About Florence Nightingale Strachey writes:

The Miss Nightingale, of fact was not as facile fancy pointed her. She worked in another fashion, and towards another end; she moved under the stress of an impetus which finds no place in the popular imagination. A Demon possessed her. Now demons, whatever else they may be, are full of interest.¹

At a time when it became the hallmark for a lady of a well-to-do family to be idle and do nothing Strachey finds it disgusting that Florence Nightingale a woman of status should ignore that tradition and step forward with such self-dedication, zeal and enthusiasm for work that she shadowed even the eminent men of the time. An agitated Strachey lashes out at her, and her family. By writing about the affluence of her family and their relationship "... with a spreading circle of other well-to-do families",² he is describing his own hatred against this newly rising upper middle class of the Victorian age.

He assumes what Florence should have been. He attacks her life of ease with the assumption that after a number of dances Florence should have married an eligible gentleman and lived happily ever after. But she did nothing of the sort. She was aspiring for other worlds to conquer. She was not natural even from childhood.

¹-² E.V., p. 115.
Commenting on Florence Nightingale's mother's remark that "We are ducks, who have hatched a wild swan", Strachey writes: "But the poor lady was wrong; it was not a swan that they had hatched; it was an eagle." He is out to prove that like an eagle she fell upon her prey and got the best out of them.

Then the Crimean War came. Florence Nightingale went to the East to serve God whose Call she had heard and for this opportunity she had waited. About her service there Strachey points out that she was heroic, but it was not the simple heroism commonly found in novels. Her heroism was of a sterner stuff. She was a friend of the helpless soldiers, but a foe to the high officials. Though her laughter and jokes meant for the soldiers were harmless and without any sting yet the sarcastic remarks which she made in her letters to Sidney Herbert about the men with whom she had to work were far from harmless, her nicknames were terrible, slanderous and unrespectful.

She had such a supporter in Sidney Herbert that she had only to open her mouth from the Far East and he would do whatever was in his means to carry out her wishes. Commenting on their relationship Strachey writes that it was a friendship without

3. Ibid., p. 120.
any scandal but it was also a friendship in which the relationship between the man and the woman was reversed. Here the woman performed the work of the man by that of commanding and the man that of inspiring and applauding. Strachey comments that Florence Nightingale belonged to a time when women had no role in any politics or outdoor service naturally she had to fight her way through. To explain the serious nature of her hold upon Sidney Herbert he uses the image of a stag and a tigress — Sidney Herbert, no doubt, was a stag and Florence Nightingale the tigress. Strachey is of the opinion that her demand and pressure for more work upon him was so firm that she did not even consider his weak constitution. He died due to the work load she forced upon him. Whenever he complained of his ill health and his inability thereby to serve her, she displayed signs of irritation and temper.

The brooch presented to her by the Queen was designed by the Prince and the inscription "Blessed are the merciful" were his words chosen from the simplicity of his heart, but Strachey feels it was sheer irony that the Prince should select these words for a person who was very far from merciful. Clough too died serving her. She could not be friends with anyone. Dr. Sutherland, Jowett, Panmure all came into confrontation with her.
Another assumption of Strachey is that she achieved her purpose so easily because she knew all the Peers, Cabinet Ministers, high government officials from childhood. When a new Government came in it did not alter her position, she knew the new Prime Minister just as well as she knew the outgoing Prime Minister. They were all her father's friends. Another advantage that she enjoyed was, Strachey states, financial sufficiency.

She did not spare her ownself of any lapses in duty so how could she spare others if they neglected their duties. Strachey is critical of this enthusiasm in her for work. She was performing the task of a man. She had formed her own "Cabinet", and had eminent men of the time to carry out her advice. Her experience was so vast that in course of time she came to be looked upon as a leading expert on health and sanitation. Strachey compares her to the autocratic Eastern Emperors. Getting an audience with her was not an easy job the fortunate few who did get the privilege of an interview could never forget the occasion.

Florence Nightingale was deeply religious. She wrote herself that from the very first she was conscious of a "Call", though at first she could not ascertain to what field of activity she was being called. But she soon found out that her
path was not the ordinary one trod by all men and women. Strachey a sceptic could not tolerate this religious fervour in her.

He is full of ridicule when he writes that: "She would correct the mistakes of the Churches; she would point out just where Christianity was wrong; ..." The idea of a woman tampering with religion and wanting to set it in the right path is beyond Strachey's liking. He also did not like her working ceaselessly to set the War Office right.

Strachey draws a contrasting character of Florence Nightingale at the end. The same bossing, haughty woman changes into a humble and benign person. He means to say that she received her due punishment.

4. Ibid., p. 166.
Strachey from the very first warns the readers that Florence Nightingale in reality fell far short of the ideal. The Florence Nightingale that the readers had known till then was very different in actual life. "A Demon possessed her." She really worked with another and in view, to Strachey this made her all the more interesting to know than the legendary one.

But Florence Nightingale's major biographer Sir Edward Cook comes out with a very different tale. He says:

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.

Cook closes his Introduction by saying that his endeavour will be to show that Florence Nightingale's character was stronger, more spacious, and as he has felt, more lovable than that of the Lady with the Lamp. It can be said about Cook that he succeeded in replacing the existing romantic fable by his complete picture of Florence Nightingale.

5. E.V., p. 115.
but Strachey in trying to do the same supplied us with another legend that of the ferocious and angry Florence Nightingale.

Strachey says that Florence Nightingale could not accommodate herself to the ways of the family to which she belonged. From childhood she was firmly fixed on doing something different and this was, he writes, "To do her duty in that state of life unto which it had pleased God to call her!" He sarcastically continues — "... but unto what state of life had it pleased God to call her? That was the question. God's calls are, many and they are strange." Then Strachey in order to show in which direction God was calling her writes:

Why, as a child in the nursery, when her sister had shown a healthy pleasure in tearing her dolls to pieces, had she shown an almost morbid one in sewing them up again? Why was she driven now to minister to the poor in their cottages, to watch by sick-beds, to put her dog's paw into elaborate splints as if it was a human being? Why was her head filled with queer imaginations of the country house at Embley turned, by some enchantment, into a hospital, with herself as matron moving about among the beds? Why was even her vision of heaven itself filled with suffering patients to whom she was being useful? So she dreamed and wondered, and, taking out her diary, she poured into it the agitations of her soul. And then the bell rang, and it was time to go and dress for dinner.

In order to give a mock epic effect Strachey intentionally makes the dinner bell ring at a moment when Florence Nightingale

was so engrossed in thinking of doing noble deeds.

Cook says the same things but with a different outlook. About the call he writes:

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.¹⁰

Cook gives in detail all the tales concerning Florence's love for nursing from a tender age, but he warns his readers about the authenticity of these stories, and sure enough it is told now that the dog did not belong to Florence, it belonged to an old shepherd. Moreover Florence did not put the dog's "wounded paw into elaborate splints"¹¹ she merely assisted the local parson in administering ordinary first aid. But Strachey ignores the warning and tries to read deeply into these incidents and discover the future Florence from her childhood acts.

Probably thinking in advance about biographers like Strachey who would come after him, Cook writes:

It is a natural temptation of biographers to give a formal unity to their subject by representing the child as in all things the father of the man; to date the vocation of their hero or heroine very early in life; to magnify some childish incident as prophetic of what is to come thereafter ...¹²

Cook writes that as a child Florence Nightingale had the habit of sewing up torn dolls, nursing the dog's broken leg, or visiting the poor but these things are nothing unusual, many little girls of the same age have the same habit of nursing sick dolls besides many other "squires' daughters," have attended the sick and poor in fact it was the usual condition in the nineteenth century and adds:

The discovery of her true vocation belongs, then, to a later period of our story; and it was not the result of childish fancy, or the accomplishment of early incident; it was the fruit of long and earnest study.\(^{14}\)

What Cooks says in earnest and in details is briefly narrated by Strachey with a different meaning.

Strachey's hatred for the rising upper middle class is revealed in ideas such as that Florence Nightingale's family was extremely well-to-do and that it was connected by marriage with a spreading circle of other such families. They had a country house in Derbyshire; and another in the New Forest; there were Mayfair rooms for the London Season and all its finest parties; they went on continental tours, attended Italian operas and met the celebrities of Paris.

It can be said in Strachey's favour that he supplies these informations in his biography, but very soon he says

that Florence Nightingale living in such a society should have done justice to that particular state of life to which it had pleased God to put her in — and that is — she should have married an eligible gentleman after a fitting number of dances and dinner parties in the footsteps of her sister, her cousins, and all the young ladies of her acquaintance, who were preparing to do this or had done this already. His tone is somewhat humiliating and sounds that marriage was the only concern of accomplished young ladies and Florence Nightingale had to follow suit. A little later Strachey again recommends a husband for Florence to cure her of all her dreams, dissatisfactions and cravings to "do" something. He also attacks Florence's search for work when there was so much to be done within the household. There was the china to look after and her father to read to. Strachey's dislike for this society is revealed in these, it makes these people so light and frivolous.

Cook says that in their tour of France and Italy the Nightingale sisters mixed in the best society in every town and enjoyed a lively round of picnics, concerts, soirees, dancing, midnight masks and court balls at which Grand Dukes were "exceedingly polite" to Florence Nightingale and her

The Italian opera gave Florence Nightingale the greatest pleasure. These are social advantages, and she was not without the inclination to use them. She chose in the end another path—a path which was beset by many obstacles of circumstances; but there were obstacles in herself also, and one of the last "temptations" to be overcome, before she was free to interpret her call and to act upon it, was as she wrote in many a page of confession and self-examination "the desire to shine in society". She overcame this too with ease.

Cook's descriptions gradually unveil the woman in the girl. It is natural that such a young girl may sometimes experience temptations around her and as she matures she overcomes these and her goal of life is fixed. Florence Nightingale was no exception to this rule.

Cook writes that Florence often took up the role of Sister of Mercy or Emergency Man—taking charge of one household when an aunt was away or when illness was prevalent. A friend and a visitor to Lea Hurst explained that Florence would often be missing in the evening, and on search being made she would be found in the village, sitting by the bedside of some sick person, and saying she could not sit down to a grand seven o'clock dinner while this was going on. But Strachey

changes it. He writes, no matter what noble things Florence was doing when the dinner bell rang, she had to go and dress for dinner.

Strachey is hasty and rash in his unfolding of Florence's character while Cook's unfolding is gradual and psychological.

Her parents, Cook writes, indulged in charities but to them these graces were not the main business of life; they considered these to be rightly incidental to their station.

Of the difficulties which stood in Florence Nightingale's way when she wanted to be a nurse, Cook writes:

The objections were moral and social, rooted to a large measure in conventional ideas ... 'It was as if I had wanted to be a kitchen-maid', she said in later years. Nothing is more tenacious than a social prejudice.18

The difficulties were nothing but evils rooted in the Victorian society. The idea prevalent then was that a modest woman could never serve as a nurse in a hospital. Mr. Nightingale inquired and consulted many friends regarding his daughter's desire.

She went abroad with her parents and sister. Her parents thought that these tours might help in changing her mind. But instead of diverting her mind, these tours

strengthened her mind. In one such tour she met Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Herbert and this acquaintance produced a far reaching influence upon her career. She came to know life better and Cook quotes her words:

Life is seen in a much truer form in London than in the country. In an English country place everything that is painful is so carefully removed out of sight, behind those fine trees, to a village three miles off. In London, at all events if you open your eyes, you cannot help seeing in the next street that life is not as it has been made to you. You cannot get out of a carriage at a party without seeing what is in the faces making the lane on either side, and without feeling tempted to rush back and say, 'Those are my brothers and sisters'.

She longed to rush back, to be able to go out freely into the slums, to comfort some old woman who was dying unattended, or rescue some child who was going astray untaught. But the proprieties prevented. 'It would never do', she was told, 'for a young woman in her station in life to go out in London without a servant'.

When a second foreign tour was proposed in 1849 her parents and sister were again enkindled with a new hope, because Florence was engrossed with studies on this tour. Her parents thought that this could mean that Florence might adopt a life of gracefully learned leisure. But it was not to be so.

19-20. Ibid., pp. 82-83.
The literary temptation did, for truth, assail Florence, but she brushed it aside. Though her mind was interested in all these things, her heart was elsewhere. Cook writes that in 1850 Florence wrote in her diary that she had three paths among which to choose. She might have been a literary woman or a married woman, or a hospital sister. She turned away from the first. Regarding the rejection of the second path, Cook writes that Miss Nightingale remained single not due to lack of opportunity to marry. The reason is to be found elsewhere — in feelings, thoughts, and ideals, in reasoned convictions and aspirations. For two or three years, Florence Nightingale was in much trouble of mind from an attachment which one of her cousins had formed for her. But she never thought of marrying him.

Among other attachments of which Florence Nightingale was the object there was one which had a deeper effect and called for a more difficult and searching choice in life. She was asked in marriage by one who continued for some years to press his suit. It was a proposal which seemed brilliant to those about her to promise every happiness. And Florence herself was strongly drawn to her admirer. But she turned away from it in order to pursue her ideal.

In the typical Victorian manner Cook considers it indecent to mention that her admirer was none other than Richard
Monckton Milnes. Strachey also does the same. This only proves that Strachey was not eager to attack her personal affairs, he was more interested in the periphery around her.

Cook says that she did not deny the bliss of marriage but she also held the view that there are some women who may be marked out for single life. Then Cook writes "In her own case, Miss Nightingale was conscious of capacities within her for 'high purposes for mankind and for God'." She could not feel sure that the marriage which was offered to her would enable her to employ those capacities to their best and fullest power. And so she sacrificed her passional nature to her moral ideal.

In one of the many pages of autobiographical notes which she preserved in relation to this episode in her life, she explained her refusal to marry:

"... To be nailed to a continuation and exaggeration of my present life, without hope of another would be intolerable to me. Voluntarily to put it out of my power ever to be able to seize the chance of forming for myself a true and rich life, would seem to me like suicide."

Strachey describes this particular attachment in a dramatic way, by stating that her previous lovers had all been

but burdens to her but this one was different, she wavered for a moment.

a new feeling swept over her, a feeling which she had never known before nor know again. The most powerful and the profoundest of all the instincts of humanity laid claim upon her. 23

To describe how she overcame this feeling Strachey quotes those words of Florence Nightingale from her autobiographical note which Cook has also quoted in his book but he intentionally leaves out parts of her words. He excises those parts which tell of Florence Nightingale making the choice by her reasoning. He wants to show just the opposite: that no reason dominated her, instead she was a victim of bad temper and sudden impulse. He passes on her words "that would be suicide" as his own.

These words coming as a comment to Florence Nightingale's autobiographical note makes the whole thing — her consideration for making her choice — frivolous.

In *Eminent Victorians* the quotation runs as:

To be nailed to a continuation and exaggeration of my present life ... to put it out of my power ever to be able to seize the chance of forming for myself a true and rich life' that —. would be a suicide. 24

Cook deserves praise for being a meticulous writer.

His careful details reveal the subtle and the beautiful

23-24. E.V., pp. 119-120.
Qualities in Florence Nightingale’s character. The struggle within Florence Nightingale before the final choice of a dedicated life is understood by the readers perfectly. They seem to become one with Florence Nightingale’s woes.

Florence Nightingale’s father, mother and sister were opposed to her choice of becoming a nurse. They felt that she had let them down among their social circle. Though this pained her yet she went ahead bravely till success was hers. Mrs. Gaskell the authoress came to visit Mr. and Mrs. Nightingale at Lea Hurst at the same time when Florence too was spending a few days’ holiday there. She was fascinated by Florence’s charm and attributed divine qualities to her but it meant nothing to her mother till then. Mrs. Gaskell wrote of Mrs. Nightingale in a letter which Cook quotes — “Mrs. Nightingale says with tears in her eyes (alluding to Andersen’s Fairy Tales), that they are ducks, and have hatched a wild swan.”

Incidentally Florence Nightingale had to cut short this holiday on hearing that an epidemic of cholera had broken out in London. Cook quotes all these to show that he too like Mrs. Gaskell thought Florence was no ordinary being.

We have it in Strachey as:

At times, indeed, among her intimates, Mrs. Nightingale almost wept. ‘We are ducks’, she

said with tears in her eyes, 'who have hatched a wild swan.' But the poor lady was wrong; it was not a swan that they had hatched; it was an eagle.\textsuperscript{26}

Strachey purposely makes the eagle representative of Florence because he wishes to convey the idea that she soared over Scutari keeping a keen watch on everything during the Crimean War. She also fell upon Sidney Herbert and Clough like an eagle and killed them with overwork.

In order to describe Florence Nightingale's role in the Crimean War Strachey sets everything from the very start in her favour. He writes the Crimean War broke out just in the right time. Florence Nightingale was prepared from all sides to prove her mettle. Had it come a few years earlier she would have been inexperienced had it come few years later she would have lacked the energy. It also so happened that Sidney Herbert was at the helm at the War office and his letter to Florence Nightingale asking her for her service at Scutari and her letter written to him offering her service crossed each other in the post. However everything was settled and at last after much waiting she understood that this was God's call. Cook accepts this providential interpretation naturally, but Strachey accepts it with mockery.

\textsuperscript{26} E.V., p. 120.
Strachey's description of Florence Nightingale in Scutari is undoubtedly excellent but even here we fail to catch a glimpse of the real Florence. Her achievements appear astonishing, her work is greatly magnified same with her anger and irritation. Cook is of the opinion that whatever good was achieved at Scutari was not due to Miss Nightingale's service alone. It would be unfair to look upon it that way. It was the joint labour of many persons both at home and in the East. Her image was such that dozens of things with which she had nothing to do were placed at her credit blindly. The tenacity and strength which Strachey bestows upon her does not appear human. He purposely makes her overburdened with work, and that makes her give vent to her bad temper. It must also be borne in mind here that Strachey's purpose is not so much to attack Florence Nightingale but the power, a group of inefficient men, at the top bungling everything, while conducting administration from a far away country. Sitting in London they had no idea what was happening or what was required where the war was raging. Before setting out for Scutari Florence Nightingale consulted the head of the Army Medical Board Dr. Andrew Smith in London as to whether she should take out stores of any kind to Scutari, and she was assured not only by Dr. Smith but by Sidney Herbert as well that nothing was required there. On
her arrival she found "Hell" reigning there.

Regarding her activities at Scutari and the condition of things prevailing there Strachey borrows his details from his chief source Cook. He also uses his minor sources to add a few details here and there. Sidney Godolphin Osborne's book is believed to be the most reliable report on the mess which confronted Florence Nightingale when she arrived there. In fact describing the administrative collapse, which was the root cause of the Crimean bungle, Osborne's tone becomes too angry for words. He writes:

This nation has paid a fearful penalty in 'life' for the mis-management of the war. When the pressure of the cost in 'means' is fully felt, I hope the spirit of the land may be roused, to require at the hands of those who rule these matters, that for the future, the lives of our soldiers, the hard-earned money of the taxpayers, shall not be wantonly made over to the wasteful expenditure of men; who neither in the Cabinet, the field, or in any one department, have proved that they possess either administrative power, or common sense habits of business.

Relying on this account Strachey writes:

Errors, follies, and vices on the part of individuals there doubtless were; but, in the general reckoning, they were of small account—insignificant symptoms of the deep disease

27. Ibid., p. 125

of the body politic — the enormous calamity of administrative collapse. 29

He draws from Cook's book and S.M. Mitra's book about the apathy which some colonels and army doctors like Dr. Andrew Smith, Dr. John Hall had for Florence Nightingale. They failed to realise what women had to do with war. They made a joke of it. So naturally they considered her appointment as "extremely droll". 30 She got no help from them, it appeared as if she had arrived to disturb the peace of their existence there. Strachey seems to hint that chaos was bound to rule supreme at the place where these men were sent out to rule by the same type of men sitting at home.

Panmure's biographers: Douglas and Ramsey pointed out that Panmure had "a certain salutary toughness of hide." 31 Strachey drawing from this source writes about Panmure "the hide was the hide of a Mexican buffalo." 32 He feels that ordinary men like Panmure without claim to any exceptional gifts or talents were in reality controlling the matters. It was no wonders that Florence Nightingale constantly had clashes with them.

29. E.V., p. 28.
30. Ibid., p. 28.
Florence Nightingale provided the soldiers in the hospitals with some small luxury items that they might have enjoyed in their houses. Dr. Hall failed to see the necessity of this. In describing this Strachey follows S.M. Mitra. But he cannot help in adding a few characteristic gestures of his own.

Strachey writes: "Dr. Hall might snort when he heard of it, asking with a growl, what a soldier wanted with a tooth brush". He adds the gestures like snorting and growling. These gestures are not found in his source S.M. Mitra's Life and Letters of Sir John Hall where it reads:

Fixed hospitals, Dr. Hall thought, ought to contain every comfort and convenience essentially necessary for the proper and effectual treatment of the sick; but even there, he considered, efforts were made to introduce refinements not essential to the cure of the disease, and foreign to the habits of soldiers — such, for the instance, as looking-glasses, hair and tooth brushes, ... 34

Regarding the hostility of some of the officials towards Florence Nightingale, Cook tries to balance his statements. He sees things from two angles. One in favour of Florence Nightingale and in another he considers the circumstances which prompted the officers to act against her. As an example he cites an incident where Florence Nightingale assumed

33. Ibid., p. 129.
34. Quoted by Simson, p. 163.
responsibility as a builder and this act of hers was condemned in most quarters. She was forced to undertake the role as the Barrack Hospital was in such a dilapidated condition that it was unsuitable for the patients who were on their way to it. The War Department approved her action. It was an instance of "the Nightingale power", and she herself regarded it as the most beneficent thing she did in the East. Cook writes:

In all these things Miss Nightingale may be warmly commended, but the officials need not be too hotly condemned. They were but doing their duty, as they had learnt it; and for the rest it was the system, or want of system that was at fault. Just as in London there was no co-ordination among the Departments, so at Scutari there was no unity of action, and no clear personal responsibility.35

On another occasion 27,000 shirts were at hand at Scutari but these could not be unpacked for three weeks for want of official approval. Cook writes that the story much circulated at that time was that on this occasion Florence Nightingale ordered the Government consignment to be opened forcibly, while the officials wrung their hands in fear of what the Board of Survey might say. To quote his words: "The story was mentioned in the Roebuck Committee; and, though it was not confirmed, I think that Miss Nightingale was quite capable of the dreadful deed."36

In *Eminent Victorians* we have it as:

A little later, however, on a similar occasion, Miss Nightingale felt that she could assert her own authority. She ordered a Government consignment to be forcibly opened, while the miserable 'Purveyor' stood by, wringing his hands in departmental agony. While Cook states that this story was not confirmed, Strachey for brevity's sake states it as fact. There is no scope to let the readers know that it might not have happened really it could only be a circulated story to express the lady's high-handedness. Cook goes on to say that though Florence Nightingale called many of the officers by hard names in her letters to Sidney Herbert but in other letters she admitted that the ultimate fault lay elsewhere. She should never be supposed as a spurner of rules or a despiser of rules. It was just the opposite; she was a firm believer in rules; her complain was that these officers should have the sense to know, and the courage to act upon the knowledge, that rules sometimes exist only to be broken. Her strict adherence to rules made her unpopular among many subordinate officers but her departure from rules when emergency arose, in the form of breaking open of consignments, brought commendation and support from her superior officer Sidney Herbert.

Both the military and the medical quarters were jealous

37. E.V., p. 129.
of her in the Crimea. Religious and racial animosities worsened the disputes. She never allowed personal feeling to affect the impartiality of her judgement. Though she met a tough opponent in Dr. Hall who always disputed her authority and resented her interference, and though she fought him and in the end beat him yet there are passages in her letters which bear testimony to his good services and high capacity in many respects. Their personal relation was not unfriendly though she saw in him throughout an antagonistic influence.

Strachey and Cook both think that Florence Nightingale's real work began after she had returned from Crimea. Strachey thinks: "her real life began at the very moment when, in the popular imagination, it had ended." 38

Cook writes her work in the Crimea is not to be supposed either as: "the summit of her attainment or the fulfilment of her life. Rather was it a starting-point." 39 On her return to England she found that her reputation and experience during the Crimean War had only enlarged the scope of her work.

Then Strachey states that on her return from the Crimean War she aspired after fame and reputation though he does it

38. E.V., p. 141.

indirectly. He states that Florence Nightingale returned home seriously ill and the doctors declared that only rest would save her. But that was one thing she refused to have. Her family members protested in vain. To quote Strachey:

She had never been in the habit of resting; why should she begin now? Now, when her opportunity had come at last; now, when the iron was hot, and it was time to strike? ... A demoniac frenzy had seized upon her. As she lay upon her sofa, gasping, she devoured blue-books, dictated letters, and, in the intervals of her palpitations, cracked her febrile jokes ... 40

This is not a sympathetic picture of a sick lady.

Cook writes of this period of her return home from the Crime:

But first she needed rest and seclusion. Rest, in which to recuperate from the long strain of labours, hardship, and anxieties. Seclusion, in which to hide herself from publicity and applause. The world praised her self-sacrifice. She felt that she had made none ... She shrank from glory in dread of vain-glory. 41

This is a different picture and a more understanding one too. Strachey compares Florence Nightingale to a tigress who drove her claws into the timid stag: — Sidney Herbert. From Strachey we learn that she became impatient and angry everytime Sidney Herbert complained of illness.

40. E.V., p. 42.
Cook on the other hand tells us that she wrote to Mrs. Herbert begging her not to let Sidney Herbert call on her. But he refused to listen and wrote back that he was not ill and a visit to her would do him no harm it would do just the opposite. Then she suggested a cure at Malvern. Cook writes here:

But I do not think that either of the allies expected, or desired, the other to take the advice which they interchanged. Well or ill, each of them worked unrestingly...

It appears from Cook that Sidney Herbert too like Florence Nightingale was fond of work. If she was the main instrument behind his death Mrs. Herbert would not have forgiven her. To quote Cook again:

Her friend, Lady Herbert, put the case from her point of view, when she wrote (March 7, 1862), in reply to a letter telling of much weakness and weariness, 'If you never wish to live for your own sake, yet bear to live, dearest, for a time to carry out his work, and to keep his memory fresh in the hearts of men'.

Mrs. Herbert was equally fond of her and held her in high esteem.

Cook does not blame Florence Nightingale for Sidney Herbert's death nor does he blame her for Clough's. He saw

42. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 381.
43. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 60.
it in a different light. Cook writes that Sidney Herbert’s last words were “Poor Florence! Poor Florence! Our joint work unfinished”.\textsuperscript{44} While Strachey makes it melodramatic. He writes:

... then, almost unconscious, his lips were seen to be moving. Those about him bent down. ‘Poor Florence! Poor Florence!’ they just caught. ‘... Our joint work ... unfinished ... tried to do ...’ and they could hear no more.\textsuperscript{45}

Strachey writes about Clough that his troubled mind, due to the Oxford Movement, became quiet after joining Florence Nightingale’s services. She used him in other ways. He tied up her parcels\textsuperscript{46} in brown paper and carried them to the post. When she travelled he\textsuperscript{46} carried her railway tickets. Strachey further writes “Arthur Clough, worn out by labours very different from those of Sidney Herbert, died too: never more would he tie up\textsuperscript{46} her parcels”.\textsuperscript{46} Though it is not stated clearly it is only implied that he too like Sidney Herbert died of the pressure of work which she imposed upon him. Strachey hints that Florence Nightingale failed and was unable to form an attachment with anyone on any kind of personal feeling. Strachey personally, in the Bloomsbury manner, valued

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\begin{enumerate}
\item[45.] E.V., p. 160.
\item[46.] Ibid., p. 161.
\end{enumerate}
personal feeling and relationship greatly. Naturally, he found Florence Nightingale lacking in this quality.

But in Cook there is no such hint regarding Clough. He writes:

He had broken down in health and been ordered abroad in April 1861, and she had urged him to go. He'd died, however, at Florence on November 12. 47

Regarding the nature of his work Cook writes that Clough made arrangements for her journey, escorted her, and helped her out of office hours with her vast notes on the British Army. He did all this with cheerful modesty. Cook thinks that Florence Nightingale benefitted from Clough's company: "The companionship of Arthur Hugh Clough ... was doubtless one of the causes which led to an active resumption of her theological speculations." 48 He states:

In the case of Clough, as in that of Sidney Herbert, she sometimes attributed to infirmity of will what was in fact due to infirmity of body. 49

These are some of the harshest words Cook uses for Florence Nightingale but it lacks Strachey's irony and

49. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 11.
accusations against her. Strachey makes Dr. Sutherland shiver in his boots in fear of Florence Nightingale. However, from what Cook writes it appears that it was Dr. Sutherland who annoyed her. He writes:

But the doctor, who was not always very business-like, sometimes tried the patience of the exacting Lady-in-Chief. Her aunt records a day when a tiff with Dr. Sutherland caused her niece a serious attack of palpitation of the heart.50

The same idea is formed again when Cook later writes of another incident. It so happened Florence Nightingale asked Dr. Sutherland to supply certain instructions on sanitation to her for Lord Dufferin who was going out to India to replace Lord Ripon. The doctor however was busy with his research on cholera bacillus. Nor would he work on Sundays.

Dr. Sutherland was not to be cajoled into abandoning either his science or his Sabbatarianism ... Miss Nightingale did not believe in the bacillus but allowed herself to be appeased, especially as it turned out that Lord Dufferin was not leaving London till a day or two later than she had supposed. So, she and Dr. Sutherland collaborated in indoctrinating their fifth Viceroy in the truths of their Sanitary gospel.51

There is no hint that Dr. Sutherland dreaded Florence Nightingale. Instead Cook gives a lively account of their

51. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 344.
relationship. We get the impression of an irascible old couple working together for a good cause.

Regarding Florence Nightingale's friendship with Mr. Jowett, Strachey writes:

For many years the Master of Balliol acted as her spiritual adviser. He discussed with her in a series of enormous letters the problems of religion and philosophy; he criticised her writings on those subjects with the tactful sympathy of a cleric who was also a man of the world; and he even ventured to attempt at times to instil into her rebellious nature some of his own peculiar suavity. 52

Cook does not write of Jowett's "tactful sympathy" or of his "peculiar suavity". Regarding his reading of her writings particularly Suggestions for Thought, Cook writes:

He read it, and was greatly interested; so much so that, in addition to sending her a letter of general criticism, he was at the pains to annotate it in the margin. He hoped that he might be allowed to see the remainder. A perusal of this increased his high opinion, 'I have seldom felt less inclined to criticize,' he said, 'than in reading this book.' But one or two criticisms he did offer — 'for your consideration,' he said, 'and not as pretending to lay down to law on the subject to any one, much less to you'; and he invited further correspondence. Miss Nightingale's essays remained in his mind, for in a famous book, published nine years later, he introduced an allusion to them. 53

52. E.V., p. 170.
Cook also comments: "The criticisms were many, and often far-reaching, but no less frequent are expressions such as 'Very good', 'Very fine and noble'."^54

Strachey does not mention these appreciations of Mr. Jowett. The statement that even though he criticised her writings he did not forget to be tactful probably refers to the comments "Very good", "Very fine" in Cook.

Strachey ignores Florence Nightingale's literary career, which was just as distinguished as her other career. It appears from his book that Mill, Carlyle and Jowett all scoffed at her literary work. He makes her angry with Mill for not being convinced with her proof of the existence of God after reading her writings. Strachey writes that Florence Nightingale was hurt at Carlyle's remark about her being a lost lamb bleating on the mountains after reading her writing. Strachey comments: "Mr. Jowett's suavity was required to keep the peace."^55 He quietened her by writing to her.

From Cook we get to know that her literary works were of high merit. According to Cook if she had not been absorbed in practical affairs during the active years of her life, or

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55. E.V., p. 170.
if at a later time her energy or inclination had not been thwarted by ill health, she would have easily attained a place among the philosophical writers of the nineteenth century.

Once when she expressed a desire to free herself from official drudgery Jowett seized the occasion to advice her to indulge in literary work which would be a good recreation for her. She would gain permanent influence by writing books or essays he expressed. She took his advice and occupied herself in writing a good deal she also helped him with his writings.

Cook then writes:

Another scheme was carried out. In 1873 an edition of the Bible appeared which has a history of some interest. The School and Children's Bible it was called; ... it is not generally known that the other principal collaborator with Mr. Jowett was Miss Nightingale.56

Much of her philosophical and religious writings consisting of translations of passages from devotional writings of the Middle Ages were inspired by Jowett.

Cook writes that Florence Nightingale constantly had nursing friends to stay with her. A friend of hers wrote:

'During our visit Mr. Jowett came for a few days; he was very pleasant to us and full of kindness.

I remember his speaking of a quality in our hostess which always struck us; I mean the thoroughness in all details of her hospitality, even to putting flowers in our rooms gathered by herself in the garden.\textsuperscript{57}

Jowett used to say that he never saw Miss Nightingale or received a letter from her without feeling strengthened for his duties. Strachey's conclusion regarding the friendship of Florence Nightingale and Jowett suggests a decay in friendship. He writes that at first Florence Nightingale spoke very highly of Jowett but as time passed she grew impatient:

He was devoted to her; though the precise nature of his feelings towards her never quite transpired. Her feelings towards him were more mixed. At first, he was 'that great and good man' -- 'that true saint, Mr. Jowett'; but, as time went on, some gall was mingled with the balm; the acrimony of her nature asserted itself. She felt that she gave more sympathy than she received; she was exhausted, she was annoyed, by his conversation. Her tongue, one day, could not refrain from shooting out at him. 'He comes to me, and he talks to me', she said, 'as if I were someone else.'\textsuperscript{58}

From Strachey it appears that Florence Nightingale could not tolerate the supremacy of others over her. Whoever did not echo her mind and thought fell from her favour.

Cook writes:

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 311-312.

\textsuperscript{58} E.V., p. 7/8
There was a time, as we have heard, when Miss Nightingale's friendship with Mr. Jowett, though it did not diminish, yet became sensible, on her side at least of a certain discomfort; but that time was short. Later years brought occasion for a renewal of more effective sympathy; and as old age began to steal upon them, the friends held closer together. Mr. Jowett was deeply interested in many of Miss Nightingale's later Indian interests — especially in those that related to education. 59

Her concern for Jowett's welfare was so great that when he fell ill Cook states:  

Miss Nightingale had daily letters or telegrams sent to her reporting the patient's condition in much detail. This was her regular practice in the case of relations or friends for whom she was solicitous. 60

Misunderstanding between friends is nothing unusual especially when both were talented, difference of opinions can take place but that does not mean the end of a friendship. Strachey puts an end to it there. But Cook takes the trouble to explain that it was only temporary. Their friendship became more firm as days went by.

Strachey thinks that Florence Nightingale achieved her purpose so easily because she belonged to the highest circle of society. No one dared ignore her, had she been a commoner the whole thing would have been different.

60. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 395.
Cook states that her very nature was such that she drew throngs of people to her side. She was full of sympathy for others, besides she was an expert in her field of work naturally the people sought her help constantly.

The War Office constantly sought her to solve their difficulties and disputes. They wanted her suggestions on new ideas. She was recognized as a kind of super professor by the War Office. Many experts who felt the needs for reform in the British Army and also knew the difficulties of reform found an invaluable ally in her, they went to her openly or secretly with hints and requests of assistance. She did not take advantage of her position, and was extremely reserved in her ways. To Quote Cook:

Never reluctant to intervene in cases which might be considered within her competence, she had the strongest objection to weakening her influence by any appearance of meddling in matters wherein she had no better right to express an opinion than anybody else.61

Strachey states that Florence Nightingale always kept ready the weapon of public support for her. She threatened to let loose the public upon those who tried to hamper her work. But there is no such idea in Cook of her using the public for her benefit.

Strachey is of the opinion that her illness was of great convenience. Just as the Eastern Emperors ruled invisibly from their ceremonial palaces, Florence Nightingale too ruled from her chamber above, her illness was just as good as the seclusion of the palace. It acted as a barrier and it kept her hidden. It protected her from the reach of the people. They had to wait patiently for hours for her audience, even then only a lucky few were ushered into her presence.

Cook does not think in the same way. He looks into her illness differently. He writes:

The body was so weak that the wonder is how a woman in delicate health was able to perform so much of what Sidney Herbert called 'a man's work' in the world. She was supported, sustained, inspired by great spiritual force and energy, which drove her to seek self-satisfaction in a dedicated life of work, and which in its turn found expression in a form of religion, independently attained and intensely held, ...[62]

He also states that she was busy all the time with serious work, but all her work was done in quiet. The most remarkable thing being during all these years she was constantly down with physical weakness, yet it could not overcome her zeal for work. She was full of energy and fire and spent her days in writing and talking. A look into her bibliography is enough to indicate the vast amount of her writing.

Cook does not compare her seclusion to that of Eastern Emperors, or their palaces. He writes that in her own secluded court she worked indefatigably, but she screened herself closely from the world. "The screen from the outside world was provided by the devotion of relations and a few intimate friends." 63

Probably Strachey takes his idea of a palace from Cook's words: "secluded court". And his idea that those who wanted to see her had to go through Dr. Sutherland is probably taken from Cook's statement that Dr. Sutherland was by her side.

Strachey writes that even after a hectic life in the practical field Florence Nightingale felt she had not done enough work. She desired to conquer more worlds. On looking around about her she suddenly spotted the religious world. She at once entered upon it with the idea of doing some good for it. "She would correct the mistakes of the churches; she would point out just where Christianity was wrong; ..." 64

In Cook we find that it was not as Strachey had stated that having finished her work in the practical field she entered upon the religious side. It was something spontaneous in her.

64. E.V., p. 466.
She was conscious of a "Call" from the beginning of her life. At first she could not ascertain to which field of activity she was being called but once she understood the meaning of the Call she knew her path was not the ordinary path trod by all men and women. She sacrificed her life of ease, she did not marry, she broke away from home to follow the Call of God and she was successful. Cook states that her nature was profoundly religious, so much so it was her firm faith in God that helped her to endure her severe illness, she had no complaints to make about her physical infirmity. It was her belief in God that inspired her to do a giant's work. Yet she was full of humbleness and never thought of herself doing much.

With an eye to her haughtiness Strachey states that she could not think of herself as an insignificant person fallen from glory. He dramatizes:

Yet her mind, so positive, so realistic, so ultra-practical, had its singular revulsions, its mysterious moods of mysticism and of doubt. At times, lying sleepless in the early hours, she fell into long, strange, agonised meditations, and then, seizing a pencil, she would commit to paper the confessions of her soul. The morbid longings of her pre-Crimean days came over her once more; she filled page after page with self examination, self-criticism, self-surrender .... She was lonely, she was miserable .... One night, waking suddenly, she saw, in the dim light of the night-lamp, tenebrous shapes, upon the wall. The past rushed back upon her. 'Am I she who once stood on that Crimean height!'
she wildly asked — "The Lady with a lamp shall stand ... The lamp shows me only my utter shipwreck."  

Cook writes about the same thing to show that Florence Nightingale, who was a tower of strength and inspiration to others was to herself the weakest of human vessels, and lowest of God's servants, she never thought too high of herself.

Strachey makes fun of Florence Nightingale's unorthodox notion of God:

Yet her conception of God was certainly not orthodox. She felt towards Him as she might have felt towards a glorified sanitary engineer; and in some of her speculations she seems hardly to distinguish between the Deity and the Drains. As one turns over these singular pages, one has the impression that Miss Nightingale has got the Almighty too into her clutches, and that, if He is not careful, she will kill Him with overwork.

Just as she had killed Sidney Herbert and Clough with overwork, this is what Strachey has in mind.

There is a touch of drama in Strachey when he writes:

Sometimes word came down that Miss Nightingale was just well enough to see one of her visitors. The fortunate was led up, was ushered, trembling, into the shaded chamber, and, of course, could never afterwards forget the interview.

65. Ibid., p. 169.
66. Ibid., p. 167.
67. Ibid., pp. 164-165.
Cook is very specific, he gives in details the people Florence Nightingale saw. She saw her father often. Her mother and sister she saw occasionally, but she hardly had any time for the other members of the family or friends, who had nothing to do with her work. Besides she was so busy and ill too. She met people by appointment only. So there was no question of people waiting for her. Florence Nightingale was a conspicuous advocate of light and sun. She could never allow her room to be shaded. So Strachey’s "shaded chamber" is unacceptable. Cook describes her chamber as a well lighted one facing south with the walls painted white and having huge windows without any curtains.

Though Cook discusses in detail Florence Nightingale's role as a reformer on many issues relating to India, Strachey does not mention her reforms for India, he mentions an incident that when her influence was at its height in India she issued an order to keep all windows of the hospital wards open to let in fresh air just because she had found it helpful at Scutari. She would not be cajoled into the fact that it just could not be done in India since the hot weather would not permit it. Finally the Viceroy Lord Lawrence had to use his authority to

desist her. For this reason she thought the Viceroy to be a weak person giving into public demand so easily.

But it must be borne in mind that Strachey is not interested in the reforms that she carried out for India. He simply wants to stress upon that aspect of her character which is hateful to him, viz., her fanaticism. This incident relating to her insistence on having the windows kept open gives rise to other thoughts. She had never come to India, so there is no question of her having any practical experience at all. Yet she was thought to be an authority on India and each Viceroy before leaving for India visited her for her advice regarding Indian affairs. There were reasons behind this, it must be remembered that though she had not visited India her interest in India was immense and this thirst to know India, to help the needy in India, made her correspond with many Indians upon a great variety of subjects. One has a wonderful experience while going through these letters. It is amazing to find someone so much interested to help the people whom she had nothing to do with. It would not have mattered in the least if she had not think about these people. But we see her as a friend of India. She insisted upon facts and facts only from her friends in letters relating to certain Indian questions because from these letters we find her briefing the Home
Government upon these issues. That is why she asked for facts so that she could take up the matter with the Ministers in the Cabinet there and have them send orders for the relief of the oppressed in India accordingly. We know how influential she was! Priya Ranjan Sen, the editor of some of these letters, which were addressed to his father, writes that her love for humanity transcended geographical limitations. The letters contain her concern for the Indian peasant. She felt that the ryots who were dependent upon the Zamindars were exploited. She sought for the protection of the ryots by the Government. Though the Rent Act X of 1859 was passed with an eye towards the protection of the ryots by the Government, it could not give a practical relief. By the Act a ryot who cultivated the same plot continuously for twelve years was given some sort of protection under the Act. But the Zamindars did not allow any peasant to till for twelve years at a stretch, they frequently evicted these peasants, who were poor and ignorant. Disputes between landlords and tenants grew chronic in Bengal. The Act was in need of further revision. The miserable condition of the ryots drew the sympathy of many patriotic Indians. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee tried through his writings to make the people conscious of this evil before them. Many English
people came forward to fight for the cause of the tillers. It was in this connection that letters were exchanged between Florence Nightingale and Prasanna Kumar Sen, Vakil and Attorney of Calcutta High Court. These letters were written between 1878 and 1882. Quotation from one such letter will show to what extent she felt for the poor people. Nineteen years had passed after the Act X of 1859 was passed and no noticeable improvement had taken place in the condition of the ryots. She felt something more had to be done, so she sought the help of her Indian friend.


Sir,
I have very many thanks to offer you for your kind note of Sept. 16, and for your valuable pamphlet, which accompanied it on the 'Bengal Land Question', — as also for one on the 'Rent Question' by Mr. P.C. Roy; and for Mr. Dutt's most interesting little book on the 'Bengal Peasantry' with which I was already acquainted.

For each and for all of these pray accept my hearty thanks: as for the copies of the 'Bengal Land Question' which I am circulating among men who care for India and who have influence. ... I would earnestly request you to put down narratives of individual ryots, (with time, name and place,) in this connection. English people will not read Reports in general, for generalities, abstractions, statistics, or opinions, such as most Reports are full of. They want facts: individual facts concerning particular instances, real lives and effects.

Give us detailed facts, we want to rouse the interest of the public: for behind the
Cabinet in England always stands the House of Commons and behind the House of Commons always stands the British public. And these are they we want to interest: and these can only be interested by narratives of real lives. ...

This is what is wanted to interest the people of England and make a Government work for us. ... Should you be kindly willing to collect the facts, but there should arise some difficulty as to the expense of putting them in print, perhaps you will kindly let me know. ..."71

This letter reveals her weakness for the poor in India. In many of these letters she tells that she is very ill due to over-work. In one letter she writes:

23 years of overwork and illness have been mine. But this last half year, ending with my dear mother's blessed going 'home' (but what a gap to me!) can scarcely come again. 6 years without one day's rest of body or mind I have had. (Excuse my excuses.)"72

The allegation made by some biographers that she hardly had any time for her mother and sister when she was at the height of her fame is not true.

A look at her writings on India shows her wide ranging interest in the country. The titles of the writings show that she not only wrote about various subjects but sought improvement upon each. She took interest and worked for the good of Sanitary

71. Ibid., pp. 4-8.
Strachey does not mention that as she grew old and until near her end her health for a time improved, the weakness of heart and nerves which distressed her in middle life had left her. But it did not make any difference to her mode of life. She still remained indoors and continued to work very hard. Those who saw her in this state of health got the impression that it was a robust and vigorous old age. These details are supplied by Cook. Strachey on the other hand explains her end differently. He writes that the haughty, high-handed lady who was so used to commanding others, and treated God like any other sanitary engineer she knew, got her due towards the end of her life. He mentions that, she was a "proud woman" and a "terrible commander". Her writings were full of bitter attacks, and were drawn up with "the vindictive relish of a Swift". She possessed a "haughty eye" and an "acrid mouth" and a brain that had been "stealed at Scutari". But she was not to die in this state. The sting had to be taken out of her and as she advanced in years, she got her punishment. Destiny played a cruel game on her. She was stripped of all these qualities, and Strachey presents a sad picture of her. She became soft and eager to oblige others. She craved for compliments and friendship. He also draws a
picture of an old lady smiling all day long with a cracked brain. Strachey cleverly avoids from putting it all as his own opinion. He transfers it upon the doings of Destiny.

Cook's description of her end is without any sting. He simply states that gradually her powers failed, and for the last fifteen years of her life she hardly left her room. In 1887 she had talked of herself as being almost blind, and want of memory. At first it was only the dates and names which she could not remember but after a few years it became more general, she did not like the idea of a nurse taking up her charge, and often at night when the nurse tucked her up in bed she would get out of bed go into the next room and tuck up the nurse herself. Those who served her were impressed by her kindness and consideration.

Regarding her Honours Strachey says that just three years before her death and when she had lost her sight and memory those in authority thought that the most opportune moment had arrived for them to honour her with the Order of Merit. He was criticising the Government and the men in authority too. They could not think of a better time to bestow

73. E.V., p. 173.

the honour. They were slack. It was as if they were doing their routine work. The sincerity is lacking. He makes it more interesting by describing the prize giving ceremony. We get to know that Florence Nightingale was made to sit up in bed with the support of pillows all around, while Sir Douglas Dawson, made a short speech, then he stepped forward and handed over the Scroll to her. But the recipient of the honour hardly understood anything beyond that it was some sort of a compliment. She for the first time was not being ironical when she uttered "too kind, too kind". 75

The transformation of Florence Nightingale from a haughty being into a sad tragic figure is what Strachey aims at doing at the end. He is quite successful in his aim. The indomitable will which she once possessed is reduced to nothingness, she loses all control over her senses. Thus Strachey qualifies his attack. Strachey ends his essay before Florence Nightingale's death, hence he gets no chance to describe her quiet funeral. Cook not only describes this point meticulously but he also mentions another honour conferred on Florence Nightingale. He writes:

On March 16, 1908, the Freedom of the City of London was conferred upon her — hitherto conferred on only one woman, Lady Burdett-Coutts.

75. E.V., p. 174.
Miss Nightingale was able with great difficulty to sign from her bed her initials upon the City's roll of honour, but it is doubtful if she understood what she was being asked to sign. ... In the years of her strength she had ever a dread and a misgiving of the world's praises. In the days of her weakness, when power of work in this world had gone from her, she would have regarded such honours, had she understood them, as coming too late. She sought no glory crowned but the opportunity of doing New Work. 76

Strachey does not mention the second honour. Cook concludes that she had left instructions that her funeral was to be of the simplest possible kind, and that only two persons were to accompany her body to the grave. Accordingly she was buried beside her father and mother in the church-yard of East Wellow, near her old home in Hampshire. She did not like people to make too much of her when she was living, on the other hand she wanted to serve them without any reward. In death too she did not want that anybody should do anything for her. She remained noble till the end. 77 Cook is more understanding, he tries to explain that even though she did not care for honours when she was busy she would have felt happy if she was honoured when she had her full senses, after all she was human. Strachey would have done better had he been more sympathetic to her by interpreting her actions with greater simplicity.

77. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 422.