

APPENDIX

The following letter which has come to light since the biography was published will interest readers

December 12, 1903.

DEAR MR. IRVINE—What mingled feelings your letter has called forth mostly of a sad nature. What a rush of memories of the romantic Old Calabar of my youth the dear old friends, whose like we do not see now. The changed conditions from the days when we lived among the natives, and they and we were free as the air to pursue callings under more than Bohemian licence, the advent of the steamers with their old and kindly, if rather rough and exaggerated, criticisms from skipper and man, the open hospitality on hulk and in mission houses, and the general camaraderie and bond of friendship, which a stay on this Coast invariably conveyed—how changed it is now, all is brand new. The advent of the British Government has brought all the freedom of the native and the European to an end, and just as if a cannon ball had exploded and shattered and scattered us as so many different particles, and sent us off into separate locations, the old community of feeling is at an end, and the rush and competition and conventionality which make life in Europe such a strain has come here to stay.

I do not face Calabar now, I've not been in Duke Town for years, unless a short visit to the Consulate hill during the Aro Expedition may be called going to Duke Town. I've not been in Orange Grove (Mammie Sutherland's old house) for eight years, the changes and memories are too powerful, and this leads me to the changes in the mission. The changed conditions, of course, affect the missionaries too, and life is much harder for them. The constant inspection of premises by the Government, the transition from the old native law to the British Constitution and jurisprudence, the frictions of various kinds in private and public life for the native in which the European gets involved if only by sympathy, the constant influx of people from the coast, the putting of pompous and official persons into posts of authority, the fact of there being a garrison of heathen soldiers in their midst—all this and much more make the missionaries' life in Calabar a very strenuous and a prosaic thing. . .

December 14.

I do not know how I got off into this long rigmarole the other day. I am up in the old slaving ground ; the old slave traders used to come to my district to sell

their human wares, so I was often of use to them in sickness or palaver, or the other *et ceteras* connected with their nomadic life ; and now that the Aro Expedition has broken the back of the " open sore " and garrisoned the whole district, I have been able through their kindness to come up and open a station and a school on a small scale. I have only partially-educated boys to send to teach the rudiments, but I come up myself as often as I can, as they gave me a very efficient helper this year who is fully in sympathy with such extension ; so we have a large shed, and two small apartments are cut off from it, where a little privacy and cooking can be got, but it is quite dark save for the light of the doorway, and thus we are " at home " all the time to everybody. It was amid these constant interruptions that I began this, and now I must pull up and come to the answering of your letter, for I shall not get time when I am at home.

You ask me to " give you a full account of Miss Kingsley during the period she stayed with me." Again you say, " Miss Kingsley was put down as an opponent of missions and missionaries." You are also kind enough to say that she returned the affection which she inspired so profoundly in myself, and of that fact I am as proud as I ever was of any communication from her.

But, O dear me! Mr. Irvine, to give you an account of Miss Kingsley and her stay here—you may as well tell me to catch the clouds with their ever varying forms, or catch the perfume of our forest jessamine, or the flashes of the sunlight on the river. Miss Kingsley cannot be portrayed. She had an individuality as pronounced as it was unique, with charm of manner and conversation, while the interplay of wit and mild satire, of pure spontaneous mirth and of profoundly deep seriousness, made her a series of surprises, each one tenderer and more elusive than the foregoing. No there was only one Miss Kingsley, and I can't define her character by speaking in this way, in the terms we speak of one another ; or gather up the beauty and instruction and joy of those days of companionship, and say, There she gave me this or that other impression or impulse or idea. It is like the languorous glamour of a summer day in which one bathed, and lay still, and let life go by in a sweet dream.

But when I come to the second point, at which the bare possibility of Miss Kingsley being an opponent of Christianity comes to the front, I can be decided enough. Miss Kingsley adored the Christ of God, the Saviour of the world, and held that nothing could ever join issue with Him in character as a dynamic force among men. All the trouble of her sensitive heart found rest at His feet. The mystery of pain and suffering which she could not reconcile with Calvary, or Gethsemane, was what sometimes goaded her into saying hard things of God as the creeds represented Him, and perhaps here she was sometimes a little unjust toward the Churches ; but while she longed for light and yearned for the confi-

dence and freedom which some she loved enjoyed and which was in great measure denied to her, she clung constantly and pathetically to the fact that God would at least approve the sincerity of her desire to live for the highest ends and to be of some use to others. " Light or no light, I shall do ever what my conscience tells me He will approve." That was her attitude, and will any Christians say that God shall have disappointed her ?

I dare not betray confidences, sacred as the soul's secrets towards its Maker only can be, else it were easy to prove that Christianity—for the white and for the black alike—alone held hope and progress with Miss Kingsley. She has been blamed for extolling Roman Catholic missionaries and missions at the expense of Protestants and their missions. Miss Kingsley was far too truthful to hide anything she found as good. Whatever the result of her finding, or rather of her telling, might be, she used to say she inherited rabid ideas of Roman Catholicism from her father, as being a political rather than a religious system, and she so feared being biased by this, that she tried to find the best in their methods and in themselves, and gave the best, so that she could be perfectly clear in her own conscience of doing no harm from prejudice to any one. What a pity that everything is so easily wrested from its meaning.

Again, she has been blamed for condoning the drink traffic. When she lived with me my people were steeped in drink ; it could not be exaggerated as an evil, a gigantic evil, but though I told her so she did not see it, and therefore she said, " I can't tell what I have not seen. I have seen more drink in evidence in London in one evening than I have seen up to this time on the Coast." I did not take her to the homes and haunts where those things were to be seen, because she did not come for temperance statistics, and I had my regular work ; moreover, we had a twin baby which frightened everybody and ostracised us in a sense for the time being. I fought the thing after she left, and it is long, long since Christianity conquered at least to the extent of saving the children. She was a traveller, and therefore she saw the top dressing, as it were, and she spoke the truth as far as she knew it on the drink question, though the missionary who differs from her because of his more intimate knowledge of the underpart of native life is right too.

In regard to Mohammedanism, Miss Kingsley's views were not matured ; she had a great longing to disguise herself and travel in North Africa in order to study it, as a great controversy was raging about that time round Mohammedanism and its possibilities for Africa.

All that she then saw was simply summed up. She thought Mohammed a force as represented by the slaver and the political autocrat of the interior and the northern part of Africa. Of the comparative sobriety of the Mohammedan

and his higher morality she spoke clearly enough. If she had had to choose between it and paganism she would have preferred the latter as better for the country and its peoples. If she had had to choose between it and Christianity she would not have mentioned them together, as she believed, as I have already said, that Christianity alone held any hope for Africa.

Her idea of Christianity in its transcendent purity, however, she held would have to be modified to begin with, and she would, like Mohammed, allow polygamy until Christianity worked out its own ideals by its own evolution. The only fear she had for Africa's future was that of tacking on, as it were, by creeds of any kind, or governments, or false ideas as to the dignity of labour, a kind of spurious civilisation and a Christianity which should denationalise the race and keep it from assimilating the constituent parts of those foreign elements which should form dynamic forces for their evolution as a distinct race with distinct possibilities and attainments, contributing their share to the world's weal. It was because the Church held too firmly to the scriptural ideal that she felt it might miss its mark, and she believed the same results would be gained in the end if they only slackened a little for a time. This, and not the fact that the Church teaches too many doctrines, was her theory. It was because in the beginning of things the missionaries held too much perhaps to the educational and spiritual side of Christianity that she thought they had diverted the minds of the native from this world and its business, through which Christianity alone could manifest its power.

It was because the Government applied the jurisprudence which was the accumulation of generations of experience and attainment to a people with no past, with hardly a perceptible consciousness of a present, that she believed they were making fatal mistakes, which the future would pay dearly for. These were all good in their own spheres, but the negro should be left to appropriate of each what he could digest and use, and the rest should be held in abeyance till he could use them, and liberty should be conceded him to grow in his own way towards his own environment. Whether Miss Kingsley developed her views beyond this point, either as regards Mohammedanism or the modes of guiding the growth of conscious being in the African, I do not know. I do know that at one time these were her views, and she never had up till then any idea that Mohammedanism could do more than keep a chief firmly seated on his throne, and so aid the stability of local governments.

I have made a lot of words and no sense, I fear. I have been writing under unfair circumstances till now. I came home on Friday last, and as I had lost my glasses in the bush I could not get anything of any kind written. Whether you will be able to gather any sense out of it I don't know ; whether it will help you

to combat to any degree the utterly false impressions abroad of our dear departed friend I don't know, but if I were speaking to you instead of writing I think I could make it plain what I mean, and it would bear out your own opinions regarding her belief ; she sees light now in His light, and she has not lived in vain ; so for her past, and I am sure for her present, we may thank God, and follow in her steps of self-sacrifice, for she, of all the women I knew, lived not for herself.

I do not think we in Calabar here have to reckon with Mohammed as a force at all ; those who live in the town—at Duke Town—keep themselves and their religion to themselves, and were it not for their dress they would pass unnoticed. Those among the soldiers keep themselves to their duties, and I have found them very willing to listen to the Gospel, nor did I ever hear of any discussion as to the relative merits of either party. No native that I have ever heard of has ever even hinted at the possibility of Calabar giving Mohammed a follower. As to Northern Nigeria, I do not know, except from hearing, and most people think it is just a form which fits as well as any other, but there is no fanaticism or even open aggression among native Mohammedans.—I am, yours most truly,

MARY M. SLESSOR.