A LOST COMMANDER, FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.*

Rarely have we read a book which has given us more pleasure than a " A Lost Commander, Florence Nightingale," by Mrs. Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews, the title of which is taken from a sentence in Sir Edward Cook's Life of Miss Nightingale.

" A great Commander was lost to England when Florence Nightingale was born a woman."

And yet, after all, was the loss so great ? For in very truth she was a Great Commander, who blazed a trail along which countless legions have marched and are still marching in ever-increasing numbers, to ultimate victory, their objects the care and cure of the sick, and the betterment of humanity by the inculcation of the laws of health defined by Miss Nightingale with such clarity. " We are your soldiers, and we look for the approval of our chief," wrote Agnes Jones—attractive, beautiful, witty, intensely religious—whom Miss Nightingale sent to be Superintendent of a sink of iniquity, the workhouse infirmary at Brownlow Hill, Liverpool. The sequel is known to the world. Unquestioning she obeyed her Great Commander : " Hers not to make reply, hers not to reason why, hers but to do and die," and gloriously she did both.

The special charm of Mrs. Andrews' book is that, written by a woman possessing both insight and literary skill, it presents to us Florence Nightingale as she must have been : impulsive, impetuous, loving and beloved, endowed with brains far above the normal, with a steady purpose which never faltered despite discouragement dissuasion, and, even more hard to resist, persuasion.

Other lives of Florence Nightingale have been written and well written. Sir Edward Cook's book was a necessary and historical record received with widespread approval. But it is not a book to inspire the average girl considering her future vocation with the conviction that in Nursing she will find an outlet for her gifts of hand, heart and brain, to appeal to her generous impulses, or to set before her in life's pathway a figure arresting, enticing, stimulating, a woman pulsating with life, energy and determination, whose footsteps, follow as faithfully as she may, she can never hope to outstrip.

The stories of Florence Nightingale are many. We do not desire in this short notice to reiterate those already well known, but rather to emphasise the points and the little intimate details, authentic and imaginary, which appear important to a woman biographer, showing us the child, the girl, the woman of single aim and unswerving purpose.

" She marched along a flowery path, growing in body and mind ; living in laughter and love and play and work as other little English girls grow and live ; learning to keep house and to be useful to animals and to peasants, as other squires' daughters learned ; building up intellect and judgment and character in a way few have done, and always with a message from beyond in her ears ; always hearing that trumpet summoning ; always following a star.

" Over against the common conception of Florence Nightingale as a superhuman, bloodless, untempted saint, one may set the alluring surroundings through which the young girl struggled to her freedom. In between London and country-house parties she was studying anatomy and visiting hospitals. She stage-managed a performance of the *Merchant of Venice* at Waverley Abbey, her aunt's house ; she was one of a fancy dress ball there, she sang with a gay group of cousins, picnicked with them, danced. At Lea Hurst, in Derbyshire, and Embley Park, in Hampshire, Mrs. Nightingale had house-parties constantly. Florence wrote that Embley could receive at one time ' five-able-bodied married females and their husbands.' She went to London in the season, was presented at Court, met great people. . . . All interests, all pleasures of money and position besieged her, and it was because, as much as in spite of, her worldly wisdom and her human charm that she controlled the influence and power on which floated, like a great ship, her work for humanity."

After referring to Sairey Gamp, and relating that " around 1870, in Bellevue Hospital, New York, there were plenty of her," Mrs. Andrews writes : " Fifty years ago," says an eminent physician who knows, " some of the nursing in Bellevue Hospital, for instance, was done by drunken prostitutes, who in the notorious Five Points Police Court were given the option of going to prison or to hospital service. . . . They were often found in sleep under the beds of their dead patients whose liquor they had stolen."

She continues to show that " far back of Sairey Gamp's *evil time—two thousand years back* of our white-capped young women of to-day—there were nurses of high character, of devotion and skill," and instances Phœbe of Cenchrea, whom St. Paul commends to the Christians in Rome because " she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also." " If," says Mrs. Andrews, " his Greek were translated better, we should realise that he actually referred to Phœbe as a visiting nurse, for the word given in English as ' succourer ' carried that meaning." The uniformed, up-to-date girls who graduate of a June morning every year from schools all over the land, have that brave, antique figure, misty now with nineteen hundred dusty years, as their prototype and pioneer."

" The years slipped by . . . in the Fourth Century there were forty parish nurses in Constantinople alone ; St. Chrysostom tells us that. What is now the Mosque of St. Sophia was in A.D. 600 dedicated by the Patriarch of Constantinople as the Church of the Deaconesses."

Mrs. Andrews shows that the nursing profession is, " in origin—and for centuries was in practice—a religious manifestation." Coming to the nineteenth century and the debased type of women employed as nurses, she writes : " Florence Nightingale's searchlight eyes saw the tragic side of these characterless nurses. Need of work ; underpayment ; deficient food and clothing ; desire to save the children ; then one of two things : drink to stimulate failing strength, or extortion of bribes from patients, ' mostly both.' She said also ' Upon an average, all men and women after a laborious day require a good night. . . Now comes a thing that I am very anxious about, the more anxious because it is important, and because it is an innovation. I have watched the night duty with particularly anxious interest in each hospital I have entered . . . and of the following principle I am thoroughly certain.' Odd," says Mrs. Andrews, " that the ' principle ' so carefully prefaced should be merely that a night nurse should have food at night. But they didn't do it. ' In one hospital,' Miss Nightingale goes on, ' there is a rule that no night nurse is to take refreshment during her watch, the intention being to keep her more vigilantly to her duty.' Yet the head nurses knew that a human woman ' watching and fasting ' from 9 p.m. to breakfast at 6 a.m. would soon be unfit ; so that rule was quietly disregarded.

" Towards such a world of drunkenness and immorality and misery did this daintily raised pilgrim steadfastly set her steps. That her family opposed her tooth and nail is not remarkable."

Mrs. Andrews describes the foundation of the Deaconesses' Institute at Kaiserswerth—renowned as the place where Florence Nightingale received some systematic

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She also wrote The Marshal, a Napoleonic historical novel, Crosses of War, a collection of World War I poetry, A Lost Commander, a biography of Florence Nightingale, and The Eternal Feminine, a collection of stories about women.[1] Andrews also wrote the chapter "The School Boy" in The Whole Family, a collaborative novel featuring chapters written by different authors, including Henry James and.