

### The Nurses' Missionary Association.

(In aid of the Medical Mission Work of the S.P.C.K.)

#### MISS MARY KINGSLEY'S ADDRESS.

I presume I have been requested to speak to you in order that my imperfections may throw by contrast into their proper light the utterances of the great authorities who have spoken, or will speak, to you to-day. Some portrait painters, as you know,

put in a background to the portrait of a great man, a background that looks rather like a very bad London fog, or like a slab of slate, or like the makings of uncommon dirty weather. That is in itself uninteresting, but yet which serves the purpose of throwing into high relief the strength and beauty of the portraits. Such an artist undoubtedly requested me to be background to-day, and I gladly obey, for I yield to no one in my admiration of those men and women who, throwing down their lives before their God, leave home, friends, comfort, country, in order to save the soul life of those races of men who are neither kith nor kin to them. I, in my heart, believe all kinds of missionaries are heroes. I know, however, it is a

most dangerous thing to say, particularly when there are so many people personally connected with missions, or missionaries themselves *present*; I speak from experience. I, only the other day, remarked calmly as merely stating an acknowledged fact that the missionary spirit was an heroic one, and that missionaries who went to West Africa or China, or such like places, were particularly worthy of admiration. I go no further, for there was a real live West African missionary present, in fact, only him and some friends of his. He was a man who for twelve

years had laboured in the deadliest part of West Africa, and he rose at me like a lion saying, "No, we are not heroes, we only do our duty." I asked him civilly what heroism consisted in except doing one's duty, but I got no answer. It is no use talking common sense to men nowadays, and if there had been some missionaries from bad parts of China, and so on present, I daresay I should have been torn to shreds. Warned by this and many similar little incidents, I will not run the risk of praising missionary affairs. I

cannot give anything but praise to the individual missionaries. I have had the honour of knowing many in the mission field of Western Africa; good men, brave men, wise men, and true, all of them that I have met have been, and I have always said so. It is true I have not as Dr. Battersby has said, met at their Lagos stations' representatives of the Church Missionary Society, because I have never been ashore at Lagos, nor have I ever claimed to have been, but I have met the representatives of the Church Missionary Society on shipboard, so I exclude from my admiration no class of missionary who risks his life to save as he believes the soul life of the West African natives, but I can continue as I have begun, and criticise minor points in



MISS MARY KINGSLEY.

the affair. The general purpose of missions is I think beyond criticism. England sends her merchants and her explorers into the uttermost parts of the earth, no one abuses them for going where it is dangerous, surely; it is ridiculous for English men and women to abuse, or to question the right of the missionaries to go where it is dangerous. If she claims the right to spread her commerce and her conquest she need not apologise for spreading her religion.

The only thing she need care about is whether it be commerce, conquest, or religion she sends out; that she

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