

**A WOMAN OF DESTINY.\****(Continued from page 423.)***HOSPITALS AND NURSES.**

Part IV of the first volume draws for us Miss Nightingale as "The Hospital Reformer," "The Passionate Statistician," and "The Founder of Modern Nursing." It also describes the foundation of the Nightingale Training School, and gives an insight into the religious side of her character and her manner of life.

Miss Nightingale's "Notes on Hospitals," published in October, 1858, "revolutionized many ideas, and gave a new direction to hospital construction." Sir James Paget wrote to her: "It appears to me to be the most valuable contribution to sanitary science in application to medical institutions that I have ever read." As is well known, she constantly insisted on the supreme importance of fresh air and direct sunlight, and that her views had weight is evidenced by a statement by Lord Palmerston in the House of Commons in 1858 that, "strange as it might appear, considering the progress of science in every department, it was only within a few years that mankind had found out that oxygen and pure air were conducive to the well-being of the body."

With her love of statistics it is not surprising that Miss Nightingale drew up an exhaustive standard list of model Statistical Hospital Forms which "would enable the mortality in hospitals and also the mortality from particular diseases, injuries, and operations, to be ascertained with accuracy." She further persuaded a number of the large London hospitals to adopt them, as also a uniform system for the Registration of Patients. It seems a pity that she did not go a step further and commend to attention a uniform system for the Registration of Nurses.

In regard to Miss Nightingale as the "Founder of Modern Nursing," Sir Edward Cook refers to the three famous persons in this country in the nineteenth century "who contributed more than any others to the relief of human suffering in disease—Simpson, the introducer of chloroform; Lister, the inventor of antiseptic surgery; and Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing. . . . The contribution of Florence Nightingale to the healing art was less original than that of either Simpson or Lister; but, perhaps from its wider range, it has saved as many lives, and relieved

as much, if not so acute, suffering as either of the other two."

Before she appeared on the scene nursing was regarded as a menial occupation which did not attract women of character. Nurses were, as the correspondent of the *Times* said, "meek, pious, saucy, careless, drunken or unchaste, according to circumstances or temperament, mostly attentive, and rarely unkind"; but, with very few exceptions, they were untrained. The means by which Miss Nightingale achieved reform were three—Example, Precept, and Practice.

Her "Notes on Hospitals" were followed by "Notes on Nursing," and again Sir James Paget wrote to her: "I am ashamed to find how much I have learnt from the 'Notes,' more, I think than from any other book of the same size that I have ever read," and Harriet Martineau wrote: "This is a work of genius if ever I saw one; and it will operate accordingly. It is so real and so intense that it will, I doubt not, create a new Order of Nurses before it has finished its work."

She was a pioneer in establishing the principles of Modern Hygiene, and insisted that "nursing the well" is even more important than nursing the sick—preventive hygiene than curative medicine.

Miss Nightingale was contemptuous of the ordinary conception of the trained nurse. "No man, she wrote, not even a doctor, ever gives any definition of what a nurse should be than just this—'devoted and obedient.' This definition would do just as well for a porter. It might even do for a horse. It would not do for a policeman. Some 'obedient' nurses know no medium between 'Now no fire' and 'now fire' as if they were volunteer riflemen." After saying that some people appeared to think that it only needed a disappointment in love, or incapacity in other things to turn a woman into a good nurse, she wrote, "This reminds one of the parish where a stupid old man was set up to be schoolmaster because he was 'past keeping the pigs.'" She also quoted, with some humour, Lord Melbourne's saying: "I would rather have men about me when I am ill; I think it requires very strong health to put up with women."

She claimed that "the best definition of a nurse can be found, as always, in Shakespeare" (*Cymbeline*):

"So kind, so duteous, diligent,  
So tender over his occasions, true,  
So feat, so nurse like."

June 24th, 1860, is a memorable day in the annals of nursing, for it was then that the

\* "The Life of Florence Nightingale." By Sir Edward Cook. Macmillan & Co., Ltd. 30s. net.

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