

who act without knowledge, and for those whose knowledge leads to no useful action. She was herself laborious of detail and scrupulously careful of her premises. "Though I write positively," she once said, "I do not think positively." She weighed every consideration; she sought much competent advice; but when once her decision was taken, she was resolute and masterful—not lightly turned from her course, impatient of delay, not very tolerant of opposition.

Something of this spirit appears in her view of friendship, and in the conduct of her affections. Men and women are placed in the world in order, she thought, to work for the betterment of the human race, and their work should be the supreme consideration. Mr. Jowett said of Miss Nightingale that she was the only woman he had ever known who put public duty before private, and in 1868 she wrote to her friend, Madame Mohl, "I think a woman who cares for a man because of his convictions, and who ceases to care for him if he alters those convictions, is worthy of the highest reverence."

So wrote the great practical enthusiast, and it is practical enthusiasm which moves the world. To the average person there is something a little cold-blooded in this high claim, as there is in her reasons for not marrying. The lonely altitudes climbed by greatness are not for the many, but the few.

Thus when she was asked in marriage by one who continued for years to press his suit—a match in every way suitable, and even brilliant, with a man whose talents she admired, in whose society she found increasing pleasure, and on whose sympathy she leaned more and more she persistently refused his proposal, and after the strange fashion of self-analysis and introspection of her day—a fashion most noticeable also in the life of Agnes Jones—she committed to writing, in notes which she left behind her, the reasons for her refusal.

"I have an intellectual nature which requires satisfaction, and that would find it in him. I have a passional nature which requires satisfaction, and that would find it in him. I have a moral an active nature, which requires satisfaction, and that would not find it in his life. I can hardly find satisfaction for any of my natures. Sometimes I think that I will satisfy my passional nature at all events, because that will at least secure me from the evil of dreaming. But would it? I could be satisfied to spend a life with him combining our different powers in some great object. I could not satisfy this nature by spending a life with him in making society and arranging domestic things . . . To be nailed to a continuation and exaggeration of my present life, without hope of another, would be intolerable to me. Voluntarily to put it out of my power ever to be able to seize the chance of forming for myself a true and rich life would seem to me like suicide."

Florence Nightingale was no vestal ascetic. A true and perfect marriage was she thought the perfect state . . . But she held on the other hand that there are some women who may be marked out for single life.

Miss Nightingale's reasons for this belief, interesting as they are, are too lengthy to quote here.

When nature fashions an implement for a particular purpose, she is apt to take considerable pains in the making, and this was pre-eminently the case with Florence Nightingale. Her fairy godmother came to her with full hands, gave her intellectual and charming parents, set her in fair surroundings, with all the advantages which wealth could give, although for years she had no private income, gave her the stimulus of cultured society and foreign travel, and a keen sense of appreciation, gracious influences which all helped to develop the distinguished personality which in after years took the country by storm.

Yet so certain was Miss Nightingale of her destiny, that as a caged bird beats its wings against the bars, so she chafed at the restrictions of her life. Though the bars of her cage were pleasantly gilded, it was none the less a prison. When in 1845 a cherished project to go to the Salisbury Hospital for some months fell through because

"There have been difficulties about my very first step which terrified mama. I do not mean the physically revolting parts of a hospital, but things about the surgeons and nurses which you may guess. . . . You will laugh dear at the whole plan, I daresay, but no one but the mother of it knows how precious an infant idea becomes. . . . Oh, for some strong thing to sweep this loathsome life into the past."

Geniuses are notoriously uneasy to get on with, and Florence Nightingale's family found her no exception to the rule. They tried to divert her thoughts with foreign travel, she used the opportunity to study nursing conditions abroad. When in 1849 the distraction of a foreign tour was offered, "her parents and her sister hoped once more that Florence would return a different and more comfortable woman. Those with whom we are cast into the nearest intimacy sometimes understand us least."

In her 31st year she wrote, "I see nothing desirable but death." She was "perishing," as she put it, "for want of food."

Her visits to Kaiserswerth were an unmixed pleasure. She wrote:

"I could hardly believe I was there. With the feeling with which a pilgrim first looks on the

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