

## Matrons in Council.

### THE NURSING OF THE SICK AT SEA.\*

BY THE COMTE C. DE CARDI.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I am afraid, after the speeches I have heard here to-day, my speech will appear a very swamp of amateurism. I shall



not trouble you with a lot of figures and particulars of the death-rate in any particular part of the world to which British ships sail, and in which the enterprise of Englishmen has planted the Union Jack, but, as my personal knowledge of my subject has been chiefly gained on the West and South-West coast of Africa, my remarks must be taken to apply principally to that part of the world.

In tropical West Africa, Great Britain possesses to-day the following colonies—Gambia, Sierra Leone, Sherbro, the Gold Coast, which includes Kumasi, where the native revolt is just now causing the Government some uneasiness, Lagos, Northern and Southern Nigeria. Now, this long list of possessions represents a wonderfully rich and valuable commercial asset to the English nation, the immense size of these countries is yet but faintly realized by the British public. West Africa exports a number of the most valuable natural products, which its soil produces of its own accord, without the natives having to expend much toil in assisting nature in her wonderful work.

Amongst these products I must mention gold, because I fully believe the time is not far distant when West Africa will astonish the world by her enormous production of the yellow metal; but in its climate, West Africa—and I might almost say the same of any of England's tropical possessions—has a jealous guardian of its wealth. King Fever reigns supreme and claims yearly a fearful toll from the adventurous white man who dares to seek fortune within his dominions.

Within the last few years, a number of thoughtful ladies banded themselves together and formed the Colonial Nursing Association, in which the Right Hon. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain has taken very great interest, and I am sure any one who is in any way connected with England's tropical colonies—whether as a merchant

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risking his goods there in trade, or the white trader risking his life in the discharge of his duties, or the Government employé—will gratefully remember the names of these ladies who have so successfully started the Colonial Nursing Association. I believe we are indebted, in the first place, for the idea of a Colonial Nursing Association, to Mrs. Piggott, a lady who knew what was wanted from a personal experience of what life in the Tropics for the average white, male or female, was. Luckily, she was in a position to get the benevolent assistance of eminently philanthropic ladies such as Mrs. Chamberlain, Lady Amptill, and Mrs. Antrobus, who have never flinched in their purpose, though, I believe, they have met with many difficulties and disappointments in their work.

Whilst speaking about ladies who have taken a great interest in ameliorating the lot of those white people whose duty or business carries them into tropical countries, I must not forget to mention the name of the late and much lamented Miss Mary Kingsley, whose practical and personal acquaintance with the requirements of the sick in tropical countries, and Western and South-Western Africa in particular, was of such a high order that I cannot allow this opportunity to pass without bearing my testimony to her wonderful grasp of this subject. I am sure that, had Miss Mary Kingsley been spared to be with us to-day, it is not I that would have been addressing you on this subject, for I am sure she could and would have read you a much more interesting paper than I am doing.

The Colonial Nursing Association has taken in hand the care of the sick on shore, but there is another branch that requires the attention of the British public, and that is the Nursing of the Sick at Sea. At present few, if any, British ships are provided either with the necessary staff or with a hospital. There are many difficulties in the way of getting the ship-owners to provide either the necessary staff or the hospital of their own accord and at their own expense, because most of the lines of steamships are owned to-day by companies, whose shareholders might think it was not quite the right way to deal with their interests if the Managing Director parcelled off a portion of the ship's passenger space and called it a hospital, and always kept it ready to receive sick passengers, and, no doubt, it would be a costly arrangement, because, for the hospital to be of any practical use in a tropical climate, it would have to be large and would mean a loss in passenger space of perhaps the equal of £500 per ship per annum, which would, of course, be reduced to nil if on each voyage the hospital

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