

under review. Let her share in the work here be noted. After her marriage with Theodore Fliedner, a man of plain living and high thinking, and a practical worker on humanitarian lines, she realised the terrible state of nursing conditions, and the idea of a society of Protestant Sisters, centred round a Mother, and trained by her for nursing work, presented itself to her with ever-increasing insistence. Simple as the scheme appears to us now, in those days it required much thought, for the majority of the hospitals had a very low standard, and girls sent into them for training could scarcely fail to deteriorate. Frederica, nothing daunted, and in opposition to the Mayor and people of Kaiserswerth—who dreaded the near neighbourhood of a hospital—bought a house with borrowed capital, and a few months later received her first patient. In the course of a year sixty patients had been received, and seven probationer deaconesses were at work.

The story of the Pastor's second wooing is told by Mrs. Tooley. He went to Hamburg to ask Amalia Sieveking to take charge of a deaconess home. She was unable to do so, but recommended in her stead Caroline Bertheau, a young friend and pupil who had been nursing in the Hamburg Hospital. The Pastor was so pleased with the substitute that he offered her the choice of either taking charge of a deaconess home or becoming his wife. Caroline demurely elected to do both. They were married at once, and those nurses who recently paid a visit to the Charité Hospital at Berlin may be interested to learn that the bride and bridegroom spent their honeymoon in that city for the purpose of establishing at the Charité the first five of the Kaiserswerth deaconesses, whose successors are still in office there.

The closing episode of Miss Nightingale's life at Kaiserswerth is still related by Frau Disselhoff, the daughter of Theodore Fliedner, and the mother of Pastor Disselhoff, now head of the institution. After bidding good-bye to the deaconesses, Miss Nightingale bent her head to the Pastor and asked for his blessing. With hands resting on her head, and face upturned to heaven, he prayed that her sojourn at Kaiserswerth might bear precious fruit and her great powers be dedicated to the service of humanity. Then repeating his usual formula, "May God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three Persons in one God, bless you; may He establish you in the truth until death, and give you hereafter the Crown of Life. Amen," he sent her forth dedicated to the service of the sick and suffering.

In the period which elapsed between Miss Nightingale's return from Kaiserswerth and her departure for the Crimea she took charge of the Harley Street Home for Sick Governesses, which was then in a very unsatisfactory condition, collected funds, inspired old subscribers with new confidence, and set it on its feet again.

No account of Miss Nightingale would be complete without some mention of her friendship for Mr. Sidney Herbert (afterwards Lord Herbert of Lea), who in 1852 became Secretary of War in Lord Aberdeen's Government. "I wish," wrote Gladstone to Richard Monckton-Milnes (afterwards Lord Houghton) in October, 1855, "that some one of the thousands who in prose justly celebrate Miss Nightingale would say a single word for the man of 'routine' who devised and projected her going—Sidney Herbert."

The history of the Crimean War is a history of gross neglect in the war administration. The commissariat broke down; food, clothing, and comforts had been stowed in the hold of vessels, beneath ammunition, and could not be got at when required, while other stores rotted on the shores of the Bosphorus while awaiting delivery. "The commonest accessories of a hospital are wanting," wrote the *Times*' war correspondent, William Howard Russell, "there is not the least attention paid to decency or cleanliness, the stench is appalling . . . and, for all I can observe, the men die without the least effort 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."

Although the lack of female nurses in the hospitals in the East was so keenly felt, it is small wonder that the Government of that day shrank from sending them out. The Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State for War, subsequently said in evidence before the Commission appointed to inquire into the conduct of the war:—"The employment of nurses in the hospital at Scutari was mooted in this country at an early stage, before the army left this country, but it was not liked by the military authorities. The class of women employed as nurses had been very much addicted to drinking, and they were found even more callous to the sufferings of soldiers in hospitals than men would have been."

In this dilemma Mr. Sidney Herbert expressed the conviction that Miss Florence Nightingale was the "one woman" fitted by position, knowledge, training, and character to organise a nursing staff and to go out to the Crimea as Superintendent of Nurses. It is a curious coincidence that Mr. Sidney Herbert's letter offering Miss Nightingale this position crossed one from her offering her services. Surely no woman ever undertook a nursing appointment under better auspices. The whole country was indignant at the unnecessary suffering and waste of life in the Crimea; here was the "one woman" with nursing knowledge and executive ability willing and anxious to bring order out of chaos, and behind her the letter of the Secretary for War. "Would you listen to the request to go out and supervise the whole thing? You would, of course, have plenary authority over all the nurses, and I think I could secure you the fullest assistance and co-operation from the medical staff, and you would also have an unlimited power of drawing on the Government for whatever you think requisite for the success of your mission." Thus Miss Nightingale, as the *Times* officially announced, was "appointed by Government to the office of Superintendent of Nurses at Scutari." Her appointment was followed by a bewildering number of applications from Society ladies to work on her staff. "Were all accepted who offer," said Mr. Sidney Herbert, "I fear we should have not only many indifferent nurses, but many hysterical patients."

The hospitals at that time do not seem to have been eager to offer members of their staff for this national duty. The thirty-eight nurses who accompanied Miss Nightingale were made up as follows:—Fourteen from St. John's House and Miss Selton's Home, ten Roman Catholic Sisters of Mercy, three nurses selected by Lady Maria Forrester (who was the first to form a plan of sending nurses to Scutari), and eleven selected from miscellaneous applicants. They left London on

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)