XIII

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

Day unto day her dainty hands
Make Life's soiled temples clean;
And there's a wake of glory where
Her spirit pure hath been.
At midnight through the shadow-land
Her living face doth gleam;
The dying kiss her shadow, and
The dead smile in their dream.

—Gerald Massey.

SOME years ago, when the celebrated Florence Nightingale was a little girl, living at her father's home, a large, old Elizabethan house, with great woods about it, in Hampshire, there was one thing that struck everybody who knew her. It was that she seemed to be always thinking what she could do to please or help anyone who needed either help or comfort. She was very fond, too, of animals, and she was so gentle in her way, that even the shyest of them would come quite close to her, and pick up whatever she flung down for them to eat.

There was, in the garden behind the house, a long walk with trees on each side, the abode of many squirrels, and when Florence came down the walk, dropping nuts as she went along, the squirrels would run down the trunks of their trees, and, hardly waiting until she passed by, **would** pick up the prize and dart away, with their

little bushy tails curled over their backs, and their black eyes looking about as if terrified at the least noise, though they did not seem to be afraid of Florence.

Then there was an old gray pony named Peggy, past work, living in a paddock, with nothing to do all day long but to amuse herself. Whenever Florence appeared at the gate, Peggy would come trotting up and put her nose into the dress pocket of her little mistress, and pick it of the apple or the roll of bread that she knew she would always find there, for this was a trick Florence had taught the pony. Florence was fond of riding, and her father's old friend, the clergyman of the parish, used often to come and take her for a ride with him when he went to the farm cottages at a distance.

As he had studied medicine when a young man, he was able to tell the people what would do them good when they were ill or had met with an accident. Little Florence took great delight in helping to nurse those who were ill; and whenever she went on these long rides, she had a small basket fastened to her saddle, filled with something nice which she saved from her breakfast or dinner, or carried for her mother.

There lived in one of two or three solitary cottages in the wood an old shepherd of her father's, named Roger, who had a favourite sheep-dog called Cap. Roger had neither wife nor child, and Cap lived with him and kept him company at night after he had penned his flock. Cap was a very sensible dog; indeed people used to say he could do everything but speak. He kept the sheep in wonderfully good order, and thus saved his master a great deal of trouble. One day as Florence and her old friend were out for a ride, they came to a field where they found the shepherd giving his sheep their

night feed; but he was without the dog, and the sheep knew it, for they were scampering in every direction. Florence and her friend noticed that the old shepherd looked very sad, and they stopped to ask what was the matter, and what had become of his dog.

"Oh," said Roger, "Cap will never be of any more use to me; I'll have to hang him, poor fellow, as soon as I go home to-night."

"Hang him!" said Florence. "Oh, Roger, how wicked of you! What has dear old Cap done?"

"He has done nothing," replied Roger; "but he will never be of any more use to me, and I cannot afford to keep him for nothing; one of the mischievous school boys throwed a stone at him yesterday and broke one of his legs." And the old shepherd's eyes filled with tears, which he wiped away with his shirt-sleeve, then he drove his spade deep in the ground to hide what he felt, for he did not like to be seen crying.

"Poor Cap," he sighed, "he was as knowing almost as a human being."

"But are you sure his leg is broken?" asked Florence.

"Oh, yes, miss, it is broken safe enough; he has not put his foot to the ground since."

Florence and her friend rode on without saying anything more to Roger.

"We will go and see poor Cap," said the vicar; "I don't believe the leg is really broken. It would take a big stone and a hard blow to break the leg of a big dog like Cap."

"Oh, if you could cure him, how glad Roger would be!" replied Florence.

They soon reached the shepherd's cottage, but the door was fastened; and when they moved the latch, such

a furious barking was heard that they drew back, startled. However, a little boy came out of the next cottage, and asked if they wanted to go in, as Roger had left the key with his mother. So the key was got and the door opened and there on the bare brick floor lay the dog, his hair dishevelled, and his eyes sparkling with anger at the intruders. But when he saw the little boy he grew peaceful, and when he looked at Florence and heard her call him "poor Cap," he began to wag his short tail; and then crept from under the table and lay down at her feet. She took hold of one of his paws, patted his old rough head, and talked to him, whilst her friend examined the injured leg. It was dreadfully swollen, and hurt very much to have it examined; but the dog knew it was meant kindly, and though he moaned and winced with pain, he licked the hands that were hurting him.

"It's only a bad bruise, no bones are broken," said her old friend. "Rest is all Cap needs; he will soon be well again."

"I am so glad," said Florence; "but can we do nothing for him, he seems in such pain?"

"There is one thing that would ease the pain and heal the leg all the sooner, and that is plenty of hot water to foment the part."

Florence struck a light with the tinder-box, and lighted the fire, which was already laid. She then set off to the other cottage to get something to bathe the leg with. She found an old flannel petticoat hanging up to dry, and this she carried off, and tore up into strips, which she wrung out in warm water, and laid them tenderly on Cap's swollen leg. It was not long before the poor dog felt the benefit of the application, and he looked grateful, wagging his little stump of a tail in thanks. On their

way home they met the shepherd coming slowly along, with a piece of rope in his hand.

"Oh, Roger," cried Florence, "you are not to hang poor old Cap; his leg is not broken at all."

"No, he will serve you yet," said the vicar.

"Well, I be main glad to hear it," said the shepherd, "and thanks to you for going to see him."

On the next morning Florence was up early, and the first thing she did was to take two flannel petticoats to give to the poor woman whose skirt she had torn up to bathe Cap. Then she went to the dog, and was delighted to find the swelling of his leg much less. She bathed it again, and Cap was as grateful as before.

Two or three days afterward Florence and her friend were riding together, when they came up to Roger and his sheep. This time Cap was watching the sheep, though he was lying quite still, and pretending to be asleep. When he heard the voice of Florence speaking to his master, who was portioning out the usual food, his tail wagged and his eyes sparkled, but he did not get up, for he was on duty. The shepherd stopped his work, and as he glanced at the dog with a merry laugh, said, "Do look at the dog, Miss; he be so pleased to hear your voice." Cap's tail went faster and faster. "I be glad," continued the old man, "I did not hang him. I be greatly obliged to you Miss, and the vicar, for what you did. But for you I would have hanged the best dog I ever had in my life."

This child, Florence Nightingale, of whom the foregoing story is told, was born in Florence, Italy, in 1820. Her parents were English, and her early years were given to the studies which a girl fortunately situated would follow. She was taught in science and mathematics as

well as in the fluent use of French, German and Italian.

But from the day the little girl nursed the leg of the shepherd's dog, it became the custom of the neighbourhood where she lived to send for her when anyone had a cut or bruise or sick animal. "During her girlhood," says the lady who has written her life, "she was chief almoner to the cottages around her home, and nursed all illnesses under the advice of her mother and the vicar." Her favourite books were those that taught of helpfulness to the suffering and miserable, and it seemed as if her whole nature was turning toward her great work. While still a young girl she became interested in what Elizabeth Fry had done in English prisons, and she paid an interested visit to Mrs. Fry.

When in London she would visit hospitals and kindred institutions, and it is said that in the family travels in Egypt she nursed to health several sick Arabs. Her tastes and time, it is evident, were turned toward a humane and benevolent rather than a social life. Thus passed the years of her younger womanhood.

She had withdrawn from gaieties to learn whatever she could of the hospitals of London, Edinburgh and Dublin, and indeed, of the civil and military hospitals of all Europe, and finally in 1851, she went into training as a nurse in a famous institution at Kaiserwerth on the Rhine. Here, when she had taken the course of instruction, she passed a distinguished examination. After a short period of further study in Paris she returned to her beautiful English home for rest.

But at this time a hospital and home in London for sick and aged governesses was about to fail from lack of means and lack of able direction. To this Miss

Nightingale gave herself with ardour, and so renewed its strength that it still remains a witness to her energy. She gave largely to this institution. Nevertheless she was to be found, says a visitor, "organising the nurses, attending to the correspondence, prescriptions and accounts; in short, performing all the duties of a hard-working matron."

Ten years she had been serving apprenticeship for the great work of her life, and now she was thirty-four years old. In 1854 a war broke out between England and Russia. It is known as the Crimean War. England sent her soldiers to the Black Sea in many thousands. These soldiers were sadly clad and fed. Bad management seems to have prevailed, and the service for carrying supplies was inadequate. Warm clothing, blankets, tents and other protection failed to reach the troops. "What a mockery," says one writer, "it must have seemed to the poor fellows, who with scanty rations and in threadbare and tattered clothes, were enduring the most cruel fatigues aggravated by wind and rain and snow and cold upon the bleak heights of the Tauric Chersonese," to hear comforts had been sent them. "When men of courageous mould have been seen 'to weep,' as on night after night, succeeding days of starvation and toil, they were ordered to their work in freezing trenches, who can estimate the exhausting misery they had at first endured?"

"It is now pouring rain," wrote another who was there, "the skies are black as ink — the wind is howling over the staggering tents — the trenches are turned into dykes — in the tents the water is sometimes a foot deep —our men have not either warm or waterproof clothing—they are out for twelve hours at a time in the trenches

—they are plunged into the inevitable miseries of a winter campaign — and not a soul seems to care for their comfort, or even for their lives. The wretched beggar who wanders about the streets of London in the rain, leads the life of a prince, compared with the British soldiers who are fighting out here for their country.

"The commonest accessories of a hospital are wanting; there is not the least attention paid to decency or cleanliness; the fetid air can barely struggle out to taint the atmosphere, save through the chinks in the walls and roofs, and, for all I can observe, these men die without the least effort being made to save them. There they lie, just as they were let gently down on the ground by the poor fellows, their comrades, who brought them on their backs from the camp with the greatest tenderness, but who are not allowed to remain with them. The sick appear to be tended by the sick, and the dying by the dying."

During that winter of 1854, many were frozen in their tents. Of nearly forty-five thousand, over eighteen thousand were reported in the hospitals. The English people at last saw their disaster, and certain women volunteered services of helpfulness. The head of the War Department of the Government who knew of Miss Nightingale's interest in nursing, asked her to superintend and organise a staff of nurses. By a strange coincidence Florence Nightingale had written and offered her aid to the sick and wounded soldiers, and her letter passed the letter from the Government.

It was an undertaking wholly new to English habits —a band of devoted women going to soften the horrors of war and save lives the war had endeavoured to end. As the nurses landed at Boulogne in France, the poor fisherwomen seized and carried their baggage in token

of their admiration for the work they were starting out to do. And in their journey through France the innkeepers would not take pay for their lodgings and food. They sailed across the Mediterranean and in November, 1854, reached Scutari, a town in Turkey in Asia, opposite Constantinople.

Four thousand sick and wounded soldiers lay in the hospitals awaiting their ministrations. And still others from a great battle were coming in. These hospitals were so filled that even in the corridors were two rows of mattresses and so close together that two persons could barely walk between the rows. The beds reeked with infection. There was no thought, seemingly, of sanitation. Rather than curers the hospitals were breeders of pestilence.

"The whole of yesterday one could only forget one's own existence," wrote one of the nurses, "for it was spent first in sewing the men's mattresses, and then in washing them, and assisting the surgeons, when we could, in dressing their ghastly wounds after their five days' confinement on board ship, during which space hundreds of wounds had not been dressed. Hundreds of men with fever, dysentery and cholera (the wounded were the smaller portion) filled the wards in succession from the overcrowded transports." Such were the conditions this band of women found.

The head of the band, Miss Nightingale, began her work of organisation. She laboured with tireless energy and indomitable will. But not without opposition. The military and medical officials, says one who was there, "were in the uttermost confusion among themselves, and they generally regarded these gentle missionaries as a **new** element of anarchy."

As soon as the wounded soldiers had had treatment Miss Nightingale set in active operations a kitchen where food fit for the sick might be prepared. Many hundreds of the invalids could not eat of ordinary food without serious evil results. In this kitchen the nurses cooked nourishing delicacies for the poor fellows. The following is a little snapshot by one who was there: "In the outer room we caught a glimpse of the justly celebrated Miss Nightingale, an amiable and highly intelligent-looking lady, delicate in form and prepossessing in appearance. Her energies were concentrated for the instant in the careful preparation of a dish of delectable food for an enfeebled patient — one of her homely ministrations to the wan victims of relentless war."

After the kitchen the master — or mistress — mind planned a laundry where the clothing and beds of the sick men might be cleansed. Miss Nightingale, you see, merely organised and conducted housekeeping upon a giant scale. Then in addition she set on foot evening lectures for the men able to listen, and a library and a schoolroom.

Nevertheless she gave distinct and individual service. "I believe," wrote one, "that there never was a severe case of any kind that escaped her notice; and sometimes it was wonderful to see her at the bedside of a patient who had been admitted perhaps but an hour before, and of whose arrival one would hardly have supposed it possible she could already be cognisant."

"As her slender form glided quietly along each corri¬dor every poor fellow's face softens with gratitude at the sight of her," wrote another. "When all the medical officers have retired for the night and silence and darkness have settled down on the miles of prostrate sick, she