

NIGHTINGALEIANA.

SEVENTY YEARS OF LIFE IN THE
VICTORIAN ERA.

In a book which has recently come into our possession, "Seventy years of Life in the Victorian Era by a Physician," the author gives a most interesting account of his experiences in the Crimea in 1854 and also at Scutari, where he experienced his first great shock, arising from the horrors of war when he went to the assistance of a medical officer who had just arrived with a large cargo of wounded, who told that in the Black Sea they had encountered a fearful gale, and that for three days it was impossible to dress a third of the cases, and that several were delirious with pain and nerve shock. "The wounds, not having been dressed for so long were in a most horrible state, and the foul odours were almost unbearable, even to one accustomed to such. A few more shiploads of like horrors followed, and then the outcome of the wounded from the three battlefields of Alma, Balaclava and Inkerman, were duly landed and placed in comparatively comfortable quarters in the two huge hospitals at Scutari and the one on the Bosphorus, while the Russian prisoners were accommodated in a hospital at Pera. . . .

"Miss Nightingale arrived out from England the beginning of November, bringing with her about twenty-four experienced nurses of her own selection, and they were indeed of great service in dressing and attending the wounded, and seeing that they were properly supplied with medical comforts. Miss Nightingale on her own responsibility, and in defiance of all red-tapeism, ordered over from Constantinople bazaars hundreds of mattresses for the poor fellows to lie upon. And though she was sorely distressed to find that she could not get sufficient laundry work done to give such a crowd of sick and disabled men even one clean shirt a week, she might well look puzzled when the medical chief asked her where she thought four thousand shirts could be washed—even supposing the men had a change of flannels, which scores had not, and many were torn and would go to pieces if exposed to rough handling. Notwithstanding such drawbacks as these, I soon perceived that she and her aids had produced a great and beneficial reform before I left for the Crimea, which I did in about six weeks, after having shared actively in scenes of distress, disease and bloodshed, such as it is impossible to depict with pen and pencil, but which Lord Panmure did me the honour of appreciating by rewarding me with an extra six months' pay amounting to £230. There was a great outcry sent home with regard to the dearth of medical attendants, and then the authorities sent out to Scutari a lot of raw young surgeons, who were of little use in severe cases and worried one's life out with questions as to what was to be done here and what there; they would not take any responsibility on their inexperienced shoulders, and were not of much more use than Miss Nightingale's skilled nurses, but it proved to them an excellent school of instruction. On my arrival in the Crimea I went off to headquarters to present my letters of introduction to Sir John Hall, the head of the Medical Department, who received me most kindly, and arranged for me to take up my quarters at the Balaclava Hospital, formerly a large Russian Government school, which was filled to repletion with six hundred patients, suffering principally from rheumatism and dysentery, arising from exposure in the trenches, and want of proper nourishment. Here, also, the medical staff were very short handed, and I sadly overworked. Besides this heavy duty, I was asked to act as temporary sanitary officer, and while thus engaged I had to condemn a shipload of Turkish loaves

of black bread which the Sultan had sent up as a present to our troops, but which had become fermented and mildewed in the hold, and thus rendered unfit for human food; hence I had to condemn this life-giving cargo, and it was ordered out of harm's way by being thrown overboard into the Black Sea. They were so long on the passage, thanks to the sluggish Turk, and on our part we were so slow to order the loaves (3,200) out, and get them distributed, red-tapey in the shape of check and counter-check being so dilatory. . . .

"Again, I was told off to attend any sick ladies who might arrive in the harbour, and thus I was brought into contact with Miss Nightingale once more, who would come up to see how the nursing was going on in the Crimea. Before she could return to Scutari she was attacked with camp fever, and laid up in one of the transports. For her recovery she relied entirely on good nursing and nourishment, and objected all through her attack to take either stimulants or medicines. When she recovered she was a mere wreck of her former self, and how to get her back to Scutari was the difficulty, as she was a very bad sailor; so I petitioned Lord Dudley for the loan of his yacht, which was lying idle in the harbour. He received me very graciously, but thought my application rather an astounding one. Miss Nightingale was now however one of the celebrities of the position, and his lordship yielded with a good grace, and not only that, but said the doctor attached to the steamer should accompany her on the voyage, which was a great boon, considering we were so short handed. Though her cabin was luxuriously fitted up with every possible convenience, and the berth was slung by elastic webbing to the roof-floor and sides, and thus every lurch was provided for, she had a dreadful passage, and the doctor had great difficulty in keeping life in her, but God be thanked, she was spared to do much good work afterwards. . . .

"Though many years have elapsed since that memorable occasion, the warmth of my gratitude has never cooled down when I call to mind the great kindness I received from that inestimable and self-sacrificing lady, when I in my turn was laid low with Asiatic cholera in the Crimea. She supplied me with a continuous relay of experienced nurses, who gave me their invaluable services both night and day, and carried me safely through one of the most fatal of scourges, in which ordinary remedies are of no avail, but close attention to minutiae is of the utmost importance. . . .

"The time had now arrived when we were to bid farewell to the Crimea, and the recollection, if that were possible, of all its horrors, its dangers and worries, only too thankful that we had escaped with our lives. The beautiful month of June, 1856, found us on board a steam transport bound for Constantinople, where I landed, and went off to pay my respects to my old patient, Miss Nightingale. I found that noble creature looking very pale and slender, and delicate in appearance, with her beautiful black hair cut short, but still retaining her wonted stock of fiery courage and activity. She was simply worshipped by the sick and wounded, who romantically kissed her very shadow as she noiselessly glided along the corridors, lamp in hand, when all was silent and quiet at night, to satisfy herself that all was going on well among her eyeless, armless, footless, shot, sabred and bayoneted devotees. There, within these dismal walls, was to be seen this refined, highly cultured lady going the rounds of her wards two and a half miles in extent, among thousands of uneducated men, rough, ragged, bloody, dirty, wounded, sick, hungry and miserable, undertaking painful and arduous duties with every possible deficiency in the necessary supplies, for she had to deal with men wrapped up in departmental formalism

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