EDWARD TYAS COOK

THE LIFE OF FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

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INTRODUCTORY

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Among Miss Nightingale's memoranda on books and reading, there is this injunction: “The preface of a book ought to set forth the importance of what it is going to treat of, so that the reader may understand what he is reading for.” The saying is typical of the methodical and positive spirit which, as we shall learn, was one of the dominant strains in Miss Nightingale's work and character. She wanted to know at every stage precisely what a person, or a book, or an institution was driving at. “Of all human sounds,” she said, “I think the words *I don't know* are the saddest.” Unless a book had something of definite importance to say, it had better, she thought, not be written; and in order to save the reader's time and fix his attention, he should be told at once wherein the significance of the book consists. This, though it may be a hard saying, is perhaps not unwholesome even to biographers. At any rate, as Miss Nightingale's biographer, I am moved to obey her injunction. I propose, therefore, in this Introductory chapter to state wherein, as I conceive, the significance and importance of Miss Nightingale's life consists, and what the work was that she did in the world.

I

“In the course of a life's experience such as scarcely any one has ever had, I have always found,” said Miss Nightingale,[1] “that no one ever deserves his or her character. Be it better or worse than the real one, it is

always unlike the real one.” Of no one is this saying more true than of herself. “It has been your fate,” said Mr. Jowett to her once, “to become a Legend in your lifetime.” Now, nothing is more persistent than a legend; and the legend of Florence Nightingale became fixed early in her life—at a time, indeed, antecedent to that at which her best work in the world, as she thought, had begun. The popular imagination of Miss Nightingale is of a girl of high degree who, moved by a wave of pity, forsook the pleasures of fashionable life for the horrors of the Crimean War; who went about the hospitals of Scutari with a lamp, scattering flowers of comfort and ministration; who retired at the close of the war into private life, and lived thenceforth in the seclusion of an invalid's room—a seclusion varied only by good deeds to hospitals and nurses and by gracious and sentimental pieties. I do not mean, of course, that this was all that anybody knew or wrote about her. Any such suggestion would be far from the truth. But the popular idea of Florence Nightingale's life has been based on some such lines as I have indicated, and the general conception of her character is to this day founded upon them. The legend was fixed by Longfellow's poem and Miss Yonge's *Golden Deeds*. Its growth was favoured by the fact of Miss Nightingale's seclusion, by the hidden, almost the secretive, manner in which she worked, by her shrinking from publicity, by her extreme reticence about herself. It is only now, when her Papers are accessible, that her real life can be known. There are some elements of truth in the popular legend, but it is so remote from the whole truth as to convey in general impression everything but the truth. The real Florence Nightingale was very different from the legendary, but also greater. Her life was built on larger lines, her work had more importance, than belong to the legend.

The Crimean War was not the first thing, and still less was it the last, that is significant in Miss Nightingale's life. The story of her earlier years is that of the building up of a character. It shows us a girl of high natural ability and of considerable attractions feeling her way to an ideal alike in practice and in speculation. Having found it, she was thrown into revolt against the environment of her home. We shall see her pursuing her ideal with consistent, though with self-torturing, tenacity against alike the obstacles and the temptations of circumstance. She had already served an apprenticeship when the call to the Crimea came. It was a call not to “sacrifice,” but to the fulfilment of her dearest wishes for a life of active usefulness. Such is the theme of the *First Part*, which I have called “Aspiration.”

* * * * *

Many other women have passed through similar experiences. But there is special significance in them in the case of Florence Nightingale—a significance both historic and personal. The glamour that surrounded her service in the Crimea, the wide-world publicity that was given to her name and deeds, invested with peculiar importance her fight for freedom. To do “as Florence Nightingale did” became an object of imitation which the well-to-do world was henceforth readier to condone, or even to approve; and thus the story of Miss Nightingale's earlier years is the history of a pioneer, on one side, in the emancipation of women.

For the understanding of her own later life, the earlier years are all-important. They give the clue to her character, and explain much that would otherwise be puzzling or confused. Through great difficulties and at a heavy price she

had purchased her birthright—her ideal of self-expression in work. On her return from the Crimea she was placed, on the one hand, owing to her fame, in a position of special opportunity; on the other hand, owing to illness, in a position of special disability. She shaped her life henceforward so as to make these two factors conform to the continued fulfilment of her ideal. I need not here forestall what subsequent chapters will abundantly illustrate. I will only say that the resultant effect was a manner of life and work, both extraordinary, and, to me at least, of the greatest interest.

* * * * *

The *Second Part* of the Memoir is devoted to the Crimean War. The popular conception with regard to Miss Nightingale's work during this episode in her life is not untrue so far as it goes, but it is amazingly short of the whole truth as now ascertainable from her Papers. The popular imagination pictures Florence Nightingale at Scutari and in the Crimea as “the ministering angel.” And such in very truth she was. But the deeper significance of her work in the Crimean War lies elsewhere. It was as Administrator and Reformer, more than as Angel, that she showed her peculiar powers. Queen Victoria, with native shrewdness and a touch of humour, hit off the truth about Miss Nightingale's services in the Crimea in concise words: “Such a clear head. I wish we had her at the War Office.”

The influence of Miss Nightingale's service in the Crimea was great. Some of it is obvious, and on the moral side Longfellow's poem said the first, and the last, word. She may also be accounted, if not the founder, yet the promoter of Female Nursing in war, and the Red Cross Societies

throughout the world are, as we shall hear, the direct outcome of her labours in the Crimea. The indirect, and less obvious, results were in many spheres. From a sick-room in the West End of London Miss Nightingale played a part—and a much larger part than could be known without access to her Papers—in reforming the sanitary administration of the British army, in reconstructing hospitals throughout the world, in founding the modern art of nursing, in setting up a sanitary administration in India, and in promoting various other reforms in that country.

* * * * *

Miss Nightingale's return from the Crimea, it will thus be seen, was not the end of her active life. In a sense it was the beginning. The nursing at Scutari and in the Crimea was an episode. The fame which she shunned, but which nevertheless came to her, gave her a starting-point for doing work which was destined, as she hoped, and as in large measure was granted, to be of permanent service to her country and the world. The first chapter of the *Third Part* shows her laying her plans for the health of the British soldier, and the subsequent chapters tell what followed. This is the period of Miss Nightingale's close co-operation with Sidney Herbert. To the writer this later phase of Miss Nightingale's life—with its ingenious adjustment of means to ends, its masterful resourcefulness, its incessant industry, and then with its perpetual struggle against physical weakness and its extraordinary power of devoted concentration—has seemed not less interesting than the Crimean episode.

The *Fourth Part* describes, as its main themes, the work which Miss Nightingale did, concurrently with that described

in the preceding Part, as Hospital Reformer and the Founder of Modern Nursing. Other chapters introduce two topics which might at first sight seem widely separate, but which were yet closely associated in Miss Nightingale's mind. They deal with her, respectively, as a Passionate Statistician and as a Religious Thinker. The nature of her speculations is fully explained in the latter chapters, and elsewhere in the memoir. It will be seen that Miss Nightingale had thought out a scheme of religious belief which widely differed from the creeds of Christian orthodoxy, whether Catholic or Protestant, but which yet admitted of accommodation to much of their language and formularies. It admitted also, as will appear in due course, of close alliance with mysticism. Miss Nightingale believed intensely in a Personal God and in personal religion. The language which expressed most adequately to her the sense of union with God was the language of the Greek and Christian mystics. But “law” was to her “the thought of God”; union with God meant co-operation with Him towards human perfectibility; and for the discovery of “the thought of God” statistics were to her mind an indispensable means.

* * * * *

In the *Fifth Part* we are introduced to a new interest in Miss Nightingale's life, a new sphere of her work. For forty years she worked at Indian questions. She took up the subject at first through interest in the army. It was a natural supplement to her efforts for the health of the British soldier at home, to make a like attempt on behalf of the army in India. Gradually she was drawn into other questions, and she became a keen Indian reformer all along the line. Her assiduity, her persistence, her ingenuity were as marked in

this sphere as in others; it was only her immediate success that was less.

In relation to the primary object with which she began her Indian campaigns, Miss Nightingale's life and work have great importance. The Royal Commission of 1859–63, which was due to her, and the measures taken in consequence of its Report, were the starting-point of a new era in sanitary improvement for the army. The results have been most salutary. Miss Nightingale's friendship with Lord Stanley and with Sir John Lawrence here served her somewhat as that with Mr. Herbert served in the earlier campaign. In the wider sphere of Indian sanitation generally Miss Nightingale's efforts were not so successful. The field was perhaps too vast, the conditions were too adverse, for any great and immediate success to be possible. Yet this and her other efforts for India were the part of Miss Nightingale's life and work to which she attached most importance, and by the record of which she set most store. Even in the Will (afterwards revoked) directing her Papers to be destroyed, she made exception of those relating to India; and, as already stated in the preface, one of her few pieces of autobiographical record related to her Indian work. Perhaps it was the special affection which a mother often feels for the least robust or least successful child. Perhaps it was that she took long views; and that, foreseeing a future time when many of the reforms for which she had toiled might be accomplished, she desired to be remembered as a pioneer. “Sanitation,” said a high authority in 1894, “is the Cinderella of the Indian administrative family.”[2] The difficulty of finding money and a reluctance to introduce Western reforms in advance of Eastern opinion are objections with which we shall often meet in the correspondence of Indian officials with Miss Nightingale, and they are still raised in the present

day.[3] On the other hand, the Under-Secretary for India, in his Budget Statement for 1913, declared that “the service which has the strongest claim after education on the resources of the Government is sanitation,” and explained that “the Budget estimate of expenditure for sanitation comes this year to nearly £2,000,000, showing an increase of 112 per cent over the expenditure of three years ago.” So perhaps Cinderella is to go to the ball; if ever the glass slipper is found, let it be remembered, as this Memoir will show, that Miss Nightingale was the good fairy.

* * * * *

Her Indian work continued as long as she was able to work at all, and from 1862 onwards it forms one of the recurring themes in our story. The *Sixth Part*, while continuing that subject, introduces another sphere in which Miss Nightingale's life and work have important significance. From the reform of Hospital Nursing she turned, in conjunction with the late Mr. William Rathbone, to the reform of workhouse nursing. And as one thing led to another, it will be seen that Miss Nightingale deserves to be remembered also as a Poor Law Reformer.

* * * * *

The *Seventh Part* comprises the last thirty-eight years of Miss Nightingale's life (1872–1910), and a word or two may here be said to explain an apparent alteration of scale. In a biography the scale must be proportionate not to the number of the years, but to their richness in characteristic significance. After 1872, the year in which (as Miss Nightingale put it) she went “out of office,” her life was less

full than theretofore in new activities. The germinant seeds had all been sown. But these later years, though they have admitted of more summary treatment, were full of interest. The chapters in which they are recorded deal first with Miss Nightingale's literary work, and more especially with her studies in Plato and the Christian mystics. These studies were in part a result of her close friendship of thirty years with Mr. Jowett. Then, too, occasion is found for an endeavour to portray Miss Nightingale as the Mother-Chief (for so they called her) of the Nurses. It is only by access to her enormous correspondence in this sort that the range and extent of her personal influence can be measured. Her ideal of the nursing vocation stands out very clearly from the famous “Nurses' Battle” which occupied much of her later years. She found an opportunity during the same period to start an important experiment in Rural Hygiene. At the same time she was preaching indefatigably the need of Health missionaries in Indian villages. And then came the end. To the time of labour, there succeeds in every life, says Ruskin, “the time of death; which in happy lives is very short, but always a *time*.” In the case of Miss Nightingale the time was long. She lived for many years after the power to labour was gone.

II

So much, by way of preface, in explanation of the significance of Miss Nightingale's life and work. But this book endeavours to depict a character, as well as to record a career. There has been much discussion, in our days as in others, of the proper scope and method of biography, and various models are held up, in one sense or another, to

practitioners in this difficult art. The questions are propounded, whether biography should describe a person's life or his character? his work or how he did it? If the person did anything worthy of record, a biography should, surely, describe alike the life and the character, the work and the methods. The biographer may fail in his attempt; but in the case of Miss Nightingale the attempt is peculiarly necessary, because all that she did and the manner in which she did it were, as it has seemed to me, characteristic of a strongly-marked personality behind them.

This book is, however, a biography and not a history. It is not a history of the Crimean War, nor of nursing, nor of Indian administration. Something on all these matters will be found in it; but only so much of detail as was necessary to place Miss Nightingale's work in its true light and to exhibit her characteristic methods. So, also, many other persons will pass across the stage—persons drawn from a great many different classes, occupations, walks in life; but the book does not aim at giving a detailed picture of “Miss Nightingale's circle.” Her relations, her friends, her acquaintances, her correspondents only concern us here in so far as their dealings with her affected her work, or illustrate her character.

Here, again—to revert to what has been said above—it will be found, I think, that this book possesses a certain significance as correcting, or supplementing, a popular legend. A preacher, in an obituary sermon upon Miss Nightingale, said that all her work was done “by force of simple goodness.” Assuredly Miss Nightingale was a good woman, and there was also a certain simplicity about her. But there was much else. A man of affairs, who in the course of a long and varied life had come in contact with many of the acutest intellects and greatest administrators of the

time, said of Miss Nightingale that hers was the clearest brain he had ever known in man or woman. Strength of head was quite as marked in her as goodness of heart, and she had at least as much of adroitness as of simplicity. Her character was in fact curiously many-sided. A remarkable variety of interests, motives, methods will be found coming into play in the course of this record. The Florence Nightingale who will be shown in it—by her acts, her methods, her sayings, her ways of looking at things and people—is a very different person from Santa Filomena. Miss Nightingale has been given a place among the saints in the popular calendars of many nations; and she deserves the canonisation, but not entirely for the popular reasons. Her character, as I have endeavoured to depict it, was stronger, more spacious, and, as I have felt, more lovable than that of The Lady with the Lamp.

Footnotes:

1. In a letter to Madame Mohl, December 13, 1871.
2. Sir Auckland Colvin in the *Journal of the Society of Arts*, May 11, 1894, p. 515.
3. As, for instance, in some of the speeches in the House of Lords on June 9, 1913, and in a leading article in the *Times* of the following day. The speech of Lord Midleton, in introducing the subject, was, on the other hand, upon Miss Nightingale's lines, being founded upon the Report of her Royal Commission of 1859–63. Some pages (194–197) in Mr. George Peel's *The Future of England* (1911) are on similar lines.

PART I

ASPIRATION

(1820–1854)

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I go to prove my soul!
I see my way as birds their trackless way.
I shall arrive—what time, what circuit first,
I ask not; but unless God send his hail
Or blinding fire-balls, sleet, or stifling snow,
In some time, his good time, I shall arrive:
He guides me and the bird. In his good time.

BROWNING: *Paracelsus*.

CHAPTER I
CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION
(1820–1839)

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> I found her in her chamber reading *Phaedon Platonis* in Greek, and that with as much pleasure as some gentlemen would read a merry tale in Bocace.
> —Roger Ascham.

To the tender sentiment and popular adoration that gathered around the subject of this Memoir, something perhaps was added by the beauty of a name which linked together the City of the Flowers and the music of the birds. Her surname suggested to Longfellow the title of the poem which has carried home to the hearts of thousands in two continents a lesson of her life. The popularity of "Florence"—in the Middle Ages a masculine name—as a Christian name for English girls is noted by the historian of that subject as due to association with the heroine of the Crimea.

* * * * *

Both of her names were the result of circumstance. Her father came of the old Derbyshire family of Shore of Tapton, and changed his name in 1815 from William Edward Shore to William Edward Nightingale on succeeding to the property of his mother's uncle, Peter Nightingale of Lea, in the same county. Mr. William Nightingale was fond of travel, and the

close of the French war, shortly before his marriage (1818), had thrown the Continent open to the grand tour. Mr. and Mrs. Nightingale's only children, two daughters, were born during a sojourn in Italy. The elder was born at Naples in 1819, and was named, firstly, Frances, after her mother, and, secondly, after the old Greek settlement on the site of her birthplace, Parthenope. She afterwards became the second wife of Sir Harry Verney.[4] The younger daughter, the subject of this Memoir, was also named after her birthplace. She was born at Florence on May 12, 1820, in the Villa Colombaia, near the Porta Romana, as a memorial-tablet now affixed to the house records; and there on the 4th of July she was baptized by Dr. Trevor, Prebendary of Chester. The place-names became in familiar intercourse “Parthe” or “Pop,” and “Flo.”

“The surprises of sainthood,” said a speaker at a Congress on Eugenics, “are no less remarkable than those of genius. St. Francis of Assisi, St. Catherine of Siena, and Florence Nightingale could no more have been predicted from their ancestry than Napoleon, Beethoven, Michael Angelo, or Shakespeare.” But the peculiarities of tissue on which some physical characteristics are held to depend can, at any rate, be inherited. Florence Nightingale's mother was one of the eleven children of William Smith of Parndon Hall, Essex, of whom Sir James Stephen said: “When he had nearly completed four score years, he could still gratefully acknowledge that he had no remembrance of any bodily pain or illness, and that of the very numerous family of which he was the head every member still lived to support and gladden his old age.” This statement is not absolutely correct, for one child did not long survive its birth; but of the other sons and daughters of William Smith, none died at an earlier age than 69, two lived to be more than 75, six to be

more than 80, and one to be more than 90. This last was Frances, Mrs. Nightingale, who lived to be 92. On the father's side there was longevity also. Mr. Nightingale himself lived to be 80. His mother lived to be 95; he had an aunt who lived to be 90; and “your uncle,” wrote his father, “young at 82, enters into politics of the present moment with all the ardour of 22.” Of the children of Mr. and Mrs. William Nightingale, Parthenope lived to be 75, and Florence, though (or, in part, perhaps, because) she lived for 53 years the life of an invalid, attained the age of 90.

Florence Nightingale, whether saint or not, was certainly conscious of a “call”; but there was nothing in her descent or inheritance which encouraged her parents to allow it to become readily effectual. Because she was a woman, her early life was one long struggle for liberation from circumstance and social prepossessions. Yet there were features in her mental equipment and intellectual outlook which may well have been inherited, and which certainly owed much to environment. Sir James Stephen adds to the remarks quoted above that if William Smith “had gone mourning all his days, he could scarcely have acquired a more tender pity for the miserable, or have laboured more habitually for their relief.” In politics he was a follower of Fox. He was a friend of Wilberforce, with whom he co-operated in the House of Commons in the Abolitionist and other humanitarian movements. Of Wilberforce, as of Thomas Clarkson, “he possessed the almost brotherly love, and of all their fellow-labourers there was none who was more devoted to their cause, or whom they more entirely trusted.”[5] In religion a Unitarian, he was a stout defender of liberty of thought and conscience, a persistent opponent of religious tests and disabilities. The liberal opinions, alike in Church and State, which were thus traditional in the family

of Florence Nightingale's mother, were shared by that of her father. Her grandfather Shore, in a letter to his son in 1818, referred to “one of the finest pieces of eloquence either in ancient or modern times, given by Sir Samuel Romilly in the Court of Chancery on a motion respecting the right of Jews to the benefit of a charity in Bedford. It does honour to the man and to human nature.” Florence Nightingale's father was also a Unitarian; and in politics he was a Whig. “How I hate Tories,” he wrote to his wife; and in another letter, after the election of 1835, in which the hated ones had gained ground, he explained that they were mighty only “by Beer, Brandy, and Money.” The Whigs, as is well known, were not all lacking in the latter equipment for political success, and Mr. Nightingale was a frequent subscriber to electoral funds on the Whig side. He was an ardent supporter of Parliamentary Reform. He held that “Bentham has taught great moral truth more effectually than all the Christian divines.” At a later time he was a follower of Lord Palmerston, of whom he was also a neighbour in the country. One of the earliest notices which I find of Florence Nightingale's interest in politics is in a letter from her father describing a meeting at Romsey to which he had taken her. “Florence,” he says, “approved very much Palmerston's exposition of his foreign policy.”

Something else Florence Nightingale owed to, or shared with, her father. He, like some other members of his family, was of a reflective temperament, interested in speculative problems. There is a letter written by him to his wife from his father's sick-room (Sept. 1822) which shows the bent of his thoughts:—

> I sit by his bedside and look at him as one would at a sleeping man, the idea of death only now and

> then flashing across my mind. I have been *studying* Mad. de Staël on the feeling of conviction, which exists more or less in different people and different nations, on the subject of soul as independent of external ideas. My imagination is a dull one, for it certainly required *study* with me to feel the full force of conviction that soul does and must exist quite separately from, though influenced by, external circumstances. *You* will say, I know, with a firm belief in Scripture and religion, Leave all philosophical speculation to the wild imaginations of the Germans. Nothing can change *your* reliance on religion. The perversity of *my* nature refers me to experience and analogies, though I begin to think that the study of the creation displayed before our faculties will exalt me into a conception of Divinity completely pervading the whole, but particularly that part of man which enables him to feel the difference between right and wrong independently of the ideas which he derives from external circumstances.

Florence Nightingale's mother accepted the religious standpoint of the day without question. Unitarianism was dropped by her and by her elder daughter; by Florence it was, as we shall hear, transcended. The mother's essential bent was practical, though the scope of it was somewhat limited. The mind of her daughter Florence found room in equal measure for practice and for contemplation. She inherited her mother's organising capacity, though she turned it to directions of her own. It was from her father that

she inherited the taste for speculative inquiry which absorbed a large part of her life.

II

From the worldly circumstances of her parents Florence came to draw conclusions little sympathetic, in some respects, with existing usages and conventions. She accepted, indeed, the position of worldly wealth into which she was born without any fundamental questioning. In later years a young friend, on being urged to visit the villagers around one of Miss Nightingale's country homes, explained that she did not like the relation, she could not bring herself to go from a big comfortable house to instruct poor people how to live. Miss Nightingale laughed, and said, “You surely don't call Lea Hurst a big house.” It had only about fifteen bedrooms. She took for granted the position into which she was born. But she thought that wealth should only be used as a means of work. The easy, comfortable, not very strenuous conditions of her home life as a girl fixed the nature of her earlier years, but her soul did not become rooted in them. They sowed seeds which grew, as the years passed, not into acquiescence, but into revolt. Mr. Nightingale had inherited his great-uncle's property when nine years old. It accumulated for him, and a lead mine added greatly to its value. By the time of his marriage he was blessed (or, as his younger daughter came to think, afflicted) by the possession of a considerable fortune. Whether it were indeed a blessing or an affliction, it involved him in much uncertainty of mind. He and his wife returned from the Continent with their infant daughters in 1821, and the question became urgent, Where to live? The landed

property which he inherited from his great-uncle was a comparatively small estate at and around Lea Hall in Derbyshire. To this property he added largely. The Hall, the old residence of his great-uncle, was discarded (it is now used as a farm-house), and Mr. Nightingale built a new house, called Lea Hurst. The charm of its situation and prospect is described in a letter by Mrs. Gaskell:—

> “High as Lea Hurst is, one seems on a pinnacle, with the clouds careering round one. Down below is a garden with stone terraces and flights of steps —the planes of these terraces being perfectly gorgeous with masses of hollyhocks, dahlias, nasturtiums, geraniums, etc. Then a sloping meadow losing itself in a steep wooded descent (such tints over the wood!) to the river Derwent, the rocks on the other side of which form the first distance, and are of a red colour streaked with misty purple. Beyond this, interlacing hills, forming three ranges of distance; the first, deep brown with decaying heather; the next, in some purple shadow, and the last catching some pale, watery sunlight.” “I am left alone,” continued Mrs. Gaskell, “established high up, in two rooms, opening one out of the other—the old nurseries.” (The inner one, in which Mrs. Gaskell slept, was, when Parthenope grew up, her bedroom.) “It is curious how simple it is. The old carpet doesn't cover the floor. No easy chair, no sofa, a little curtainless bed, a small glass. In the outer room— the former day nursery—Miss Florence's room when she is at home, everything is equally simple; now, of course, the bed is reconverted into a sofa;

> two small tables, a few bookshelves, a drab carpet only partially covering the clean boards, and stone-coloured walls—as cold in colouring as need be, but with one low window on one side, trellised over with Virginian creeper as gorgeous as can be; and the opposite one, by which I am writing, looking over such country!”[6]

The sound of the Derwent was often in Florence's ears. When she was in the Hospital at Scutari any fretting in the Straits recalled it to her. “How I like,” she said on a stormy night, “to hear that ceaseless roar; it puts me in mind of the dear Derwent; how often I have listened to it from the nursery window.”

Lea Hurst became one of Florence Nightingale's earliest homes in England, but it was not the earliest of all. The house was not built when the family returned from the Continent, and Mr. Nightingale took Kynsham Court, Presteigne, in Herefordshire. The place, it seems, was “more picturesque than habitable,” and negotiations for the purchase of it, with a view to improvements, fell through. Mr. Nightingale liked Derbyshire, and was fond of his new house; but the rich, as well as the poor, have their perplexities. “The difficulty is,” wrote Mr. Nightingale to his wife, “where is the county that is habitable for twelve successive months?” And, again, “How would you like Leicestershire? For my part, I think that, provided I could get about 2000 acres and a house in some neighbouring county where sporting and scenery were in tolerable abundance, and the visit to Lea Hurst were annually confined to July, August, September, and October, then all would be well.” While Mrs. Nightingale stayed at Kynsham, or took the children for change of air to the seaside or Tunbridge Wells,

Mr. Nightingale divided his time between the management of his property in Derbyshire and the search for a second home elsewhere. Ultimately he found what he wanted at Embley Park in the parish of Wellow, near Romsey. This estate was bought in 1825, and Kynsham was given up. Embley is on the edge of the New Forest, and the rich growth of its woods and gardens is much favoured by sun and moisture. Old oaks and beeches, thickets of flowering laurel and rhododendron, and a profusion of flowers and scents, contrast with the bare breezy hills of Derbyshire. Its new owners had here the variety they wished for, and a full scope for their taste. The most praised of its beauties is a long road almost shut in by masses of rhododendron. One of the occasional pleasures of Miss Nightingale's later life in London was a drive in the Park, in rhododendron-time, “to remind her of Embley.”

III

From her fifth year onwards Florence Nightingale had, then, for her homes Lea Hurst in the summer months and Embley during the rest of the year. The family usually spent a portion of the season in London. The sisters led, it will thus be seen, a life mainly in the country, and Florence as a child became fond of flowers, birds, and beasts. A neatly printed manuscript-book is preserved, in which she made a catalogue of her collection of flowers, describing each with analytical accuracy, and noting the particular spot at which it was picked. Her childish letters contain many references to animal companions. She made particular friends with the nuthatch. She had a pet pig, a pet donkey, a pet pony. She was fond of riding, and fond of dogs. “A small pet animal,”

she said many years afterwards, “is often an excellent companion for the sick, for long chronic cases especially.” “The more I see of men,” wrote a cynic, “the more I love dogs.” Florence Nightingale, in the same piece from which I have just quoted, drew a like moral from her experience of some nurses. “An invalid,” she said, “in giving an account of his nursing by a nurse and a dog, infinitely preferred that of the dog. ‘Above all,’ he said, ‘it did not talk.’”[7] There were no babies in the Nightingale family after the arrival of Florence herself, but most of her mother's many brothers and sisters married and had families; and as Mr. and Mrs. Nightingale's houses were often visited by these relations, there was seldom wanting a succession of babies, and in them and their christenings, and teethings, and illnesses, and lessons, Florence took that interest which is often strong in little girls.

Sometimes a baby died, and her letters show that Florence was as much interested in a death as in a birth. She rejoiced in “the little angels in heaven.” One of her favourite poems at this period was *The Better Land* of Mrs. Hemans, which she copied out for a cousin as “so very beautiful.” The earliest letter which I have seen, written when she was ten, strikes mingled notes. She is staying with Uncle Octavius Smith at “Thames Bank” (a house which then adjoined his distillery at Millbank), and writes to her sister, who is on a visit with the maid to another set of cousins:—

> Give my love to Clémence, and tell her, if you please, that I am not in the room where she established me, but in a very small one; instead of the beautiful view of the Thames, a most dismal one of the black distillery, and, whenever I open

> my window, the nasty smell rushes in like a torrent. But I like it pretty well notwithstanding. There is a hole through the wall close to my door, which communicates with the bath-room, which is next the room where Freddy[8] sleeps, and he talks to me by there. Tell her also, if you please, that I have washed myself all over and feet in warm water since I came every night. I went up into the distillery to the very tip-top by ladders with Uncle Oc and Fred Saturday night. We walked along a great pipe. We have had a good deal of boating which I like very much. We see three steam-boats pass every day, the *Diana*, the *Fly*, and the *Endeavour*. My love to all of them except Miss W ——. Give my love particularly to Hilary. Your affect and only sister. Dear Pop, I think of you, pray let us love one another more than we have done. Mama wishes it particularly, it is the will of God, and it will comfort us in our trials through life. Good-bye.

Was Miss W—— an unsympathetic governess? Whoever she was, the exception in her disfavour shows an unregenerate impulse which contrasts naïvely with the following good resolve towards her sister. To a year earlier belongs a little note-book, entitled “Journal of Flo, Embley.” It begins with the reminder, “The Lord is with thee wherever thou art.” And then an entry records, “Sunday, I obliged to sit still by Miss Christie till I had the spirit of obedience.” As a child, and throughout all the earlier part of her life, Florence was much given to dreaming, and in some introspective speculations written in 1851 she recalled the pleasures of naughtiness. “When I was a child and was

naughty, it always put an end to my dreaming for the time. I never could tell why. Was it because naughtiness was a more interesting state than the little motives which make man's peaceful civilized state, and occupied imagination for the time?” To Miss Christie, her first governess, Florence became greatly attached, and the death of the lady a few years later threw her into deep grief. She was a sensitive, and a somewhat morbid child; and though she presently developed a lively sense of humour, to which she had the capacity of giving trenchant expression, it was the humour of intellect rather than the outcome of a joyous disposition. Her early letters contain little note of childish fun. They are for the most part grave and introspective. She was self-absorbed, and had the shyness which attends upon that habit. “My greatest ambition,” she wrote in some private reminiscences of her early life, “was not to be remarked. I was always in mortal fear of doing something unlike other people, and I said, ‘If I were sure that nobody would remark me I should be quite happy.’ I had a morbid terror of not using my knives and forks like other people when I should come out. I was afraid of speaking to children because I was sure I should not please them.” Meanwhile, she was perhaps at times, even as a child, a little “difficult” at home. “Ask Flo,” wrote her father to his wife in 1832, “if she has lost her intellect. If not, why does she grumble at troubles which she cannot remedy by grumbling?”

IV

The appeal to his daughter's intellect was characteristic of Mr. Nightingale. He was himself a well-informed man, educated at Edinburgh, and Trinity, Cambridge; and, like

some others of the Unitarian circle, he held views much in advance of the average opinion of his time about the intellectual education of women. The home education of his daughters was largely supervised by himself; it included a range of subjects far outside the curriculum current in “young ladies' seminaries”; and perhaps, like Hannah More's father, he was sometimes “frightened at his own success.” Letters and note-books show, it is true, that his daughters were duly instructed in the accomplishments deemed appropriate to young ladies. We hear of them learning the use of the globes, writing books of elegant extracts, working footstools, and doing fancy work. They studied music, grammar, composition, modern languages. “We used to read Tasso and Ariosto and Alfieri with my father,” Florence said; “he was a good and always interested Italian scholar, never pedantic, never a tiresome grammarian, but he spoke Italian like an Italian and I took care of the verbs.” Mr. Nightingale added constitutional history, Latin, Greek, and mathematics. By the time Florence was sixteen, he was reading Homer with his daughters. Miss Nightingale used to say that at Greek her sister was the quicker scholar. Their father set them appointed tasks to prepare. Parthenope would trust largely to improvisation or lucky shots. Florence was more laborious; and sometimes would get up at four in the morning to prepare the lesson. Her knowledge of Latin was of some practical use in later years. In conversations with abbots and monks whom she met during her travels she sometimes found in Latin their only common tongue. Among Florence's papers were preserved many sheets in her father's handwriting, containing the heads of admirable outlines of the political history of England and of some foreign states. Her own note-books show that in her teens she had mastered the elements of Latin and Greek. She