service . . . . and give us friendship, O God, and courage—both of us."

The producers of the play have been fortunate in the cast for all are good, notably Miss Edith Evans as Florence Nightingale, and Miss Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies as Mrs. Sidney Herbert, two personalities destined to be increasingly antagonistic as the play develops, the one ruthless, concerned only with her Cause, and not at all with the fate of the implements which she employs and strains to breaking point; the other, having no use for Causes, but devoted to her man, caring only that she may save his precious life. A clash of temperaments in such a situation is inevitable.

In the second Act, Florence Nightingale comes into her own. It is the time of the Crimean War, and we see her dominating the ladies' committee in the Harley Street Nursing Home, in terse, incisive, pregnant sentences. Later, she receives Lord Palmerston, Mr. Sidney Herbert, and Dr. Andrew Smith, the pompous Director of the Army Medical Department — who invite her to go to the Crimea. Lord Palmerston explains "the most important thing is to check the appalling wastage in the Army. It means testing the whole medical and commissariat system with a fresh vigorous mind already experienced in hospital management. Herbert wants you, and I agree; and what we say will go in the Cabinet. . . . Will you do it?"

Having obtained the assurance that the nurses will be completely under her control, Florence Nightingale says simply: "Gentlemen, I will do what you want."

In the fourth Scene, we are transported to Miss Nightingale's office in the Barrack Hospital at Scutari, in the first year of the Crimean War, with Mrs. Bracebridge at her accounts, and a harassed Army Surgeon enquiring: "Where's the Lady-in-Chief?"

Mrs. Bracebridge replies: "Gone down to the purveyor's stores to try and squeeze a few blankets out of him for this rush of wounded to-day."

"It is really scandalous," says the surgeon. "I can't get the simplest medical requisites. They seem to think in England that all you need in a military hospital are packets of Epsom Salts; we've run out of bandages again. There's no lint—practically no antiseptics." (But this was before the day of Lord Lister and antiseptics were unknown.)

There follows the appearance of Miss Nightingale, whose method of dealing with an obstructive purveyor is short and effective. "Unless I receive this requisition, in full, within an hour, I shall inform the Government that I cannot continue to hold my post if you remain in yours."

The purveyor returns shortly, supported by Dr. Cumming, the Inspector-General of Hospitals, when the following dialogue takes place: "I understand, Miss Nightingale, that you've ordered the purveyor to open a consignment of stores without a Board."

"Yes, they are needed in this hospital."

"I dissociate myself entirely from you. Both as a member of the Board and as Inspector-General of Hospitals I protest against your action, and I shall of course corroborate the purveyor in his report. His attitude is strictly correct. I wish you to understand that you are exceeding your powers, Miss Nightingale. You are in charge of the female nursing establishment and you've taken on yourself to supplant the purveyor. I shall report it."

"You must do whatever your conscience tells you to be right, Dr. Cumming. But before you send that report let me advise you to consult the medical officers under you. You will find that the enormous bulk of their stores and supplies to date would never have been obtained at all if I hadn't supplanted the purveyors. They have been provided from my resources, supplemented by the *Times* fund of Mr. Macdonald . . . Have those blankets been delivered, Mr. Bamford?"

Bamford (trying to be self-confident) "No, madam."

"Then in fifteen minutes I send this telegram to Lord Palmerston. And I return to England; and I publish my experiences out here. And if one single head of a department remains in his post it won't be my fault . . .

"Dr. Cumming, surely you must see the necessity of the hospital justifies a breach of regulation."

"Yes—well—don't let it happen again."

"Oh, but it will happen again, Dr. Cumming. Constantly. Wars have a way of upsetting regulations, you know."

The honours of this duel are clearly with Miss Nightingale, but had she not been rich, influential, having the powerful support of the representative of the *Times* newspaper at the seat of war, and of the Prime Minister and the Secretary of War at home, would her commanding genius, her resolution, her devotion and courage have saved her from being broken on the wheel of callous official incompetence? We doubt it.

Stern discipline is applied to Nurse Bates, who, contrary to regulations, has written a letter as to the condition of the patients, which has appeared in the Press. "Pack your things, and be ready to leave to-morrow morning."

Seven years later, in a room in Old Burlington Street, we see Florence Nightingale prepared to safeguard the permanence of her work by a "root and branch" reform of the War Office, with the backing of Sidney Herbert—now Lord Herbert of Lea—in Parliament and the Cabinet. Then the blow falls—Lord Herbert is a sick man—a dying man. So Lady Herbert tells Miss Nightingale, and is met with the reply, "You tell me the leader we have been proud to serve is giving up within sight of the winning-post like a cowardly schoolboy, who hasn't the heart to finish his race! . . . Suppose it did kill him—or me—or you—or any of us. What does that matter compared with the results? Isn't it better to die gaining a great Cause than to jeopardise it by shirking ignominiously on the plea of sickness?"

The last scene, the most interesting and effective of all, takes place many years later in a room at No. 10, South Street, Park Lane, at the Investiture of Miss Nightingale, on behalf of the King, by the Secretary of State, with the Order of Merit, in the presence of many illustrious guests, Army Nurses, Chelsea Pensioners, and (by dramatic licence) by the presentation to her of the Freedom of the City of London by the Lord Mayor.

It is the irony of fate that the old, old woman, in the white shawl and cap, in the wheel chair—most intimately concerned in the proceedings—should be the one to understand least what is taking place. All she can say is, "Most kind. Most kind." And to the Nurse, when she is invested with the Order, "What is it, dear? They must be thanked," and later, "They were so kind. So very kind. I don't know what they were all talking about. . . . We must ask Dr. Sutherland." And Dr. Sutherland, her devoted ally, has been dead fifteen years!

Let us be thankful that at least the atmosphere of kindness penetrated to the tired brain behind the dim eyes and the deaf ears.

The curtain falls on Miss Nightingale alone, in her wheel chair, in the centre of the stage, wrapped in the white Indian shawl, which later formed her pall, as Guardsmen carried her to her grave, in the remote country churchyard of East Wellow in Hampshire.

A certain amount of dramatic licence is inevitable in the play, but it is, in the main, a page of nursing history, and, as such, should be seen, enjoyed, and studied by all nurses.

M. B.