

NIGHTINGALEIANA.

Taken from "The Life, Letters and Friendships of Richard Monckton Milnes—First Lord Houghton," by T. Wemyss Reid.

Vol. I., page 509:—

One of Miss Nightingale's nearest relatives, writing about January, 1855, to Milnes, says:—

"Very good news from Scutari as far as the way in which the expedition is received, and the use it is of. Mr. B. says: 'In one week F. has gained the confidence of all; the doctors do her will; and the Fund has poured its cornucopia into her lap—tin-pots, saucepans, jars, basins, sherry, combs, shirts, socks, sheets, coal, wooden spoons, form its jewels. They all say that the patience and endurance of the soldiers is something more beautiful than one can tell, and the manner in which they behave to the nurses. We had 1,715 sick and wounded in this hospital, and 650 in the other, of which we have charge also, when a message came to prepare for 510 wounded on our side of the hospital. We had but half-an-hour's notice before they began to land them. Between 1 and 9 o'clock we had the mattresses stripped, sewn up, and laid down—alas! only on matting on the floor—the men washed, put to bed, and all their wounds dressed. The Turks carry these men who are come out to fight for them so carelessly that they arrive in a state of agony; twenty-four died in the process. We have now nearly *four miles of beds not 18 inches apart*. We have our quarters in one tower, and this first influx has been laid down between us and the main guard in two corridors, with a line of beds down each side, and just room for one to pass between. I can truly say it is good for us to be here, even in the midst of this appalling horror. As I went my last round among the newly wounded that first night there was not a murmur, not one groan; the strictest discipline, the most absolute silence and quiet prevailed; only the step of the sentry; and I heard one man say, 'I was dreaming of my friends at home'; and another said, 'and I was thinking of them.' These poor fellows bear pain and mutilation with unshrinking heroism, and die without complaint.'"

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.
The Soldier's Friend

Page 22 to 23.—The Hon. Mrs. Sidney Herbert was obliged to step forward and defend her absent friend. . . . "It is melancholy to think," she wrote to the wife of the Rev. gentleman, "that in England no one can undertake anything without the most uncharitable and sectarian attack and had you not told me, I should scarcely have believed that a clergyman of the Established Church would have been the mouth-piece of slander. Miss Nightingale is a member of the Established Church of England, and what is called rather Low Church. But ever since she went to Scutari her religious opinions and character have been assailed on all points:—one person writes to upbraid us for having sent her, 'understanding she is a Unitarian'; another, 'that she is a Roman Catholic,' and so on. It is a cruel charge to make towards one to whom England owes so much. As to the charge of no Protestant nurses being sent, the subjoined list will convince you of its fallacy. We made no distinctions of creed; anyone who was a good skilful nurse, and understood the practice in surgical wars, was accepted, provided of course, that we had their friends' consent, and that they were, as far as we could judge, of unexceptional character."

Mr. Sidney Herbert, on a subsequent occasion, said, in allusion to the same subject, "I recollect an excellent answer being given to a query of this kind by an Irish clergyman who, when he was asked to what sect Miss Nightingale belonged, replied: 'She belongs to a sect which, unfortunately, is a very rare one—the sect of the Good Samaritans.'"

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It has only to be realised that the scenes are chiefly laid in the romantic if dissolute Court of Louis XIV of France to make our readers determine to proceed and read this volume to their delight.

The opening pages introduce the tragic figure of the exiled wife of the unfortunate King Charles, Queen Henrietta and her little daughter, Henriette, or Minette, as she was called, who was born after the arrest of her royal father, and whom she had never seen.

It was just then that their sufferings were most acute and we have a picture of the Queen and her little daughter suffering privations of hunger and cold.

Minette was crouching under a poor blanket, her knees drawn up to her thin chest, her toes cramped together with the cold.

"O, let me get up and jump about."

"No, child, not yet. Your vest is not yet dry."

"What a vest. It has been by the fire all day."

"But what a fire!" said Queen Henrietta.

Minette laughed and at once the Queen began to cry. She ought not to have laughed, for her father was in prison and his cruel enemies would not let her mother go and see him, however many letters she wrote.

A wonderful present arrived next day, when an old admirer of the Queen sent her a bag with two thousand crowns.

Then followed the assassination of King Charles—the hospitality of the widow of Louis XIII., Queen Anne—the close association of the royal children, little Minette, the young Louis XIV. and his brother Philippe.

The latter enquires of Minette:

"Why do you wear black?"

"For my father," she said flushing, and he stared at the colour that flooded into her little pale peaked face, making it suddenly pretty.

"Your father was a stupid man, wasn't he? Louis says only stupid kings would let themselves be beheaded."

"My father was a holy martyr. Much better than your father."

Even her neck was pink now, and her hands were crumpled up into minute round fists.

This effeminate little doll of a Philippe grew up into the semblance of a man, whom Minette married at the age of seventeen.

Many brilliant, fascinating and unscrupulous personages, both of the English and French courts, are introduced into this romance. La Grande Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle de la Valière, Madame de Montespan, Madame de Sévigné, the Abbé Bossuet are some of the familiar names.

The building of the vast structure of the palace of Versailles—the little Trianon—Minette's life with her odious little husband at St. Cloud—her visit to England to her adored brother Charles II in connection with the signing of the secret treaty between the English and French Kings—are a few among the crowded incidents recorded.

Louis and Minette missed their happiness. Apparently she might have held his love, if not his fidelity, which none of his *amours* were able to do for long.

"Her voice was murmurous, caressing like water, he thought. His heart had been scorched by Marie's fire,

* By Margaret Irwin. (Chatto and Windus.)

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