

"The Lady with the Lamp"

alone with a little lamp in her hand making her solitary rounds. . . . No one who has observed her fragile figure and delicate health can avoid misgivings lest these should fail. With the heart of a true woman and the manners of a lady, accomplished and refined beyond most of her sex, she combines a surprising calmness of judgment and promptitude and decision of character."

No one can wonder at the fears expressed in this letter who has read of Miss Nightingale's almost miraculous energy and power of work. When fresh detachments of the wounded were brought in, she had been known to stand for twenty hours, distributing stores, directing nurses, assisting at operations, and ministering to cholera and fever patients. "To see her pass was happiness," one poor fellow said. "As she passed down the beds she would nod to one and smile at many more; but she could not do it to all, you know. We lay there by hundreds; but we could kiss her shadow as it fell, and lay our heads upon the pillow again, content." What words could be more touching than those!

Mrs. Jamieson, in her "Sacred and Legendary Art," tells us "that at Pisa the Church of San Francesco contained a chapel dedicated lately to Santa Filomena; over the altar is a picture by Sabatelli, representing the saint as a beautiful nymph-like figure floating down from heaven, attended by two angels, bearing the lily, palm, and javelin, and beneath, in the foreground, the sick and maimed who are healed by her intercession."

Longfellow has beautifully embodied this legend in his poem on Florence Nightingale, when he writes :

"So in that house of misery
A lady with a lamp I see
Pass through the glimmering gloom
And flit from room to room.

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"On England's annals, through the long
Hereafter of her speech and song,
That light its rays shall cast
From portals of the past.

"Nor even shall be wanting here
The palm, the lily, and the spear
The symbols that of yore
St. Filomena bore."

CHAPTER II.

A DAUGHTER OF SANTA FILOMENA.

"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 that shadow-land
Her living face doth gleam;
The dying kiss her shadow, and
The dead smile in their dream."

GERALD MASSEY.

BUT, in spite of the devotion of these ministering women, the winter of 1855 was a terrible one for the army, and the Queen's womanly heart was full of pity and sympathy for her suffering soldiers. A great deal of the mismanagement had been kept from her; but some rumours reached her at last, and on December 6th she wrote to her Secretary of War: "Would you tell Mrs. Herbert that I begged she would let me see frequently the accounts she receives from Miss Nightingale or Mrs. Bracebridge, as I have no details of the wounded, though I see so many from officers, etc., about the battlefield, and naturally the former must interest me more than any one? Let Mrs. Herbert also know that I wish Miss Nightingale and the ladies would tell these poor, noble, wounded and sick men that no one takes a warmer interest, or feels more for their sufferings, or admires their courage and heroism more, than their Queen. Day and night she thinks of her

beloved troops. So does the Prince. Beg Mrs. Herbert to communicate these my words to those ladies, as I know that our sympathy is much valued by these noble fellows."

And on February 23rd Mr. Bright said, in the House of Commons, "Thousands, scores of thousands of persons have retired to rest, night after night, whose slumbers have been disturbed, or whose dreams have been busied, with the sufferings and agonies of our soldiers in the Crimea."

What those hardships were Miss Nightingale herself informs us in a letter from Balaclava to a friend, in May 1855, found among the Prince Consort's papers. She writes: "Fancy working five nights out of seven in the trenches! Fancy being thirty-six hours in them at a stretch, as they were all December, lying down, or half lying down, after forty-eight hours, with no food but raw salt pork sprinkled with sugar, rum and biscuit; nothing hot, because the exhausted soldier could not collect his own fuel, as he was expected to do, to cook his own rations; and fancy through all this the army preserving their courage and patience as they have done, and being now eager—the old ones more than the young ones—to be led even into the trenches. There is something sublime in the spectacle."

Officers as well as the private soldiers suffered terrible hardships during that winter. We read in "Captain Hedley Vicars' Life" that his only bed at that time was made of stones and leaves, until a fur rug arrived from England; he even gave up his own tent to his men, and lay in the open air, considering himself more fit to rough it.

A further staff of fifty trained female nurses had been sent from England to help Miss Nightingale and assistants. There was plenty of work for all.

One can only imagine what privations and discomforts those devoted women had to undergo during those months of wearing fatigue and endurance, and it would be difficult to give any idea of their round of daily and nightly duties.

They had to do everything for themselves as well as for the patients.

The authoress of "Eastern Hospitals and English Nurses" says: "Our life was a laborious one; we had to sweep our own room, make our bed, wash up our dishes, etc., and fetch our meals from the kitchen below. We went to our wards at nine, returned at two, went again at three (unless we went for a walk, which we had permission to do at this hour), returned at half-past five to tea, then to the wards again till half-past nine, and often again for an hour to our special cases. . . . We suffered greatly from want of proper food. Our diet consisted of the coarse sour bread of the country, tea without milk, butter so rancid we could not touch it, and very bad meat and porter, and at night a glass of wine or brandy. It was an effort, even to those in health, to sit down to our meals; we forced the food down as a duty, but some of the ladies became so weak and ill they really could not touch it."

But a brighter passage occurs later on, when the writer, in glowing words, goes on to speak of the behaviour of the poor fellows to their nurses. "Our life," she says, "was a regular routine of work and rest (except on occasions of extraordinary pressure) following each other in order; but whether in the strain of overwork, or the steady fulfilment of our arduous duty, there was one bright ray ever shed over it, one thing that made labour light and sweet, and this was the respect, affection, and gratitude of the men; no words can tell it rightly, for it was unbounded, and as long as we stayed among them it never changed. Familiar as our presence became to them, though we were in and out of the wards day and night, they never forgot the respect due to our sex and position."

It is heartrending, but at the same time gratifying, to English hearts, to read in the pages of the Rev. Sydney Godolphin Osborne, of the patience and heroism of these

poor wounded and dying men. In one strongly moving passage he says, while detailing the cruel neglect and miserable squalor of the scene of which we have been speaking: "I can with truth say, I was never called to one dying man who uttered a single murmur against those who thus treated him and his comrades. They were very fond of being read to, joined earnestly in prayer, were apparently very truthful in their answers as to their past lives (very many had run away from home and enlisted under false names); few had I occasion to attend when dying who did not show the truest penitence. . . . I saw men, after years spent in their country's service, now far from the land of those they loved, worn out by the privations of war, endured, too, under all the aggravations of pestilence and neglect, lying on the clothes they had not changed for months, in wards presenting every feature to depress and to annoy, but made more depressing and distressing by the dreadful death-scenes of each day and night, yet listening with every symptom of grateful delight to the invitation, the promises of Him who left His home in heaven to contend to death for every penitent who would trust his soul to Him.

"They dictated calmly the plain, unboastful tale they wished written to the parent, wife, or other relative at home. It told of suffering without any complaint of it. . . . There was little else I could ever do for them; they said so, and gave a grateful pressure to the extended hand. In one instance a fine dying fellow kissed it, then, the God bless you, Sir."

The writer of this sketch cannot refrain from quoting on this subject the words of a Chelsea pensioner, an old Balaclava man (one of the few still living), late Trumpet-Major of the gallant Scots Greys, in a letter recently received. The old veteran writes, "Relative to that honoured good angel, Miss Florence Nightingale: I was on duty as postman, as well as conductor of the band, and thus

came personally in contact with that lady, as I had to go the rounds of both Upper and Lower Scutari Hospitals in order to deliver letters to my comrades; and Miss Nightingale would speak to me very kindly, in her loving, pathetic voice, and tell me of her poor sufferers, and how the familiar tune of 'Annie Laurie' and others, played by our band as we passed to and fro, would cheer and enliven them; and then she would ask me questions and give me news of my comrades. This she never failed to do till my regiment, or such of it as remained, left for England."

It was amongst these sad scenes that the lady-in-chief and her nurses worked, "the Rebeccas to the Ivanhoes of the Crimea." But it is strange and almost incredible that carping tongues and unkind criticism found fault even with this heroic and self-denying woman. Rev. Sydney Osborne speaks of this tone of depreciation with regard to the sick officers:—

"I heard a good deal of observation made on the spot, also since I came home, with regard to the fact that Miss Nightingale and the 'sisters' did not pay the same attention to the wards of the wounded and sick officers which was given to those of the soldiers. I believe, as the rule, Miss Nightingale did consider her own and the services of her 'corps' confined, by previous understanding, to the soldiers only, though I have known her, on special request from a medical officer, cheerfully order small matters of extra diet for a wounded officer. I know Mrs. Bracebridge was most active and willing to forward everything which could be devised for the comfort of the officers, independent of any understanding which may have been come to previous to her leaving England (if any there was). I can see myself a good deal of practical difficulty which would have arisen if she had taken any other course. I am satisfied she is not a person who would ever lightly put aside any means of rendering aid to those of her fellow-creatures she could

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assist; but I can conceive, with all that awaited her in the endeavour to introduce this new element of nursing by ladies amongst the common soldiers in a hospital, she might have urged very reasonable grounds for not also undertaking the same duty amongst the officers. If I am not misinformed, since I left she has in more than one instance been of the utmost comfort and service at the dying beds of more than one officer of the establishment."

No worker in this world's history has been free from detractors, but one can hardly credit that there were tongues to find fault with this brave woman; but no such censure was passed by those amongst whom she worked. Kinglake tells us: "The magic of her power over men used often to be felt in the room—the dreaded, the blood-stained room—where 'operations' took place. There, perhaps, the maimed soldier, if not yet resigned to his fate, might at first be craving death rather than meet the knife of the surgeon; but when such a one looked and saw that the honoured Lady-in-chief was patiently standing by him and, with lips closely set and hands folded, decreeing herself to go through the pain of witnessing pain, he used to fall into the mood for obeying her silent command, and, finding strange support in her presence, bring himself to submit and endure."

But the voice of complaint was heard on another subject. Nolan informs us "that very warm discussions arose in connection with the religious views of Miss Nightingale and 'the Sisters.'" While all admired their self-denial, there was a numerous class who supposed them to be influenced by what is called Puseyite opinion, in their zeal for spreading which in the army they were led to incur so many hardships, privations and risks. A lady under these apprehensions having written to Mrs. Herbert on the subject, received from her the following reply: "By this post I send you a *Christian Times* of Friday-week last, by which you may see how cruel and unjust are the reports you mention about

Miss Nightingale and her noble work. Since then we have sent out forty-seven more nurses, of which I enclose you a list. It is melancholy to think that in Christian England no one can undertake anything without these most uncharitable and sectarian attacks, and had you not told me so, I should not have believed that a clergyman of the Established Church could have been the mouthpiece of slander. Miss Nightingale is a member of the Established Church of England, and what is called Low Church. But ever since she went to Scutari her religious opinions and character have been assailed at all points. One person writes to upbraid us for having sent her, 'understanding she is an Unitarian'; another, 'that she is a Roman Catholic, and so on. It is a cruel return to make towards one to whom all England owes so much.

"As to the charge of no Protestant nurses being sent, the subjoined list will convince you of its fallacy. We made no distinction of creed; any one who was a good and skilful nurse, and understood the practice in surgical wards, was accepted, provided, of course, that we had their friends' consent, and that in other respects, as far as we could judge, they were of unexceptionable character. A large proportion of the wounded being Roman Catholic, we accepted the services of some of the Sisters of Charity from St. Stephen's Hospital, Dublin. I have now told you all and feel sure that you will do your utmost to set these facts plainly before those whose minds have been disquieted by these unfair and false accusations."

This letter, written in a spirit of womanly indignation, must have had its effect in silencing these unjust and absurd accusations. "The servant is not greater than his lord," said the Master. "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." And since these words were spoken by Divine lips, every worker in God's vineyard has, at some time or other, experienced their profound truth.

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Many of the devoted nurses never returned to England, but lie in their quiet graves on the shores of the Bosphorus. In the spring of 1855, having completed her work of organisation at Scutari, Miss Nightingale went on a tour of inspection to the hospitals in the Crimea. The following little incident is told us by Mrs. Tooley. "One day, while about this work, she had occasion to go under fire; and when the men of the 93rd Regiment recognised in the slight lady clad in a black dress, walking with one of the officers, the 'Soldiers' Friend,' they sent up cheer after cheer, until the sound echoed in the caves of Inkermann and startled the Russians in Sebastopol." But the following passage is a sad one. "Not long afterwards, that same slight figure was carried on an ambulance by sad-eyed men up to the hut hospitals on the heights above Balaclava, and for many days Florence Nightingale lay between life and death, stricken down by the Crimean fever."

As soon as she recovered, Miss Nightingale refused to return home for rest and change, but insisted on resuming her work at Scutari. Twice afterwards she returned to the Crimea to carry out reforms in the hospitals there. It was not until 1856, when peace was concluded and the army was withdrawn from the Crimea, that Miss Nightingale returned to England. To avoid recognition and publicity she travelled under an assumed name, accompanied by a lady friend, and actually reached Lea Hurst without being recognised, and before her family knew that she had left Scutari.

The Queen had already sent Miss Nightingale an autograph letter, with a jewelled Cross of St. George, inscribed in letters of gold with the words, "Blessed are the Merciful," and on her return she was summoned to Balmoral. On September 21st she was introduced to the Queen and the Prince Consort by Sir James Clark, with whom she was then staying at Birkhall. "She put before us," is the brief