A LOST COMMANDER, FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.*

Rarely have we read a book which has given us more pleasure than “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—a productive, 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: “If he has said ‘Do not,’ 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 and 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 was one of a fancy dress ball there, she sang a verse 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 Phoebe 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; under-payment; deficient food and clothing; desire to save the 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 vigilant to her duty.’ Yet the head nurses knew that a human woman ‘watching and fasting’ from 9 P.M. to 6 A.M., breakfast at 6 A.M., would soon be unity; 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