

## NURSES' MISSIONARY LEAGUE.

### NURSES FROM AFAR.

At the Valedictory Meetings of the Nurses' Missionary League on October 4th, an exceptionally large number of Nurses listened with deep interest to the thrilling accounts given by missionary members of their experiences in distant lands.

First came MRS. VICKERS (trained at the Royal Infirmary, Manchester), who has worked in the midst of the jungle in S. India, many miles from any doctor, and indeed from the nearest European. She described case after case; the little Indian mother of 15, lying unconscious on the mud floor of the verandah ("for you are not permitted to die in the house") surrounded by women relatives who would not touch her for fear of pollution, whose cure opened up a whole village for the preaching of the Gospel; the other women brought in after being in labour for from five to seven days "after the village midwife and her husband, the barber, had done their worst with a rusty iron hook and with charms until the patients were in an indescribable condition" and so forth. Perhaps most interesting were her accounts of epidemics: plague, during which she inoculated 3,600 patients, 267 in one afternoon; cholera, when she distributed large bottles of preventive medicine through the villages; influenza, during which the population of whole villages died, and Mrs. Vickers, herself ill in bed, had to prescribe for the whole district while her husband made up and distributed the medicine. Vividly Mrs. Vickers showed the terrible fear which haunts the lives of these outcast villages. "There is no loving God, no Father of mankind, no guiding Spirit of Truth. Many gods, and more goddesses, but they are avenging devils to be propitiated only by offerings, and when angry by the slaughter of flocks and herds. Devils are real living powers to them."

From very different surroundings came Miss A. G. SOPER (trained at Camberwell Infirmary), who has been working in the city of Lima, Peru. She briefly described the history of the Inca Indians, their wonderful ancient civilization, their conquest by the Spaniards, their present degrading poverty and misery and vice. There are hospitals, but the conditions are like those against which Florence Nightingale contended, the patients never washed, sheets changed once in three months, no attention paid to diet. Miss Soper's work has been to superintend a school for boy and girl nurses, who are being trained to go and work in these hospitals. Three hospitals—a men's, a women's, and an asylum—are now open to them and 100 are at work, keen and quick to learn. The whole of this great work is now in the hands of one trained nurse. Little wonder that Miss Soper pleaded for recruits!

In the afternoon Miss E. HORNE (trained at the Royal Infirmary, Derby) carried the audience's thoughts to Central Africa, and told a similar story to Mrs. Vickers' of terror in the lives of the Africans,

of the putting to death of twin babies because they are unlucky, of the power of the native witch doctors, and the crude ideas about illness (e.g., that a patient with measles must never be allowed to go to sleep). Miss Horne was one of those missionaries interned by the Germans early in the War, and she spoke in highest terms of the wonderful courage of the African Christians and their devoted loyalty to their faith and to their English teachers.

The next speaker, Miss C. F. TIPPETT (trained at the Royal Infirmary, Gloucester), who had worked for nineteen years in Central China, again told of dense ignorance and of ghastly suffering, and her address was an eloquent plea for more workers. "You will have a much larger scope than ever you want. You may have to be house-surgeon, dispenser, matron, everything all in one. You will see cases you would never see at home; they come to us so advanced as to be hardly recognisable. People say of us 'Oh! poor dear, she is a missionary.' I assure you I don't feel a 'poor dear' at all! It is a joy, a privilege and an honour to add one to the thin, thin line of workers. If I had twenty lives, I would spend them all in China. But, believe me, a worker out there is absolutely powerless unless she has the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and of His salvation."

In very similar terms Miss SANTLER (trained at the Royal Infirmary, Bristol), told of the work in her part of China, of the variety and opportunities of the work, and of the ignorance, superstition, and callousness to suffering. She told, too, of the tremendous results of the medical work from the Christian point of view. The city of Kweiliu was opened to the missionaries by the giving of medicine to one youth who later was the first Chinese man ordained in the Province. In the little church, almost every member first heard the Gospel as a patient in hospital.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the day's events was the reading of the lists of members of the League sailing for the mission field this year. They number 29, representing 20 different training schools, and going out under practically every Society which carries on medical work, to Africa, India, China, Palestine, Australia, S. America, and the Near East. A large number had already started for their posts, several sent messages, and the four who were able to be present each spoke a few words. The day closed with an address by Canon de Candole, who reminded his hearers that those who go forth conquering and to conquer must be girt with the armour of Redemption and with the armour of renewal in the Holy Ghost.

It was reported by the Infectious Hospitals Committee to the Metropolitan Asylums Board last Saturday that the number of patients in the infectious hospitals\* on September 28 under treatment was 7,034, as compared with 5,669 on the corresponding date last year. It is probable another 1,000 beds will have to be provided.

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