

A WOMAN OF DESTINY.*

(Concluded from page 446.)

In the second volume of the Life of Florence Nightingale, Sir Edward Cook depicts for us the impetuous woman—who broke the windows of the room of her hotel in Rome because they were not illuminated when the Tricolor of Italy was hoisted on the Capitol—and who gave money to Garibaldi, stipulating that it should be used for ammunition—as the astute tactician, the diplomatist who, as she could not directly influence politics, influenced them indirectly. Thus when she desired to obtain the appointment of a Commission for extending the Barracks Enquiry to the Mediterranean stations, Headquarters tried to stop it. "And I defeated them," she told Miss Martineau, "by a trick which they were too stupid to find out." We agree with the author that "a great Commander was lost to her country when Florence Nightingale was born a woman." But the whole story of her life demonstrates how even the greatest of women will seek to gain her ends by indirect means, being deprived of the weapon of direct ones.

Miss Nightingale had her moments of depression, and as we have already indicated relied more upon men, and was better served by men than women. "Women have no sympathy," she wrote. . . "No woman has excited 'passions' among women more than I have. Yet I leave no school behind me. My doctrines have taken no hold among women. Not one of my Crimean following learnt anything from me, or gave herself for one moment after she came home to carry out the lesson of that war or of those hospitals."

The absorbing passion of Miss Nightingale's later years was to secure effective sanitation in India. To this end she manipulated Government Departments, interviewed out-going and home-coming Viceroys, and here again we are told that when it was desired that a Queen's officer of acknowledged experience in India should be added to the Sanitary Commission for India, she "employed some wile in obtaining the best opinions" as to a suitable nominee. "She wrote to her uncle telling him to get at Sir John Lawrence, through his friend Sir R. Vivian, and ask for suggestions. 'Vivian must be soaped,' she added, 'so as not to let him think that we undervalue his opinion.'"

But Miss Nightingale had other interests besides India. She was "consultant" to the

War Office, and indeed to many other bodies. Her bedroom became the Presence Chamber to which only her most privileged friends had access. "The visitor on being admitted was ushered into a sitting-room on the ground floor, and given pencil and paper. The message was carried upstairs into the Presence, and an answer, similarly written, was brought down. And to such an interchange would the interview be confined."

Miss Nightingale "guarded very jealously the seclusion which was necessary to enable her to do her chosen work, and she did not allow it to be invaded at will, even by the most exalted personages. Her position as a chronic invalid gave her the advantage. She could pick and choose by feeling a little stronger or a little weaker. She made two rules which she communicated to her influential friends. She would not be well enough to see any Queen or Princess who did not take a personal and practical interest in hospitals or nursing; and she would never be well enough to receive any who did not come unattended by ladies or lords in waiting."

The appointment of Miss Agnes Jones as Lady Superintendent of the Brownlow Hill Infirmary, Liverpool, gave her a considerable amount of writing. Dr. Sutherland would draft judgments and submit them for Miss Nightingale's concurrence, and in one of these there is a blank left for her to fill, as the note explains, with "soft sawder."

On her interest in, and supervision of, the Nightingale Training School, space forbids us to dwell, many interesting details are given in this connection.

Miss Nightingale supported the formation of the National Society for Aid to the Sick and Wounded—now the British Red Cross Society—but did not approve its methods. "She thought there was a lack of vigour at the start. Why, she wanted to know, did not the Society advertise itself more? 'If it had been in hiding from its creditors instead of being an Aid Society, it could not have had a more complete success; if it had been sick and wounded itself, what could it have done less?'"

Of the part played by Miss Nightingale in opposition to the registration of trained nurses, we can only regret that after she had passed the allotted span of human life she should have been utilized in her old age to oppose the demand for professional organization of nurses, which was the logical outcome of her life's work, and moreover that she should oppose it in this country, while giving her support and sympathy to the Society of American

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

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