

Editors' Table.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE'S BOOK.*

In the stillness
Which most becomes a woman—calm and holy—
Thou sittest by the fireside of the heart,
Feeding its flame. LONGFELLOW.

A perfect woman, nobly plann'd,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a spirit still, and bright
With something of an angel light.

WORDSWORTH.

THE failing health of Miss Nightingale has discouraged the hope, so long indulged, that she would, personally, superintend the regulations of a hospital for the sick, where the plans and reforms she had proved in the important department of nursing might be introduced and tested. Such an institution as she had intended to found and superintend, where nursing the sick would have been an honored and honorable profession for woman, equal with the profession of medicine for man—is the desideratum in the healing art. This work must now be left to the care of others; but Miss Nightingale has done a noble part in giving to the world her written experiences and plans. Her book is a wonderful monument of the power of truth when set forth by genius in the cause of humanity. This little volume of eighty pages is one of the most important works ever put forth by woman; and very few medical books, produced by the most eminent men, equal it in usefulness and in the good it must initiate and produce for the sick and suffering.

When we say the "Notes on Nursing" are worthy of their authoress, we hope to incite every lady who comes to our "Table" for counsel, to study the work and practise its precepts. The benevolence, philanthropy, and excellent sense which have distinguished the career of Miss Nightingale are apparent on every page, giving force, clearness, and simplicity to her writings. She is, eminently, a woman of genius, of genuine talent directed to the best aims. Manuals for the treatment of the sick are to be met with, but all we have seen are dull, commonplace, and unsatisfactory, because none seem the result of real, earnest, patient observation. Miss Nightingale's book is of a different sort; the enthusiasm of her mind communicates a warmth to her style. She tells truths, often new truths, of which she is convinced and has been cognizant, and her own conviction goes far to convince her reader. Here is one of her life-colored pictures of what is going on in many houses of America as well as of England:—

"I have known," says Miss Nightingale, "cases of hospital pyæmia quite as severe in handsome private houses as in any of the worst hospitals, and from the same cause, viz. foul air. Yet nobody learnt the lesson. Nobody learnt *anything* at all from it. They went on *thinking*—thinking that the sufferer had scratched his thumb, or that it was singular that 'all the servants' had 'whitlows,' or that something was 'much about this year; there is always sickness in our house.' This is a favorite mode of thought, leading *not* to inquire what is the uniform cause of these general 'whitlows,'

* Notes on Nursing. By Florence Nightingale.

but to stifle all inquiry. In what sense is 'sickness being 'always there' a justification of its being 'there' at all?

"I will tell you what was the cause of this hospital pyæmia being in that large private house. It was that the sewer-air from an ill-placed sink was carefully conducted into all the rooms by sedulously opening all the doors, and closing all the passage-windows. It was that the slops were emptied into the foot-pans; it was that the utensils were never properly rinsed; it was that the beds were never properly shaken, aired, picked to pieces, or changed; it was that the carpets and curtains were always musty; it was that the furniture was always dusty; it was that the papered walls were saturated with dirt; it was that the floors were never cleaned; it was that the uninhabited rooms were never sunned, or cleaned, or aired; it was that the cupboards were always the reservoirs of foul air; it was that the windows were always tight shut up at night; it was that no window was ever systematically opened in the day, or that the right window was not opened. A person gasping for air might open a window for himself. But the servants were not taught to open the windows, to shut the doors; or they opened the windows upon a dank well between high walls, not upon the airier court; or they opened the room doors into the unaired halls and passages, by way of airing the rooms. Now all this is not fancy, but fact. In that handsome house I have known in one summer three cases of hospital pyæmia, one of phlebitis, two of consumptive cough; all the *immediate* products of foul air. When, in temperate climates, a house is more unhealthy in summer than in winter, it is a certain sign of something wrong. Yet nobody learns the lesson. Yes, God always justifies his ways; he is teaching while you are not learning. This poor body loses his finger, that one loses his life; and all from the most easily preventible causes."

And here we have a few strong touches on a very important subject:—

"It seems a commonly received idea among men, and even among women themselves, that it requires nothing but a disappointment in love, the want of an object, a general disgust or incapacity for other things, to turn a woman into a good nurse. This reminds one of the parish where a stupid old man was set to be school-master because he was 'past keeping the pigs.' Apply the above receipt for making a good nurse to making a good servant, and the receipt will be found to fail. Yet popular novelists of recent days have invented ladies disappointed in love, or fresh out of the drawing-room, turning into the war hospitals to find their wounded lovers, and, when found, forthwith abandoning their sick-ward for their lover, as might be expected. Yet in the estimation of the authors these ladies were none the worse for that, but on the contrary were heroines of nursing. What cruel mistakes are sometimes made by benevolent men and women 'n matters of business about which they can know nothing, and think they know a great deal! The everyday management of a large ward, let alone of a hospital, the knowing what are the laws of life and

death for men, and what the laws of health for wards (wards are healthy or unhealthy, mainly according to the knowledge or ignorance of the nurse), are not these matters of sufficient importance and difficulty to require learning by experience and careful inquiry, just as much as any other art? They do not come by inspiration to the lady disappointed in love, nor to the poor workhouse drudge hard up for a livelihood." (p. 75.)

"It is, I think, alarming, peculiarly at this time, when the female ink-bottles are perpetually impressing upon us 'woman's particular worth and general missionariness,' to see that the dress of women is daily more and more unfitting them for any 'mission' or usefulness at all. It is equally unfitting for all poetic and all domestic purposes. A man is now a more handy and far less objectionable being in a sick room than a woman. Compelled by her dress, every woman now either shuffles or waddles; only a man can cross the floor of a sick room without shaking it! What has become of woman's light step? the firm, light, quick step we have been asking for?"

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"The fidget of silk and of crinoline, the rattling of keys, the creaking of stays and of shoes, will do a patient more harm than all the medicines in the world will do him good. The noiseless step of woman, the noiseless drapery of woman, are mere figures of speech in this day. Her skirts (and well if they do not throw down some piece of furniture) will at least brush against every article in the room as she moves. Fortunate it is if her skirts do not catch fire, and if the nurse does not give herself up a sacrifice, together with her patient, to be burnt in her own petticoats." (p. 26.)

Miss Nightingale pleads, most eloquently the cause of humanity. She tells you how to abate sufferings, and tells it in language so nervous, so simple, so forcible, that the manner must interest even those who may, naturally, be indifferent to the matter. She says:—

"If a patient is cold, if a patient is feverish, if a patient is faint, if he is sick after taking food, if he has a bed-sore, it is generally the fault, not of the disease, but of the nursing." (p. 6.)

After describing four ways by which patients are starved to death by mismanagement, Miss Nightingale says:—

"I cannot too often repeat that patients are generally either too languid to observe these things, or too shy to speak about them; nor is it well that they should be made to observe them; it fixes their attention upon themselves. Again, I say, what *is* the nurse or friend there for except to take note of these things, instead of the patient doing so." (p. 62.)

"All hurry or bustle is peculiarly painful to the sick. And when a patient has compulsory occupations to engage him, instead of having simply to amuse himself, it becomes doubly injurious. The friend who remains standing and fidgeting about while a patient is talking business to him, or the friend who sits and prosés—the one from an idea of not letting the patient talk, the other from an idea of amusing him—each is equally inconsiderate. Always sit down when a sick person is talking business to you, show no signs of hurry, give complete attention and full consideration if your advice is wanted, and go away the moment the subject is ended.

"Always sit within the patient's view, so that when you speak to him he has not painfully to turn his head round in order to look at you. Everybody involuntarily looks at the person speaking. If you make this act a

wearisome one on the part of the patient, you are doing him harm. So also if by continuing to stand you make him continuously raise his eyes to see you. Be as motionless as possible, and never gesticulate in speaking to the sick.

"Never make a patient repeat a message or request, especially if it be some time after. Occupied patients are often accused of doing too much of their own business. They are instinctively right. How often you hear the person charged with the request of giving the message, or writing the letter, say half an hour afterwards to the patient, 'Did you appoint twelve o'clock?' or 'What did you say was the address?' or ask perhaps some much more agitating question, thus causing the patient the effort of memory, or, worse still, of decision all over again. It is really less exertion to him to write his letters himself. This is the almost universal experience of occupied invalids.

"This brings us to another caution. Never speak to an invalid from behind, nor from the door, nor from any distance from him, nor when he is doing any thing. The official politeness of servants in these things is so grateful to invalids, that many prefer, without knowing why, having none but servants about them." (p. 28.)

We need not recommend the work; these details are the best advertisement. Who of us has not, occasionally at least, sickness to tend? And even the most healthy may get valuable counsel from Miss Nightingale's "Notes."

MEDICAL COLLEGES FOR WOMEN.

THESE are as yet peculiar to our country; though institutions for the instruction of women in Midwifery and Nursing are found throughout the world; civilized and barbarian, Christian and pagan alike giving the care of woman in her hour of sorrow to her own sex, excepting the people of Great Britain and the United States.

The female Medical Colleges of our land will, we trust, before many more years are passed, restore the practice of Midwifery where it belongs (both by nature and revelation), to woman. Miss Nightingale's success in her curative mission will have a mighty influence in awakening our Anglo-Saxon friends over the water to the necessity of medical instruction for the sex; hospitals are now preparing where women are to have more opportunities of testing their talents for the healing art, and proving that they are capable of performing the duties, which, as physicians for women and children, devolve on them.

THE FEMALE MEDICAL COLLEGE OF PENNSYLVANIA has been very successful. We take the following from its last circular:—

"The eleventh annual session of this institution will commence on Wednesday, the 17th of October, 1860, and continue five months. In issuing this Announcement, the Faculty congratulate the friends of the cause on a new and very important means of success. Through the active exertions of our Board of lady managers and the noble benevolence of liberal friends, a fund has been secured which insures the opening, at an early day, of a Hospital for Women. The College has, at present, ample means of imparting thorough scientific instruction on the various branches of medicine, the lectures and demonstrations being aided by an excellent museum of Papier Mache Models, Drawings, Natural Preparations, Microscopes, and other apparatus. The opening of a Hospital under the auspices of the College will afford to students