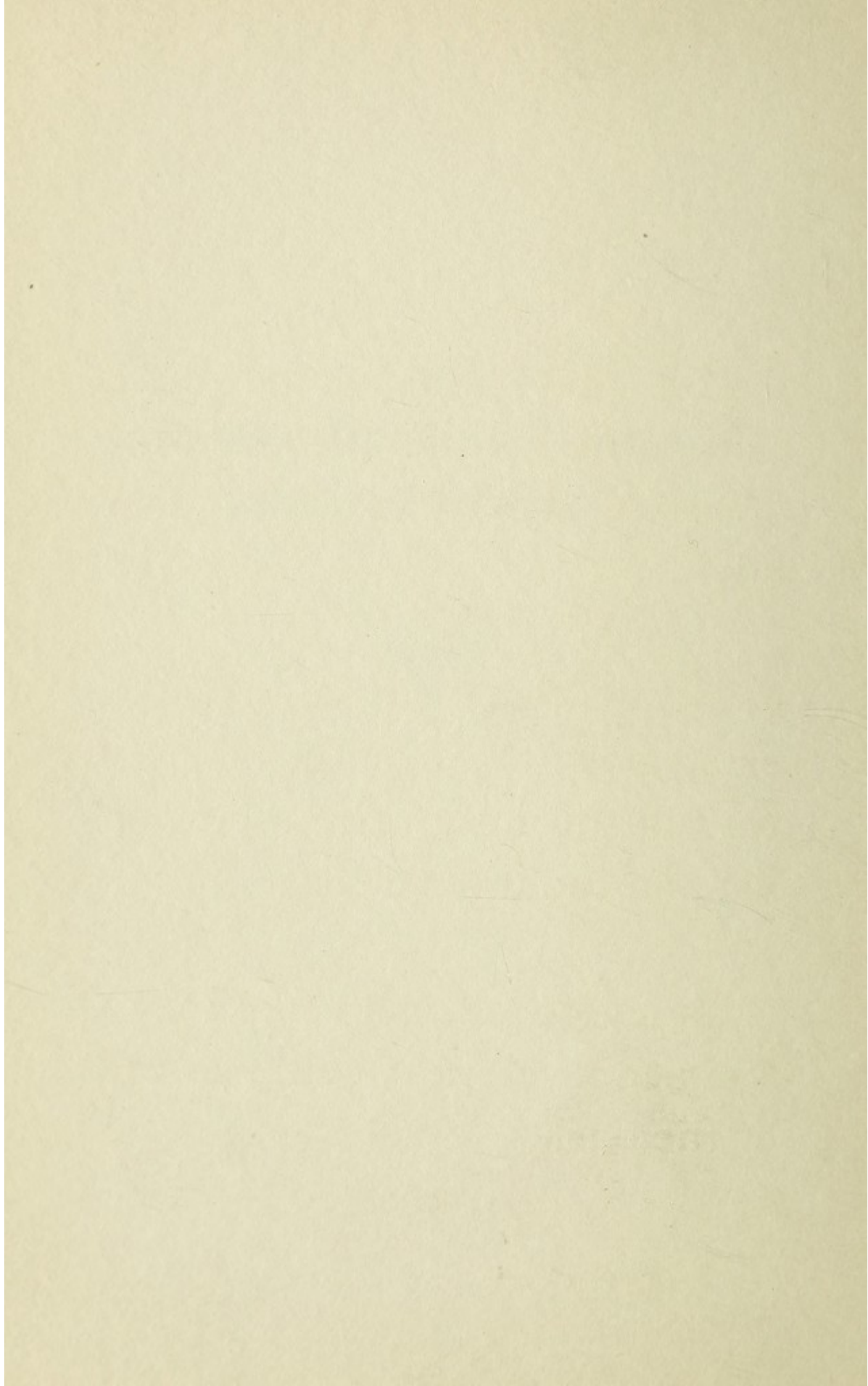
*Printed in the City of London
at the Edinburgh Press*

To
the Heroic Memory of
Florence Nightingale, "The Lady with the Lamp."¹
In
grateful recognition of those who have worked in the light of
Her Lamp for the Wounded in the Battle of Life.
And in
the hope that some who read may spare a drop of oil
so that Her lamp may shine more brightly
until the day break, and the
shadows flee away



*The
Crimean Veteran tells how the
Lady lit the Lamp*





Is that lamp going out?
The light looks very low.
Surely the oil hasn't given
out?

That little night-lamp flick-
ering away there on the hospital
wall is the only thing between
me and the utter dark.

Fancy an old man like me, a
Crimean veteran, being afraid
of the dark.

Well, I am afraid—I am afraid of the terror by night. I dread the night as much any frightened child.

Do you think the dark can ever bring anything but horror to an old soldier who spent a night on the blood-drowned slopes of the Alma, a night in a jolting litter, nights in a hospital ship, nights, nights, nights at Scutari?

I tell you pearly gates and golden streets mean nothing to me. I shall know I've reached Heaven when I try to remember—and cannot.

That's why it's always light in
Heaven, why there's no night
there. Here in the night I try
to *forget*—and cannot.



I *can* forget in the daytime in this clean and comfortable ward where everyone seems anxious to ease the last days of an old soldier who has fought for more than half a century, and has been wounded in many battles, wounded at Alma, wounded often and sorely in the daily skirmishes in the streets of the city, in the long pitched battle with age and want and care.

For I have been wounded in the house of friends and on the field of the foe, and peace has been for me a fiercer fight than war.

But every night as the darkness settles over the row of neat white-covered beds, I go right back over the long years and feel beneath me that other bed, that unclean, reeking thing, in that dreadful hospital by the Bosphorus, and every night as I lie tossing in that agony which the years have not lessened by a single pang, I watch that light over there and

wait and wait till She comes
and holds it over my head.

Then at last I can fall asleep
and forget, for I know that
when She is near all will be
well and that She will see that
the lamp is trimmed and filled
with oil. I know She will never
leave me in the dark.

But to-night She has not
come and the lamp looks
so low. Surely it can't be going
out.



That light, there, is just
like the lamp She carried.
How we waited for its appear-
ing every night in that fearful
blackness, how we watched
it as it came slowly down that
way of sorrow between the long
lines of the wounded. Now
and again it would stand
still and we caught sight of
that sweet slim black figure
with the white cap, bending

over something that was once a man.

Then it would move on again, and as it passed groans were hushed, mutterings were still, and men who could not move except in agony turned on their pillows to kiss her shadow on the bed.

Every night I lay with my eyes straining towards the first glimmer at the door, and I would sweat drops of anguish as a puff of wind caught the tiny flame and almost blew it out.

If that lamp had gone out before it reached me I should have died. It was the light of our life.

For in the hideous darkness, so crammed with all that was terrible in death, and more terrible, so much more terrible, in life, that light was the one thing in a whole world of misery that told us we were not altogether cast away by God and man. It was the one thing on earth—the Devil's earth we thought it then—that spoke of love and pity and kindness to men who had lived for weeks on hate.

For weeks we had eaten and drunk hate, we had rolled hideous, bloodguilty thoughts of revenge in our mouths and had found strength to live and endure in doing it.

One day before She came a soldier in the next bed called out "They *must* hang someone for this," and I can feel now how, when we heard him, our eyes glistened and our faces flushed, as, for the moment, we forgot what we were and imagined we were men again.

And when the pain was at its

worst I could almost bear it without cursing if I said over and over again to myself, "Whom will they hang? Someone will swing for this."



God knows we did well to
be angry.

We had fought like men and
they had left us to die like dogs.

We had won a glorious victory
and this was our reward.

We had looked unflinching
into the jaws of the Russian
artillery, with their flaming
tongues and blackened teeth, as

we lay on our faces on the slopes of the Alma; we had not wavered as the shrieking shells ripped their way into our midst; in all that two-mile line of red there was not a man who murmured as we dressed our ranks to fill the places of the dead.

We never halted in the vineyards by the river as we stumbled blindly through the storm of shot and shell—"Forward the first company!"—We did not shrink as we came within the range of the guns of the great Redoubt, when canister and grape and rifle and musket

balls swept us in blasts from every side—I can hear them shouting madly as the colour gained the breastwork—and we had no feeling but pride in a day's work well done as we fell at last,—gaspings, broken, shattered, on the hillside.

We uttered no complaint through the night as we lay where we fell, among the dead and those who had been so much better dead. We knew the price we might have to pay. And we paid it.

We paid it as they carried us those four unending miles

to the ship, every step a mile
of torture, and as we neared
Scutari and saw the brightness
of the hills we thought in
our folly we had paid in full.



Daid in full?

We did not begin to pay till we reached that shambles they had mis-named a Hospital where at last, as we thought, we might rest or at least die in peace.

Compared with the sights of Scutari the dripping slopes of the Alma were like a garden of roses, compared with the sounds of Scutari the whizz

of bullets and the crackling of shells was like sweet music, compared with the smells of Scutari the reek of powder was beautiful perfume.

They left us to rot and die in Scutari, our festering wounds undressed, our mangled bodies unclothed.

Beasts die no such death as my friends died there. Beasts live no such life as I lived there.



What's how my Lady of the Lamp found us. That is what we were like when She came to us with her little lamp in her hand.

To us She was just the Love of God and her lamp the pity of man. When we saw her face, heard her voice, felt her touch, we knew that there was a God and that She must have come straight from Him to Scutari.

And we knew, too, that the lamp she carried had been filled with oil by those at home, knew that they had not altogether forgotten and forsaken us.



Through all these years
when life has been almost
too hard to bear, when God has
been hidden and men have
seemed without pity, I have
watched for and waited for my
Lady of the Lamp.

And She has always come,
and I have always known that
I was wrong, that God does
not forget the wounded soldiers,

and that while men may, and do sometimes forget, He always reminds them.

And when they remember men are very kind.

They do forget sometimes that the Crimea was a toy-soldier war beside the battle of the busy streets.

I've fought at Alma and I've fought for bread in the city and I know.

Do you think I ceased to be a soldier when peace was pro-

claimed and I had to fight for my living?

I'm not proud of being a Crimean veteran—it was easy to be brave in those hours of splendid frenzy—but I *am* proud that after fifty years of battle, fifty years, mind you, not one glorious day at Alma, I owe no man anything, I've clean hands in a dirty world. My uniform is stained and ragged, but I've kept my honour untarnished, and I've never turned my back on the enemy.

For the peace and comfort

and ease of pain that have come to me now,—old, crippled, marred, scarred in the long years of battle—I thank my Lady of the Lamp who taught men to care for the wounded in the war.



She has not come to me
to-night.

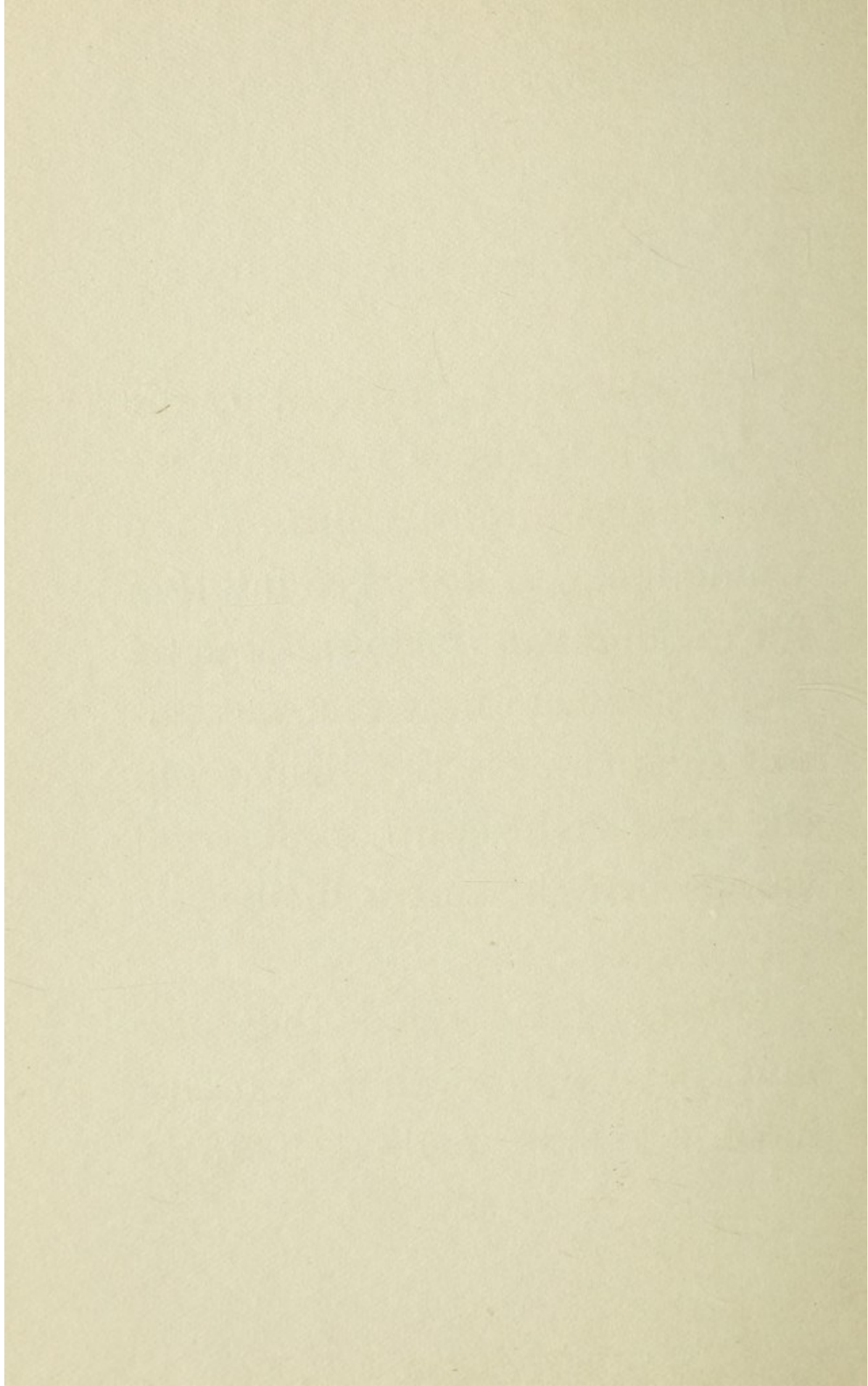
But the lamp is there.

Surely it is not going out?
Surely She will not leave me in
the dark?





The
Hospital Nurse wonders whether
the Lamp is going out



I was sitting to-night by the side of the Veteran, as we have learned to call him. They wanted to put a screen round him for the end was not far off, but he has a strange fancy that he cannot sleep unless the light from the little night lamp on the wall shines straight across his bed.

I was very tired—the day had been more than usually hard. I was feeling a little

bitter, too, for the papers had been full of stories of the Lady with the Lamp, and all day long people had been talking of the light she lit, and of how that light could never go out.

It is low enough to-day, at any rate. It is easy enough to stir enthusiasm and touch sympathies when the papers are full of daring deeds done on some far-off battle-field, when the country is ringing to the music of the military bands. The Lady of the Lamp shamed people for ever out of their indifference to the wounded

soldiers, but we city hospital nurses, Red Cross nurses in as fierce a war as ever was waged, are sometimes crushed by the thought that just because these wounded here wear no red coats, carry no waving plumes, have no medals, have no story, the public, the country, does not care.

And yet we know, we know so well that sometimes our hearts are almost breaking with sorrow, how they have suffered in the battle, how finely they have fought.

If only the people cared
now as they did then.

To-day we turned away men
and women—and little children
who have been wounded before
the fight has fairly begun.

We could not take them in,
we had no room.

And this afternoon I heard
one of the doctors say to
the students: Well, gentlemen,

some day no doubt a cure will be found when this most generous public, which owes so much to the men and women you see here, has thought fit to endow us with the means of research. Meanwhile the man here dies. He is not incurable. At present we do not know the cure. That's all. They raised thousands in an hour when the news of the state of the wounded came from the Crimea, as you have no doubt read a hundred times this morning. But it may well be that this man dying here is a greater hero than any at Scutari; it may well be that his life is

worth more than any that was saved by Florence Nightingale.

We work, doctors, nurses, with tied hands—for want of money.

I was thinking of these things,—of how men mocked the memory of the Lady with the Lamp when they talked complacently of the improvements in hospital work and nursing since her day, talked as if there were nothing more to be done, as if the lamp she lit could never go out, as if it never needed to be refilled with oil—when the Veteran

touched my arm and said: I do wish my Lady of the Lamp would come. She is very late to-night. There has been another big battle somewhere. The ward is very crowded with wounded. Have you room enough, supplies enough, for all?

I answered, hardly thinking what I said: There are many still outside. We are doing all we can but there's so much more we might do if only.

For a while he was silent: then—Wounded outside? How I wish She would come! They

never stayed outside when She came. I have so often heard her say: Bring everyone in at once. We must make room for all the wounded, every one.

And when they told her that everything was exhausted, food, clothing, stores, she would draw herself up and say proudly: Do you think that I don't know my countrymen? They will certainly provide for every wounded soldier. They would never leave one uncared for. We must try and save everyone. Bring *everyone* of the wounded in.

Nor a little time the Veteran lay with his eyes straining towards the other end of the ward as if he expected someone to come in at the door. Then suddenly he started up, threw the clothes from him, and tried to rise. Do you see Nurse? he said, that lamp *is* going out. And all for want of a little oil.

As I looked the light flickered and sank.



Her lamp must *not* go out, he said sharply. But what can I do? My Lady of the Lamp is not coming to-night. It may be the General has greater need of her somewhere else, or is she, at last, taking her Rest?



If there were something I could do. If I had something I could give. But I've nothing, I'm less than nothing in the world and my strength is almost gone. If I were rich, if I were strong, I'd never rest while a single wounded soldier were outside.

For I've been outside myself—and I know.

Do you hear, Nurse, let me get up at once. Now at once. I want to go out—out into the

dark. I'm not afraid of the night any more.

Dress me quickly. I'm going away.

Where? I don't know—what does it matter where? My fighting days are over. I'm just a burden on the army, but some of those outside will still make splendid soldiers if their wounds are healed. They are worth saving. I know She would try and save them, every one, if only She were here.

Do you think I can sleep here

when so many wounded are waiting for my bed?

It's so little I can do to help My Lady of the Lamp, but if I went out, nurse—out into the dark, if *my* bed were empty you might perhaps save one, just one wounded soldier.

It's all I can do. If I were rich, if I were strong.

You shan't stop me. I'm going—*now*.

Look Her lamp *is* going out. Let me go at once. *Now*.

I looked at the light. It was almost out.

I turned back to the bed. The Veteran had passed to where they need evermore no light of lamp.

But the little night light on the wall flamed up brightly again.

It was as if someone had just trimmed it, had filled it with oil.

And a shadow fell across the bed and softly smoothed the lines of battle on his face.



