

BOOKS AND REVIEWS

The Personality of Florence Nightingale, Alberta R. Kovacs, *International Nursing Review*, Geneva, 1973, No. 3.

...It has been interesting to note the various patterns emerging as each of the three kinds of references were consulted. Their content, scope and style undoubtedly varied with the purpose and background of the author. There appears to be agreement among writers in each of the three areas; that is, sufficient agreement about Miss *Nightingale's* outstanding characteristics to present three different aspects of her personality. These may be viewed as having created three distinct but not entirely separate images.

For example, nursing histories emphasize her practical nature, her discipline and obedience as well as her gentleness and good breeding—in other words, the qualities desired in a nurse. On the other hand, the general histories have pointed up the more forceful aspects of the *Nightingale* personality—leadership, dignity, competence and self-sacrifice, all of which were highlighted during the Crimean crisis. The biographic dictionaries crystallize the attributes of energy, industry and perseverance.

Disagreements between sources may be viewed as differences in emphasis, rather than omissions. It is evident that one must read exhaustively from a wide variety of sources to obtain a complete description of the *Nightingale* personality. It is apparent that the various approaches to the topic are made each with its 'own kind of bias'. Of special interest and importance is the fact that mention was made of only one of Miss *Nightingale's* faults.

For these reasons, it would be rewarding to read her letters and books to determine what she reveals of herself.
