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EDITORIAL.

THE NIGHTINGALE CENTENARY.

On May 12th, 1820, there was born in the fair city of Florence a child of Destiny whose name, wherever it is spoken, is held in honoured remembrance.

To the world at large that name is chiefly associated with the nursing of the sick and wounded in the Crimean war, but to the Nursing Profession it stands for much more, for Florence Nightingale, for the first time, laid down the laws which underlie the practice of nursing with scientific precision, and to-day the rules defined in her "Notes on Nursing," published sixty years ago, are those on which efficient nursing is founded.

Florence Nightingale is a popular heroine, and as such her personality has been more or less obscured as the ministering angel and the aureoled saint. Time is creating a truer conception of her great character. Her biographer, Sir Edward Cook, tells us that she "was by no means a Plaster Saint. She was a woman of strong passions—not over given to praise, not quick to forgive; somewhat prone to be censorious, not apt to forget. She was not only a gentle angel of compassion; she was more of a logician than a sentimentalist; she knew that to do good work requires a hard head as well as a soft heart."

Brought up in a spacious and gracious environment, Destiny shaped fine material into a fine implement for the colossal work demanded of her. She was richly endowed with brains, with executive ability, with the qualities of statesmanship. Queen Victoria's remark: "I wish we had her at the War Office," showed

true insight into her character. But her tongue was as a razor, her speech pungent, her pen incisive, and her methods peremptory.

The two most distinguishing traits in her character are her thirst for knowledge and her love of thoroughness. She was willing to take any pains to secure the first, and she insisted on the necessity for the second with all the vigour at her command. She recognised the futility of any struggle against disease which is not based upon a knowledge of the underlying causes, and the hopelessness of any remedies not directed to the removal of those causes.

In addition, she claimed for those whose duty it is to care for the sick a thorough education in the practical methods and technique of their calling, and she practised what she preached. She told the Royal Commission of 1857, "I have visited all the hospitals in London, Dublin and Edinburgh, many county hospitals, some of the naval and military hospitals in England; all the hospitals in Paris, and studied with the 'sœurs de charité'; the Institution of Protestant Deaconesses at Kaiserwerth on the Rhine, where I was twice in training as a nurse; the hospitals at Berlin, and many others in Germany, at Lyons, Rome, Alexandria, Constantinople, Brussels; also the war hospitals of the French and Sardinians." Miss Nightingale had no use for "fashionable asses," and she warns us that the Divine blessing was never promised to slipshod work.

It is not only on account of her commanding genius, but because of her insistence on thoroughness, that her work abides, that she is to-day held in universal honour, and that the hundred years which have passed since her birth add to the lustre of her name.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)