



Worldwide Missions

Missionary Biographies

"Ma," the Missionary Heroine of Calabar A Brief Biography of Mary Slessor

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Chapter 1. That for Which She Was Apprehended



One dark night, outside Wishart Pend, in Dundee [Scotland], stood a group of rough lads. In their midst was a small, pale-faced girl. The leader of the gang held a piece of lead attached to a string, which he was swinging round her head. The deadly weapon swung closer and closer with every round, but the girl did not flinch. The boy, as it almost grazed her brow, let the weapon fall to the ground. "Boys, she's game!" he cried, admiringly; and a murmur of approval came from each lad there. "We'll go into your meeting," said the leader, and to the meeting they went. Thenceforth, instead of trying to break up the Mission, they became her staunchest supporters. It was the turning point in the life of the boy who swung the lead.

And who was this small, brave lassie, who had stood so still and quiet under the ordeal?

She was Mary Slessor, the daughter of a cobbler, and herself a factory hand, but destined by God to be one of His greatest blessings to Africa. Timid enough to be afraid of dogs, but full of courage in the works to which God called her.

She was born in Aberdeen [Scotland], on December 2, 1848. When first she came to Dundee with her parents and brothers and sisters, she was, as she says, "a wild lassie," and ran about the streets with other children as wild as herself.

An old widow who used to watch these children and felt concern for their souls would often call them into her room and tell them of their need of salvation.

"If Ye Dinna Repent."

One dark winter afternoon she had gathered them round her fire, and suddenly, with that fire for her text, she showed the children in a few forcible words what is the fate of those who reject God's offer of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"If ye dinna repent, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, your soul will burn in the lowin', bleezin' fire for ever and ever," she said.

No paring down of the awful truth of eternal punishment here, no shaping it to please our weak, shrinking, easy-going nature. These children, young as they were, were in need of salvation; they were in danger of eternal destruction through neglect of it, and warn them she *must*, and *did*.

Dear, faithful old woman, what a wonderful thing she did for Africa when she spoke those words. Mary Slessor was then and there convinced of her need, and in a little while was rejoicing in the fact that she was saved. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Henceforth she lived not unto herself, but unto Him who died for her and rose again.

She was able now to be a help and comfort to her mother, who sorely needed it, for Mr. Slessor had fallen into habits of intemperance, which grew worse as time went on. Mrs. Slessor was often reduced to the direst straits in feeding and clothing her children. She, as well as Mary, had to work in the factory, as the father was no support to the home, spending every penny he could get in drink.

Life at the factory where Mary worked for fourteen years, beginning at the early age of eleven years, was very hard. The hours were from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., with an hour for breakfast and an hour for dinner. She had to be up at 5 every morning in order to help in the work at home, and yet with all these strenuous hours she managed to find time to cultivate her mind; like Livingstone, propping a book up on her loom in order to glance at it in precious leisure moments. On the way to and from the factory her eyes were mostly on her book.

Added to this, she attended the services in Wishart Church, to which her mother belonged; and she had a class of "lovable lassies" in the Sunday School.

When a Mission was started at 6 Queen Street, nearly opposite Quarry Pend, she volunteered as a teacher. This work was attended with dangers, as we have seen, and the older teachers always surrounded the younger ones on leaving the Mission, in order to protect them.

Later on the Mission was transferred to Wishart Pend, where she had charge of classes for boys and girls, both on Sundays and week nights. It was outside this room the boys had surrounded her when she happened to be alone, on the evening on which our story begins.

The lad who had swung the lead, when he grew to manhood and became prosperous, sent Mary a photograph of himself, his wife, and family, which photograph decorated the wall of one of her bush houses in Africa.

Conquering a Bully.

On another occasion, whilst a very officious young bully, armed with a whip, was pursuing his usual occupation of compelling the lads to go into her meeting, whilst refusing to do so himself, she faced him and asked:

"What would happen if we changed places?"

"I suppose I'd feel this whip across my back," he replied. Turning her back, she said she'd bear it for him if he'd go in.

"You would really bear that for me?" the astonished lad asked.

"I would, and much more. So go on. I am in earnest."

But he threw the whip down and went in, and that very night accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

Wherever Mary Slessor went she exercised a marvelous influence. The rough lads adored her; the women and children in the darkest, poorest houses where she visited, looked for her eagerly, and many a sad mother was braced and comforted by her courage and cheerfulness. In the factory, the strength and sweetness of her character influenced the workers to such an extent that the whole community seemed to feel it.

Why was it? How was it? It was because Mary Slessor's heart was on fire with love and gratitude to Him who had saved her from wrath to come, and her one aim was to bring souls to Him.

Dr. H. Bonar's lines were perfectly exemplified in her life:

"Thou must be true thyself,
If thou the truth would'st teach;
Thy soul must overflow if thou
Another's soul would'st reach;
It needs the overflow of heart
To give the lips full speech.

"Think truly, and thy thoughts
Shall the world's famine feed;
Speak truly, and each word of thine
Shall be a fruitful seed;
Live truly, and thy life shall be
A great and noble creed."

Mary seized every opportunity of learning, and the papers she wrote for the Fellowship Association were unusually excellent, showing a happiness in phraseology and a spiritual insight not often found at such an early age. And so, unconsciously, she was being fitted for her life work, and advancing step by step nearer to the task which was destined for her by God.

Dr. Livingstone Dead.

In 1874 came news of the Home-call of Dr. Livingstone, and the great wave of missionary enthusiasm which stirred the land set aflame the spark which for years had smoldered in Mary's heart. It blazed up and stirred her to action. She must be a missionary in very truth. She was free from much of the strain of home support now, for Mr. Slessor was dead, and her two remaining sisters in good situations. She herself would be able still to contribute to the maintenance of the home from her salary as a missionary, so she forthwith discussed the matter with her mother.

Mrs. Slessor's heart had always been in the Calabar Mission, and it was through her, humanly speaking, that Mary had become imbued with the desire, so the mother's consent was gladly given. It was a joy to give Mary, since her two sons whom she had wished to send had both died. Some of Mary's friends were not very enthusiastic over her proposal, but Mr. Logie and Mr. Smith, church members, approved entirely, and Mr. Logie promised to look after Mary's affairs whilst she was abroad. Later he became a member of the Foreign Mission Committee.

Mary offered her services to the Foreign Mission Board of her church — the United Presbyterian — in May, 1875, and though her heart was set on Calabar, she expressed her willingness to go anywhere, so eager was she to be sent forth with the life-giving message.

Her offer was accepted, but she was told to continue her studies in Dundee for a time, which she did until December, when the Board, at their own expense, sent her to Edinburgh for

special preparation.

On Board Ship.

On 5th August, 1876, at the age of twenty-eight, she sailed for Africa, from Liverpool. Two of her Dundee friends accompanied her to the steamer *Ethiopia*, in which she was to make her voyage; and the trio, watching some of the cargo put on board, noticed a number of casks of spirit [alcoholic drink] for the West Coast. How often had Mary waged war against such stuff, and how often, during her missionary labours, she would have to do so again. "There are scores of casks," she exclaimed, looking at them rather dejectedly; "only *one* missionary!"

But her God could accomplish much with this one missionary against the scores of casks, and did do so, as this story will show.

The day she landed, September 11, 1876, was the beginning of brighter days for Calabar.

Chapter 2. Learning the Ways and the People

Calabar! What scenes the name can bring up before our imagination!

A beautiful land in many parts, but even amidst its beauty lurked disease and sickness, and sin and sorrow. The natives were considered the most degraded in Africa, and small wonder this, taking into account the treatment meted out to them by nations who were more powerful, and said to be more civilized than they.

In the fifteenth century the Portuguese opened up the coast and emptied the towns by their slave raids in the same way that the towns on the land side had always been desolated by Egypt and Arabia.

But God can bring good out of evil. Through the conversion of natives from Calabar who had been sold as slaves to Jamaica, the Gospel was sent to their homeland. That had happened thirty years before Mary Slessor came. Mr. Waddell had founded the Calabar Mission in 1846. The Mission stood upon the very hill where the dead bodies of natives used to be thrown to the wild beasts.

Mary was well acquainted with many awful facts relating to the lives of the natives, and the difficulties which she had come to share with the brave souls who had been labouring there already for some time.

Calabar in 1876.

Here are a few of those facts, and as you read on through this story you will understand better the terrible and mysterious forces against which missionaries are ranged.

Witchcraft was interwoven with life in such a way as practically to rule the land. Superstition was rife everywhere. When a chief died numbers of people were murdered, and his wives, after dressing in their finery, were strangled, in order to go with him to the spirit land. Blood sacrifices were offered to jujus[?]; the human skull was worshipped; guilt was decided by poison being administered, or the hands plunged into boiling oil; when twins were born they were always killed, and the mother sent away into the bush to do the best she could, generally to starve and die, or to be killed by wild beasts.

Mary had heard about all these things in far away Dundee; now she was going to see them for herself, to fight them in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who had died to save these poor uncivilized people. Saved herself, and overflowing with love to her Saviour, she had a salvation worth speaking about, a real, definite thing, and with this treasure to share with all who would, she went forward eagerly, joyfully, into the dim, mysterious future now opening before her.

It mattered nothing to her that missionaries had been compelled in speaking of these people, to apply to them some awful names. What these missionaries said was really true; there was no exaggeration. The people were not an attractive people! But this did not move Mary. Did not the Lord Jesus Christ come down to an unattractive, repellent people, and give up His life for them? And should Mary Slessor shrink from any task, however hard and distasteful? Never! She looked upon such tasks as an honour and a privilege to perform.

The Mission Workers.

At the Mission she soon made friends, and fell quickly into Calabar Mission ways. "Mammy" Anderson saw to the latter; she found that Mary had not left all her love of pranks in Scotland, and the high spirits of the young missionary needed a slight check now and again. There were times when she was late for meals, and the promised punishment of going without food was administered. "Daddy" Anderson, however, probably with "Mammy's" full consent, would convey bananas and biscuits to the offender. "Mammy" Anderson was dearly beloved by Mary.

King Eyo, whose acquaintance Mary seems to have made at Creek Town, was a much valued friend. He was a simple, sincere, kindly Christian, and when she told him how much interested Mrs. Slessor [Mary's mother back in Scotland] was in him, the African king was delighted, and he and Mrs. Slessor used to correspond. So strong a bond is the love of Christ, that it can bridge four thousand miles of sea, between people who have never seen each other.

Then there was Mammy Fuller. She was a coloured woman, and remembered the day when the slaves in the West Indies were emancipated. She never spoke ill of any one. Mary loved Mammy Fuller, and Mammy loved Mary. Little did either of them imagine "dear old Mammy" would live to see Mary laid to rest. But that is many years later. Mary has but just started work in the Mission now.

This is an account of the usual Sunday routine. First she sends round illustrated texts to all the big men, with the message that Mr. Anderson is expecting them at the service at four, after which she sets out for the town.

Here is a man rocking himself to and fro at the door of his hut. No, he is not going to service. Why? "If your heart was sore would you go anywhere at all? Would you not prefer to stay at home and nurse your grief?" he asks.

In a moment Mary learns that his only child has died, and the man takes her to his wife, who is weeping over the grave in the hut.

The young missionary reads the story of Lazarus, and the sad, dark hearts are touched at last by the story of resurrection and re-union.

In the next yard she speaks to some slave-girls, who listen quietly. Further on she has an audience of women, who are lolling on the ground eating, sleeping, or dressing each other's hair. She is a welcome visitor. It is a little diversion, and she is taken to see a young woman who is being fattened for her future husband. Mary has to speak sternly to her, for the message is received contemptuously; the young woman is somewhat crestfallen, though still half defiant when Mary leaves.

The Rum Sellers.

After several other visits she comes upon a group of men selling rum. The white "Ma" is such a welcome sight that they put it away and ask her to remain. She talks to them, and for a while they listen, but the moment she speaks against the sale of rum they are angry, and one says:

"Why white man bring them rum, suppose rum be no good? The God-man bring the rum — then why God-man talk so?"

Poor missionary! What can she reply? She feels very bitter against those god-men (?) who

ruin the bodies and souls of their fellow-creatures for the sake of profit. She cannot answer the man.

But "when He maketh inquisition for blood," what will these men who have thus profited reply?

...Several more visits of cheer and comfort she pays, and, as the Lord was with her, there was blessing in her train.

Now she repairs to the Mission House for the four o'clock service, tired, but happy.

For nearly three years Miss Slessor laboured, spending herself as we have seen, at Duke Town, but after many attacks of fever, in one of which she nearly died, she was ordered home.

Her First Furlough.

In June, 1879, she left Calabar and went to Dundee. During this furlough she moved her mother and sister to Downfield, a village just outside the city.

It was, too, during this furlough that she expressed her desire to go to untouched fields. The pioneering spirit was already at work. But "Daddy" Anderson opposed the idea. She, however, before returning, begged the Foreign Mission Board to send her to a different station, adding at the same time that she would do as they thought best.

She sailed with the Rev. Hugh Goldie and his wife, veteran pioneers in the work, and arrived at Calabar in October, 1880. There she heard with deep joy that she was appointed to the charge of Old Town.

Chapter 3. Light in the Darkness

The people of Old Town, Qua, Akim, and Ikot Ansa were amongst the most uncivilized in Calabar. That fact in itself was enough to induce Miss Slessor to go to them.

She was able to pursue her own methods in Old Town, although it was under Duke Town supervision, and, what was very important also, she was able to economize in her way of living in order to leave more of her salary for the dear ones in Scotland, a practice which was not so easy when she was with her colleagues. They did not know this was her reason for preferring to work alone, but put it down to natural inclination, and Mary never enlightened them.

Her house was in a dilapidated condition. It was built of wattle and mud, the roof was formed of mats, and it was whitewashed inside, but repairs were sadly needed.

Among the Natives.

Mary, however, was too eager and absorbed in her work to pay attention to personal comfort. Her heart must have been on fire with love to the Lord Jesus Christ. To all who came to see her, whether they came in need, or out of curiosity to see what the white woman was like, she talked about the Saviour of the world, and of her visitor's individual need of Him.

On Sundays she was speaking of Him practically from dawn to dark — and after. She used to start early for Qua, and two boys carrying a bell slung on a poll summoned the people to the meeting. One of the chief men would put the seats ready and settle the congregation, which generally numbered 80 to 100.

The meeting over, she would go on to Akim and Ikot Ansa for more, visiting farms and sick folk on the way, giving short addresses and prayers. Back in Old Town by midday for Sunday School; and lastly, *the* service of the week — in the evening.

The yard of the chief was the place of assembly, and nearly every person in the vicinity would be there. A table, covered with a white cloth, a primitive lamp, and the Bible upon it stood in one corner. From there Miss Slessor could see row upon row of dusky faces, those nearest just catching the dim light from the lamp, those farther back merging in the darkness which surrounded them — a strange picture, a touching scene. The light of the lamp might be dim, but the Light of the World was there displayed, and how many souls were brought to acknowledge that Light at these earnest meetings, the day of Christ alone will declare.

Against the terrible superstitious cruelties still practiced by the natives in spite of laws enacted for their suppression by the Government, Miss Slessor waged incessant war.

Twin Children Murdered.

Twins were always murdered, because one of them was supposed to be the child of an evil spirit. It was, of course, impossible to tell which of them was of evil origin, and so both must die. They were generally killed and thrust into a calabash [the hollowed-out dried shell of the calabash fruit used as a container], then thrown into the bush. Sometimes they were thrown away alive, to be eaten by insects and wild beasts. It was not permitted that they should be taken out of the hut through the door, but through a hole made in the wall which was hastily refilled. The mother, herself sharing the superstition, was an outcast, and driven away into the bush, never more to use the native tracks, but to make her own through thorns and over rocks. She considered herself accursed.

Miss Slessor always got hold of any twins the moment it was possible, and some of those she rescued grew up in her house to be a comfort and blessing to her, and a proof to the superstitious folk about her that even twins were precious in the sight of God.

She also used to rescue the babies of slave women which were thrown away because there was no one to bring them up. Against witchcraft and the poison and burning oil ordeal she never ceased to fight.

Then, too, she tried to introduce a better relationship between the inland and the coast tribes, so that all could reap the benefit of trading, a campaign, this, which won her the hearty approval and sympathy of the traders.

A Forward Move.

But Miss Slessor was above all things a pioneer. She must *go forward* to preach the salvation that is in Jesus where it had seldom or never been preached. Therefore she used to make tentative excursions up-river, carrying medicine and bandages, and visiting the sick in the riverside villages, telling them at the same time of the Saviour.

At the earnest request of Okon, a chief who lived about 30 miles up the river, she paid his place a visit of a fortnight's duration. Her departure from Old Town created a great deal of excitement for days before she left. 9 a.m. was the time fixed for the start, but Mary knew enough of the ways of her people to go on calmly with her day's work, and at 6 p.m., nine hours later than "scheduled" time, she was summoned to the canoe.

This canoe had been sent by the king, and had a little improvised matting shelter with rice bags for her to rest upon, an act of love and thoughtfulness which touched her heart indeed. Setting her four twin children in the bottom of the boat she waited in patience through further native delays; then, at last, the thirty-three paddles fell into the water and the voyage was begun. There were songs in her honour — one stating that she, their beautiful beloved mother, was on board. And soon the low "tom-tom-tom" of the drum and the gentle motion through the water lulled "Ma" to sleep. In ten hours they reached Okon's place, just as dawn was breaking.

A busy fortnight ensued. There was prescribing, bandaging, cutting out of clothes, lessons in washing, ironing, starching, but above all the preaching of the Gospel. It was the first time many of the people had heard the story of Christ, and the numbers who crowded to hear her

were so great that her voice could scarcely reach them all.

Afterwards these fierce looking men, some of whom had come from a great distance, would come up and wish her good night ere starting on the dark walk back.

A Kind Advocate.

Then came a day when such grave looks were on all faces that she guessed that there was something wrong. There was trouble ahead. Two of the young wives of the chief had wilfully broken Efik law by going into a yard where a boy was sleeping, and the punishment for that offence was one hundred stripes. "Ma" interceded with Okon, and he consented to have a "big palaver." There "Ma" rebuked the girls roundly for their mischievous prank, for it involved two slave-girls as well. Her rebuke excited applause from the men, at which she turned upon them and gave them her frank opinion of their treatment of women, and the system of polygamy, a speech which was not applauded.

However, through "Ma's" entreaties, the hundred [stripes] was reduced to ten and nothing more. In an ordinary way salt would have been rubbed in, and possibly dismemberment or mutilation have followed. She bade the wives and slaves show their gratitude by loyal service, and then she began preparing for relieving the pain of the victims. Their piercing screams were heard above the shouts and laughter of the onlookers as the alligator hide did its work, and, at last, one by one the girls came to her in agony for the comfort and easement she had ready.

At length the return journey to Old Town was taken. Okon himself accompanied her, and on the way they encountered a fearful storm of rain and thunder and lightning, which drenched them all, and presently "Ma" was shaking with ague and her temperature rising every moment.

As fast as possible the rowers got her to Old Town, and she was carried by a bush path up to the Mission House, where, ill as she was, she attended first to the needs of the children.

She was obliged to remove to Duke Town late in 1882 on account of a tornado, which damaged her house so badly that she had to fly from it. In Duke Town she was so ill that the Presbytery ordered her home, and she left in April, 1883, taking with her a little girl-twin whom she had saved. The other twin, a boy, had been stolen during one of Miss Slessor's brief absences from her house and killed, therefore she resolved to keep the little girl safely beside her so that she should grow up and show them the folly of their superstition.

Home Ties Broken.

On this, her second furlough, Mary was destined to see her dear ones for the last time in this life. Janie, her youngest sister, was very ill, and a change to a warmer climate was imperative. Mary ultimately took a small house in Topsham, and as no other course seemed possible, severed her connection for the time with the Calabar Mission in order to look after her people, hoping that at some future date she would be reinstated. She then went down to Topsham, her salary assured till February.

Shortly came the news of her sister Susan's sudden death, which meant that the entire upkeep of the home devolved upon Mary.

And Mary, by this time, was earning nothing. However, as Janie's health was improving, it became clear that Mary should apply for reinstatement. This was gladly given, and she also had her mother's willing consent to her wish to go up-country on her return to Calabar.

Everything was arranged for her departure when Mrs. Slessor suddenly failed, and was unable to leave her bed. Mary waited on her Lord for guidance in this sorrow, and shortly a letter was on its way to an old Dundee friend, asking her to come and take charge of the home. That truly noble woman agreed to do so at once, and the devoted missionary was soon on her way across the ocean.

She arrived at Creek Town just before New Year, 1886. Naturally she was anxious about the dear ones she had left behind, little knowing that her mother had reached the heavenly home about the same time that Mary reached Creek Town. In March, Janie died, and the home life was over. Mary turned her face bravely, resolutely to her work in Calabar.

"Heaven is nearer to me now than Britain, and there is no one to be anxious about me when I go up-country," she said.

Chapter 4. Storming Satan's Stronghold

Miss Slessor was two and a half years in Creek Town. The last year was occupied largely by negotiations for her removal to Okoyong.

Three times members from the Mission had accompanied her to spy out the land, but were received with sullenness by an armed people. At last, in June of 1888, she resolved to go up again.

King Eyo, of Creek Town, ever her friend, sent her up in his own canoe, fitted out for her in royal state, with Brussels carpet on the floor, a palm-leaf shelter, and a brilliant curtain to screen her from the crew, to say nothing of six pillows on which to rest.

On the way up the river she reviewed the Okoyong situation, which was delicate in the extreme, for her own paddlers were the sworn enemies of the people she was going to visit.

Infinite tact, and love, and patience would be needed. The Okoyong might even be on the war path. But, like David, she encouraged herself in the Lord her God.

Arrived at the landing beach, she made her way inland four miles to Ekenge, a mud hut village, and was kindly, if noisily, received.

The outcome of this brave visit was a promise from Edem, chief of Ekenge, and also another chief at Ifako, two miles farther, that they would give her land for her missionary enterprise.

With this promise she returned to Creek Town, and packed her belongings, amid much shaking of heads and gloomy prophecies from those around, to all of which she only laughed.

King Eyo, a good man, came to see to the loading of the canoe, and in the grey, soaking dawn she set off, Mr. Goldie at the last minute sending Mr. Bishop, a member of the missionary staff with her.

Up to Okoyong.

In fading light they landed, and "Ma" immediately started on the four-mile walk through the soaking woods to Ekenge, leaving Mr. Bishop to follow with some of the carriers and dry clothes and necessaries.

"The LORD, He it is that doth go before thee; He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee."

Such promises were Mary Slessor's trust as she set out with the four children — first, a boy of eleven, carrying a box on his head filled with tea, sugar, and bread; then a boy of eight, with kettles and pots; after him a boy of three, and lastly a little maiden of five, all more or less tearful. "Ma" walked behind, a bundle on one arm and a baby girl astride her shoulders. She sang funny child songs to cheer the little mites, albeit the tears were in her own eyes. And the rain was streaming down.

A strange little company this, to come to such a stronghold of Satan. But, even so, how weak so e'er the instrument, in God's hand it is mighty.

There was no one at home at Ekenge when the little party arrived, except two slaves. Every one was at Ifako for the carnival on the occasion of the death of the chief's mother. She had died that morning.

A fire and water were soon ready, and the children undressed and asleep, and "Ma" awaited Mr. Bishop's arrival with the carriers. He came at last and informed her that the men refused to bring anything up that night. After a brief confab [chat, discussion] he and Miss Slessor collected some of the slaves, and she started back to the beach, brave heart, with them.

Her sleeping paddlers were aroused, and by midnight the needed things were at Ekenge.

Darkness before Dawn.

The next day, Sunday, August 5, 1888, her first in Okoyong, was one of the saddest she ever spent, partly, no doubt, on account of her extreme weariness after the strenuous hours of Saturday. She managed to have a little service with the women who returned — some with fractious babies, some for more food for the orgy at Ifako, and her heart was somewhat cheered.

Miss Slessor spent fifteen years in Okoyong. The sadness of that first Sunday was amply compensated for as the years went by. The fifteen years showed marvelous results and a great harvest of souls.

But at what a cost! "Ma" had to be on the qui vive [alert and vigilant] practically night and day, ready at a moment's notice for any emergency — "Run, Ma, run!" and off she would go, either to the rescue of twins, or to some palaver or poison ordeal.

Edem, the chief of Ekenge, had a sister called Ma Eme, a widow of a chief. Ma Eme was Mary's firm friend and ally, and secretly kept her well informed of all the concealed, dark doings of the people, often at risk of her own life. She was a great big woman, always acting as peacemaker and intercessor between her brother and his wives. Mary noticed some marks on Ma Eme's arm, and pointed out her own vaccination marks. Ma Eme calmly said: "These are the marks of my husband's teeth."

...Meanwhile she starts her school, and her services, stories of which were soon all over Okoyong, and requests came from various chiefs that she would visit them.

On one occasion "Ma" was sent for by a sick chief who lived eight hours away from Ekenge. She went in a deluge of rain, arriving to find the men of his village awaiting his death, and ready to begin the slaughter of those who were to follow him to the spirit-land. In some cases the "retinue" would number over forty! It has even reached sixty several times.

Mary at once attended the chief, not even waiting to change her soaking garments until she had done all she could for him. After that she got into some filthy borrowed rags, and went out to send someone for more medicine. If she could save the life of the chief she would save many lives.

A Calabar man was discovered, and he went to Ikorofiong to Mr. and Mrs. Cruikshank, who sent not only medicine, but tea, sugar, and other comforts, with a letter which was more than cheering to the missionary in her feverish condition.

The chief recovered, and Mary was allowed to have morning and evening services. There were promises to learn "book," to trade, and to make terms with Calabar. In her turn, she was made to promise always to be their mother, and to try to find them a teacher, and to come and see them again. Okoyong was free to her thenceforward.

Superstition and Sorcery.

Against sorcery and witch doctors "Ma" had to fight continuously.

When her own chief, Edem, was ill, she attended him at first, but one morning there was evidence of the witch doctor in the form of a parcel of shot, powder, teeth, bones, seeds, eggshells, and all sorts! All these, it was asserted, had been taken out of Edem's back (he was suffering from an abscess in his back), and, of course, as someone was to blame for this state of things, people were being denounced by the witch doctor and seized.

Mary's remonstrances so angered the chief that he had himself and his prisoners conveyed to his farm, where she could not follow. Presently she heard that the prisoners were to die, as Edem was growing worse. But one night a deputation came to her for a letter to the native pastor at Adiabo, to ask him to see what his skill would do. She gave the letter at once.

The native pastor, however, when told that the soul of someone was troubling the chief, refused to go. His sister went as nurse, and under her care the abscess broke — the prisoners were released, except one woman, who was put to death.

Here is another case of "sorcery."

A chief came to visit Edem, and as a matter of course there was fearful drinking. On the day of their return to their own village, they were so intoxicated that "Ma" accompanied them as protection for the villages they passed through. On the way a plantain sucker was discovered in the path, with a few palm leaves and nuts, a sight which made the brawling natives fly in terror! Back must they go to the last town they had passed and wreak vengeance for this "sorcery" laid in their path. But "Ma" barred the way, and dared them to go back. In the end they went on homewards by a long detour. "Ma" laughingly pitched the rubbish into the bush, but kept the plantain sucker to plant in her own yard.

Next morning the chief she had accompanied sent for the plantain sucker, with information that (the usual articles apparently) teeth, shot, hair, seeds, fishbones, etc., had been taken out of his leg by the native doctor. Someone was to blame. The plantain sucker was for evidence.

Of course there were ordeals imposed, and a young man seized. "Ma" was sent for to beg for his life — an odious task, for the chief was a callous, brutal man, and rejoiced in having "Ma's" supplications.

At first there did not appear to be any result, and Mary passed the days in prayer, as she went about her daily tasks. Then, one day the young man was sent back free to his people, and the fast ripening quarrel on his account between Edem and the brutal chief came to an abrupt end.

"Ma" had a song of praise in her heart we may be sure.

Chapter 5. Christ Triumphant in Okoyong

It was many a long day before these extremely leisurely natives would help "Ma" to build the house and hall for meetings, but at length they crowded to the ground.

Tree trunks, bamboos, palm mats, and red clay were the building materials. The fireplace, dresser, sofa, and seat beside the fire were all made of red clay, and polished with a stone till smooth. The Okoyong regarded the completed building with awe, and never did house hold a merrier party than this when "Ma" and her bairns [children] took possession.

One day a boy came from the village of Ifako and informed Miss Slessor that his master wanted her.

She at once obeyed the imperative message, and on arrival found the ground cleared for her hall; posts, sticks, and mud ready, and the chiefs waiting for her to direct.

She did direct, at once, and the work went on like a prairie fire, but not a single slave was allowed to help. King Eyo sent the mats for the roof. It took thousands, for the place was

thirty feet by twenty-five, and two rooms at one end, so that she could remain the night when necessary.

A Sanctuary of Refuge.

The opening of this hall was a day never to be forgotten in Okoyong.

The people appeared in their new Sunday attire, which in several cases was composed of nothing more than a freshly washed skin, but the children were mostly arrayed in garments from various mission boxes. The chiefs who were there promised that the house would be kept sacred to the service of God, no weapons of warfare should be brought in, the slave-women and children should come to it to learn, and also it should be a sanctuary of refuge.

And so Miss Slessor obtained a firm hold in Okoyong, which hold was never slackened by the vicissitudes and tumults she passed through during her long ministry.

With much difficulty she managed to establish trade between Okoyong and Calabar, and when King Eyo met the Okoyong natives for palaver — concluding the proceedings with a simple address to them in church on the words: "To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace," they returned home with increased respect for "Ma" and a great reverence for King Eyo, and the things he said and did.

A burst of trading enthusiasm followed, and they had far less time for senseless palavers, and quarrels, and drinking.

Often she would be called away miles into the forest, where the natives had hidden in order to administer the poison ordeal without her knowledge, and usually she won the victory and saved lives.

Once Ma Eme's farm was attacked by robbers, and Miss Slessor spent Sunday there trying to establish peace among the drinking natives.

Then there was the frequent: "Run, Ma, run! there are twins!" and she would go at once. Up to 1890 she had saved fifty-one twins.

She was also constantly preventing the killing of the retinue of wives and slaves on the death of a chief. "Ma" said one man, reproachfully, "you have quite spoilt our fashions. Before you came a man took his people with him; now he must go alone."

Then there was the constant attention needed in keeping her home and yard free from the encroachment of the bush. Lovely as these flowering shrubs and trees were, they had to be cut down, for they grew too fast, and offered covering for beasts of prey. She and her girls had to do this, as the natives were so busy now, planting yams for trading with Calabar.

Combating Smallpox.

In 1896 "Ma" Slessor's people had mostly moved from Ekenge to more productive lands, and she, of course, had to follow.

She stationed herself at Akpap. Very shortly smallpox broke out, and she was busy vaccinating her people.

The captain of the "smoking canoe," for so the natives designated the mission launch which plied up and down the Cross River, found her having some difficulty in making the lymph go round.

At Ekenge, where she had first begun her work in Okoyong, the epidemic was very severe, and she had to go over to nurse the sick and bury the dead. Among those who died were her two great friends, the chiefs Ekpenyong and Edem. The latter she had to bury unassisted in

the bush at night, making his coffin and digging his grave herself.

The old house and Ekenge village were soon overrun by the bush and lost to sight.

She was sent home in 1898, but returned again that year.

Okoyong was settling down into a peaceful territory under "Ma's" influence. Even more than one native had been known to take back his wife after she had given birth to twins, and a twin boy had been kept by his parents. Drinking was on the decrease, palavers were not so often scenes of bloodshed and quarrels.

One Government official says of her, that as an interpreter she made every palaver an easy one to settle, because she could represent to each side exactly what the other party wished to say.

She was even called upon to settle a dispute between the Umon and Okoyong, the Umon people being confident that she would mete out justice even if it went against her own side.

As she was going up-river to this palaver, there was an adventure with a hippopotamus which attacked the canoe, but happily no harm was done.

Later on, much against her will, she was ordered back to Creek Town, as the Government were obliged to send out troops against the Aros, who refused to submit to Government authority. During this unwilling absence Okoyong remained quiet and true, and she returned rather earlier than the Government had intended her to!

On the fifteenth anniversary of her arrival at Ekenge, the twenty-ninth year of her missionary career, a happy company gathered round the first memorial table [for communion service] in Okoyong.

How different this from the first sad Sunday. Looking back over the fifteen years, Mary could see how tenderly she had been led, and how wonderfully God had blessed her work; and when the 103rd Psalm (old metrical version in native tongue) was raised, her heart was raised, too, in adoration and love.

Chapter 6. "Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my heart, my life, my all."

Once more the pioneering spirit is urging Miss Slessor forward. Akpap could now be left to others, and she herself could go where for many years she had yearned to go — Enyong Creek.

She therefore starts negotiations for two ladies to come to Akpap, and, pending settlement, she, in her usual prompt manner, canoed up to Itu with two of her boys, Esien and Effiom, and Mana one of her girls, settling them there to teach school and take services, an experiment which proved successful far beyond "Ma's" hopes — abundantly above all she asked or thought.

At Arochuku, after Miss Wright was settled in Akpap, she did the same thing, and when she was embarking for home she was pressed on all hands to come back soon.

She lay back in her canoe, thanking God for prospering her undertakings, and admiring the loveliness of the landscape around her. Enyong Creek, the scene of most fearful wickedness and anguish, the hotbed of slave-trade and superstition, was beautiful. Tropical trees lined the banks, their branches often interlacing — the fallen trunks having their hollows full of lovely orchids and ferns; the surface of the water bearing pretty water lilies; blue kingfishers and yellow palm birds flitting through the foliage overhead as the canoe slips softly along the waterway.

Only Man is Vile.

But amidst all this loveliness there is the fearful sore of sin and sorrow, the crying need for messengers to bring the needs of the Saviour of mankind to the dark and sin-stained inhabitants.

Miss Slessor knew all about the Aros and the Long Juju with its wily slave-trade system. Whilst in Okoyong she had had visitors from Arochuku, with their tales of cruelty and wrong, and had already won a place in the hearts of many of their chiefs. And now she had received a welcome from the men who themselves were responsible for the wicked slave traffic carried on by the superstition of the Long Juju, and had stood on the very spot itself where the iniquitous practice was carried on.

Small wonder that her heart was lifted up in praise that morning as she progressed quietly homewards in her canoe. God was about to do great things.

But suddenly another canoe shot out across the river and collided, quite politely, with hers.

The man in it had a wonderful story to tell, and a letter for her, which resulted in "Ma" there and then going to see the writer of the letter at Akani Obio. His name was Onoyom Iya Nya, and he had been chosen by the Government as President of the Native Court. Also he was the only chief in the district who had not been disarmed by the Government.

Well, this man, Onoyom, met Mary when his servant brought her to his beach, and told her he was seeking God; had been seeking Him a long while. There is not space to tell all the story. It went back to his boyhood in 1875, when a white man had appeared in the Creek, sending the natives flying in fear, except this boy.

The white man had come to tell the story of Jesus. He was Dr. Robb, from Ikorofiong. At one time Mammy Fuller had been nurse in his family. Dr. Robb persuaded the boy to lead him to the chiefs, and when he was with them, preached to them words which the boy, at least, never forgot.

After Many Days.

But he grew up a heathen, and had suffered great sorrow. Now he wanted "Ma" to lead him to Jesus. The Lord Jesus Himself has promised (and He keeps His promises) that they who seek Him shall find Him. Onoyom found Him at last, and became one of His truest followers.

He had the courage to hew down a grand tree, around which was gathered much juju superstition, and turned it into seats for the Church he built. Better still, he put away all his wives, save one, making ample provision for them. The wife he kept was a twin-mother whom he had once turned away. His town was a prohibition town [no liquor allowed], and on Sundays a white flag was raised to show that there was no Sunday trading.

Years slipped away. Ma's keen desire to continue at Enyong had been acceded to by the Foreign Council.

The Government, seeing her influence with the natives, invested her with the power of magistrate. She undertook the work, but refused remuneration [payment]. Her popularity in Court was great, for the natives got their causes heard first hand owing to her perfect knowledge of their tongue, and the Government officials had implicit confidence in her judgment on account of her clear insight and intimate knowledge of native life and character.

It was not an unusual thing for "Ma" to box the ears of a truculent witness or abusive chief in court, and she was held in fear and awe by the natives everywhere. The Government officials esteemed her highly, many of them reverencing her as a mother.

In Scotland Again.

In 1907 she was so ill that she was ordered home to Scotland, and Government officials vied with each other in making her journey easy, as also did her fellow workers. Mr. Gray packed for her, Mr. Middleton of Lagos undertook to care for her on the voyage, and she reached Edinburgh at last with a heart full of gratitude to them.

She and Dan, the little six years old boy whom she had brought with her, stayed with her dear friend, Mrs. M'Crindle. Miss Slessor was soon nearly overwhelmed by her correspondence. Parcels, post cards, letters and invitations were showered upon her. She paid visits to several friends, and went out cycling with some of them. But the civilized roads in Britain were not so pleasant to her as bush paths in Africa. So timid was she that if she saw a dog coming along she got off her cycle at once, nor would she remount until the dog had passed.

She addressed several meetings. People expected she would address a great many, but she announced her intention of returning to Calabar in October, though only a few months of her furlough were spent. She was not happy. She had heard by letter a story about one of her beloved girls in Africa, and was anxious to get back and see what it meant. As far as we know she said nothing about it, and bravely carried out her engagements, having her reward in large and reverent gatherings, to whom she gave vivid pictures of the life and work in Calabar and the need for more workers. She did not write or prepare speeches beforehand, but spoke simply out of her overflowing heart. On the last night of her stay, her friends found her weeping bitterly and realizing her solitariness very keenly, for there were none of her own kith and kin. She felt also that life over here was too hurried, and filled with too many things. Very possibly she thought some of them a waste of time, and perhaps she was right. "Ma's" heart was in Africa. She was glad to find herself once more on the way there, and seemed to gain a new lease of life during the voyage.

On her arrival, her loving, anxious heart was rejoiced to find that the unhappy story (which had been circulated by a native) was entirely without foundation.

And so ended Miss Slessor's last furlough in Britain. Would it have troubled her had she known it was her last? I think not. She had no home ties here, but in Africa she had vast — one may say eternal — interests, where she was doing a work for eternity. There was the scheme of a Home for Women and Girls to be carried out, there were new stations to be planted, natives in an area of over two thousand miles looked to her for advice and help. Even in Northern Nigeria they knew the brave white "Ma."

Use was her headquarters, and as soon as she felt free to move in the matter she purchased a site for the Home in the name of her girls (being European, she could not purchase in her own), with the consent and help of the Government.

A Home for Girls.

Then, as there was a period of waiting, she quietly went on planting the fruit trees sent by the Government. She also began to accumulate stock, her first memorable installment being a cow, which she bought from a man to prevent his going to prison for debt. This cow was a terror to the natives, and was always getting loose. It ran away even when "Ma" and the Principal of the Hope Waddell Institute were leading it gently home one day.

But all this time Miss Slessor was growing weaker and more broken down in health; the frail body was not equal to the strong, brave spirit, and she was several times laid aside.

She felt that she ought to give up her court work, as she had so much to do in spreading the Gospel, and sent in her resignation, which was regretfully accepted.

One of her girls, Mary, was married to the young native driver of the Government motor car at this time, and shortly afterwards followed the first baptismal and communion services at Use — Use, only a short time since dark, degraded, and drink-sodden.

But "Ma" felt now that there was also work for her farther afield than Use. Some young men from Ikpe had come to her, and she had influenced them so strongly that they wished to

become "God men," and had gone back to Ikpe to begin a Christian work there. Now they had come to "Ma" again and told her there were forty others ready to become Christians.

Onward, Still Onward.

Ikpe was two days away from Use by water, an old slave center in a degraded part of Northern Nigeria, and in league with Aro. Services were held on Sunday and week days, and these young teachers knew only the most elementary truths as yet. What could "Ma" do in face of such heart-hunger as was manifested by these poor groping natives?

She went to them several times, but at last their reproaches that she did no more touched her so deeply that she said, "*I am coming.*"

In a short time she did return, with corrugated iron and other material for her building, and so the work began.

She still had Use as headquarters, making the journey to and fro by canoe. But it was too much for her, and in 1911, when repairing her tornado-ruined home at Use, she collapsed. At the time, Dr. Robertson's place at Itu was temporarily filled by Dr. Hitchcock, a young man quite as masterful in his way as was "Ma," and she eventually found she had to submit to his orders. He even had the temerity to send her fowls, as she was not feeding herself suitably for her state of health. On one occasion, she asked him why he had sent that fowl; to which inquiry he promptly replied that he was obliged to, as it could not come by itself, and that was all the answer "Ma" got.

It was a long time before she was at Ikpe again, and even then it was only by running away from the doctor. A great throng received her on the beach, and she was overjoyed to be at work once more. She established Jean at Nkanga as teacher and evangelist, where she had one shilling a week, and food from the people, and "Ma" provided her clothes. Jean was the best Efik teacher Mary knew, and her knowledge of the Scriptures very thorough.

Miss Slessor always looked upon money — even that given for her personal needs — as a help only for forwarding the work of God. A Government cheque for £25 for herself, in recognition of her work, was destined for her Home for Women; and so on with all that came. Thus it sometimes happened, in spite of abundant funds in Duke Town in her name, that in Ikpe and like places she was often hard put to it to find the wherewithal to purchase food.

The boxes of clothing, etc., which were sent out by the church were a cause of much pleasurable excitement. In 1911 shortbread and buns were enclosed, and this was doubly happy, for bush food had been upsetting her, and a diet of shortbread and buns for a week made her better.

Thirty-Six Years Completed.

The people around were kind, too, and saw to it that yams and rice were forthcoming from time to time, ostensibly "for the children."

But "Ma" was steadily growing weaker, and the gift of a cape cart in which she could be pushed along by two boys or girls was a great joy. In bygone days she had twice had a gift of a bicycle, but her cycling days were past.

In this cape cart, or basket chair on wheels "Ma" was able to do more work in the way of looking for building sites for churches. It was her wish to make a series of churches and schools in Ibibio.

This scheme, and the basket chair, put a stop to her idea of going home on furlough, and in September, 1912, she completed her thirty-sixth year as a missionary by making tours along the Government road, opening up out-stations wherever she could gather the natives in their villages.

Chapter 7. The Last Strenuous Years, and the Life Laid Down Until Daybreak.

And now "Ma" was to have what she considered her first real holiday, though it appears she was almost ashamed to have such a glorious time.

Her health had given concern in Scotland and in Calabar, and a lady on the Foreign Mission Board at home succeeded in persuading Miss Slessor to go to an Hotel in Grand Canary, since the cold of an English or Scots winter would be too severe for her. Friends prepared her outfit — making her, as she quaintly said, "wise-like and decent" — and Janie went with her. Mr. Wilkie handed the cashbox to the Captain, he in turn passed it on to the other Captain when she transhipped, and he, again, on arrival at Grand Canary gave it to the manager of Hotel Santa Catalina, where she put up, and during the whole of her stay the management treated her with the utmost deference and love.

The change did her good, the days spent in the sunny grounds, and on the hillsides were days she never forgot, and she returned to Use to find that she was frustrated in her intention of paying for it herself, for Miss Cook, the Foreign Mission Board friend, had settled the entire cost.

Shortly after this holiday, much to her chagrin, one of her eyes was injured by a pellet of mud. Erysipelas followed, she was blind and in much pain and fever for a fortnight, but as soon as possible she was at Ikpe again, though the eye was still troublesome.

The building at Ikpe progressed, and "Ma" was very busy with all the work on her hands. Her heart ached for those who were yet unreached, and she longed for more missionaries to be sent out.

Cut Off.

But even in all this bustle she yearned for letters and news. She once said she was seven weeks without a word from the outside. All the reading matter she had was old advertisement sheets which lined her boxes. From these she declared she had learnt the names of all hotels and boarding-houses in any part of Europe, and was willing to give the information to anyone who asked for it.

When any stray white visitor appeared with papers and letters it was a glorious day. Let us remember, if we cannot be missionaries, we can cheer missionaries, if we will, by writing and sending papers.

Government officials always visited her when in her neighbourhood, and the relations between them were friendly and happy. To some of them her introductions were decidedly informal in character. A stranger appeared one day when she was busy on the roof of the house. Looking down upon him critically, she asked what he wanted, and he, hat in hand, replied meekly that he was her new District Commissioner, but he couldn't help it. She was charmed, and at once adopted him as a friend.

A great official, whose wife was writing to Mary added as postscript to his wife's letter: "*She sends her kindest regards; I send my love.*"

The Government gave instructions that she was to be allowed to make use of any conveyance belonging to them, and that all possible help was to be given to her.

And from these same officials she received books, magazines, papers, etc., and sweets, crackers, and plum pudding at Christmas. On one Christmas Day several of them came and spent the day with her. The Governor of Southern Nigeria, Lord Egerton, with three or four officials, paid her a visit one dark, showery night, and left a case of milk, two cakes, and boxes of chocolate and crystallized fruit. He and she were delighted with each other. In the eagerness of conversing she said once to him: "Hoots, my dear laddie — I mean, Sir."

Simply Trusting.

"Ma" valued letters from her friends, and still more did she value their prayers. And in later years when she prayed for them her petition was: "Lord, give them Thy best, and it shall suffice them and me." How wise, how trustful!

Her Heavenly Father was so near, so real to her, that she talked to Him as to a friend walking beside her, and her Bibles were full of marginal notes and remarks which showed how unspeakably precious the Book was to her.

In 1913 she revisited Akpap, and there was, of course, one great unending reception during the whole of her stay. Ma Eme was with her an entire day, and their reminiscences of bygone days were intensely interesting to both. Ma Eme was still not converted, alas, and shortly after this visit she died. It was a great grief to Mary that she, this dear, brave, stately black woman never came out on the side of Christ.

There was a service arranged during Mary's visit, and it had to be held in the unfinished Church, for there were more than four hundred well-dressed natives present to hear "Ma."

A Public Presentation.

One day, soon after her stay at Akpap, came a most august-looking document for her. It asked her to accept the honour of Honorary Associate of the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in England. "Ma" was astonished, and eventually accepted.

Soon came another letter signifying the approval of King George and his sanction to her election. "Ma" said nothing about it, hoping to keep the matter secret, but the badge, a silver Maltese Cross, came through the Colonial Office to the Commissioners at Duke Town, and so she had to submit to a formal presentation there, and a Government launch was sent to fetch her.

The villages round Ikpe were not as responsive to "Ma" as others had been, but by degrees she made headway.

On the Government road at Odoro Ikpe was a Government Rest House. She climbed up to it one Saturday. It had a doorway, but no door; only holes for windows, and a mud floor, but to her it represented a fortress from which to attack the surrounding villages, and she appropriated it, knowing well that the Government would not object.

Of course, as always, there was the fight over twins and twin-mothers. The chiefs were firm and "Ma" was firm. At Ibam, when she asked to start a mission there she was advised to go home and let them think it over!

Odoro Ikpe was her next venture, and she gained a solid foothold there after a long palaver. This advance was regarded somewhat sorrowfully by the Ikpe Christians, and they asked if she was forsaking them. She could not do that, so, at this time she was keeping three centers going — Use, Ikpe, and Odoro Ikpe.

But more yet.

One Sunday morning during service she noticed six strange men enter. After service they told her they were from Ibam (the place where she had been told to go home and let them think it over), and asked her to come to them, and they would build a place to worship God. They gave their best yard, and crowds attended the meetings. Ibam was the last heathen stronghold in that district, and, it having surrendered, Miss Slessor wrote to her friends in the homeland saying that she was the most grateful and most joyful woman alive. What did it matter that she only had the floor of the Rest House to sit on, her tired back against a mud wall, her only light a candle held upright by its own grease? The rest of the weary, the Light of the World, was being preached all around, and God was blessing her work.

One incident at Ikpe I must not miss. "Ma" was holding a service at Ikpe, and to her amazement thirty lads from Odoro Ikpe came in. So interested and so earnest were they now, that they had walked five miles to hear "Ma" speak of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Ikpe people, on the entrance of the strangers, got up at once and gave them their seats, taking up a position on the floor themselves. What a lesson in Christian politeness!

Widening Influence.

The discovery of coal in Udi, and the starting of a railway from Port Harcourt to that place brought before Miss Slessor's far-seeing mind the vital need of more workers among the numbers of heathen who would congregate in the new centers of industry.

Very frequent were her calls to those across the sea, telling them of this great need, and much was she grieved by the apathy of Christians in Britain.

"Can we, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high—
Can we to men benighted,
The lamp of life deny?"

But Mary Slessor was not apathetic. She pursued her way. Wherever she could she built her little wattle and daub churches, and in them preached the simple Gospel to the natives. She was greatly averse to elaborate churches. She feared to put anything forward save Christ. The simplest form of worship in an environment of their own setting made for purer, clearer understanding of Divine things she believed, and surely she was right. She never spent the money given on expensive or ornate buildings, but in pioneer work among the tribes.

The house at Odoro Ikpe was some long time in course of erection; the men and boys employed were the laziest and greediest she had ever tackled, and during her occasional absences at Use, the work was always badly done.

But it was finished at last, somewhat in the rough, and by means of a ladder "Ma" climbed up to the top rooms to sit on the loosely boarded floor whilst tending her latest motherless baby, gazing meantime across the wild African plain.

Brave woman, *lonely* woman humanly speaking, but she knew that He who will never leave us nor forsake us was there. Her spirit was dauntless, though her body was weak and broken.

This was July, 1914. Then came whispers along the African bush paths of strange things happening in the great world across the sea.

Why had canoes laden with produce returned unloaded? Why had trading come to a sudden end? Why did not the building materials come?

Louder and louder grew the whispers, until in wild panic natives came and told her of awful tragedies in Europe. Britain and France at war with Germany! She could not believe it, and bravely continued her station duties in order to calm her people. But she sent for food in case it were true, and found prices already doubled and her difficulties thereby increased.

The Crash of War.

Then came the real blow — her first war mail. Hitherto the Government official at Ikot Ekpene had given her some news, but not the worst. Now she had the unvarnished account of the brutal invasion of Belgium and the reverses of the Allied Armies.

The shock struck her down. As a matter of fact she does not seem ever to have really recovered from this. The thought of dying alone in the bush at the Government Rest House troubled her, on account of a fear that her skull might be seized and worshipped as a powerful

juju by the people. After a fortnight of intermittent, raging fever, she was conveyed by her boys and girls to Okopedi beach. There a trading agent sent at once for Dr. Wood at Itu, and she was taken to Use, when, realizing how near the end she might be, she asked Miss Peacock to come over to her. Miss Peacock knew that "Ma" must be very ill before she would send for help, and she set off on her bicycle for Use at once.

There was a small measure of improvement later, but Miss Peacock and Miss Couper, who both visited her, now noticed that her old rallying power was gone. She consented gladly to an offer made by her dear friend, Mrs. Arnot, now a widow, of a home with her during this visit to the old country. The idea was that she should finish the house at Odoro Ikpe and leave in spring for Scotland.

But the Lord whom they both served had other plans for these two dear women. Mrs. Arnot was to be missionary in charge of the memorial to her friend — "The Mary Slessor Home for Women and Girls" — and Mary would be at Home with the Lord.

The Last Rally.

On Christmas Day she held a service. It was difficult to speak of war between Christian nations to natives, and she was glad to tell them that a day of National Intercession was fixed for the following Sunday.

On New Year's Day Miss Peacock and Miss Couper were with her. She was as happy as a girl, and they had a merry time. Miss Peacock speaks of a new tenderness and sweetness about her — the last touch of the Master's hand.

She wrote her last letter to Miss Adam — the friend who had been so truly helpful through several years — and her closing words were: "God be with you till we meet again."

On Sunday, 10th January, she struggled up for the service. Next day she was so ill that the girls sent for Miss Peacock. Miss Peacock at once summoned Dr. Robertson, and she herself remained till the end, administering the medicine and sips of milk or chicken soup. Five of her girls were there — Janie, Annie, Maggie, Alice, and Whitie — and they watched beside her till the brave spirit had winged its flight, at 3:30 on the morning of January 13, 1915, in the sixty-sixth year of her age and the thirty-ninth of her missionary life.

She was buried at Duke Town. Missionaries, Government officials, merchants, were there. Flags were flying at half-mast. The coffin was draped with the Union Jack, and borne shoulder high by the boat boys. Crowds watched the silent procession to the grave on Mission Hill. There a wail began as the coffin approached, but Mammy Fuller, sitting alone at the top of the grave, rose, saying: "Do not cry — do not cry! Praise God from whom all blessings flow. 'Ma' was a great blessing."

And so, amid a silently weeping throng, the short, simple service was conducted by Mr. Wilkie, and when the last sounds of "Asleep in Jesus" had died away and the coffin was lowered, Mammy Fuller said to Mrs. Wilkie: "Ma, I don't know when I enjoyed anything so much. I have been near Heaven all the time."

Mammy Fuller knew that for Mary there had been an abundant entrance, and that we should sorrow not, even as others who have no hope, for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.

Copied by Stephen Ross for WholesomeWords.org from *Cannibalism Conquered...* by E. E. Enock and J. Chappell. London: Pickering & Inglis, [1925?]

More Information on [Mary Slessor](#)