God more than ever to think how straight He is sending His Spirit down into her as into the prophets and saints of old....” And in another letter: ¹ “I am glad that Miss—likes North and South. I did not think Margaret was so over good. What would she say to Florence Nightingale? I can’t imagine! for there is intellect such as I never came in contact with before in woman!—only twice in man—great beauty, and of her holy goodness who is fit to speak?"

A famous writer has said of the saints, that the greatest and most helpful of them have always shown some wit or humour; ² and of Florence Nightingale Mrs. Gaskell noted further: “She has a great deal of fun, and is carried along by that, I think. She mimics most capitaly.”

Miss Nightingale cut short her holiday on hearing that an epidemic of cholera had broken out in London. She volunteered to give help with the cholera patients in the Middlesex Hospital. She was up day and night receiving the women patients—chiefly, it seems, outcasts in the district of Soho—undressing them, and ministering to them. The epidemic, however, subsided, and she returned to her normal work in Harley Street.

VI

The work there did not fail within its appointed scope, but in another way the failure which Miss Nightingale had predicted in her letter to Madame Mohl soon became apparent. The scale of the undertaking was more restricted than Florence had desired, and she saw no means of widening it. She had wanted to receive patients of all classes, to enrol many volunteer nurses, to have opportunities for training them. Among a wide circle, both at home and abroad, her knowledge and her talents were well understood; and already, in her correspondence for a year or two past, she appears as a woman to whom reference was made as to one speaking with authority. A missionary in Paris applied to her for two well-qualified matrons. “Alas,” she had to reply, “I have no fish of that kind.” She was

¹ To Catherine Winkworth, Jan. 1, 1855.