

WHITE QUEEN OF THE CANNIBALS

The Story of Mary Slessor of Calabar

by

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Moody Colportage #6

edited for 3BSB by Baptist Bible Believer in the spirit of the Colportage Ministry of a century ago

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CHAPTER FIVE

INTO THE JUNGLE

"Oh, Mary, it is good to see you again," said Mother Slessor when Mary arrived once more in Scotland. "And this is little Janie about whom you have written us so often! We are happy to have you with us, Janie."

"I am glad to be home, Mother," said Mary, "but I am anxious to go back to Africa as soon as I can. There are so many souls there to be won for JESUS."

Mary soon got over her sickness and was well and strong again. Now she went to the churches in Scotland to tell about the missionary work in Calabar. She made many friends. Some of the young people who heard her wanted to become missionaries. Miss Hoag, Miss Wright and Miss Peabody decided to become missionaries and later worked in Calabar, too.

Mary was so successful in interesting the people in mission work that the Board of Missions asked her to stay longer and visit more churches. Mary did what the Board asked, although she was anxious to get back to Africa. At last this work was finished. Now she could go back. Mary was getting ready to go back to Africa when her sister Janie became sick.

"You will have to take her to a warmer climate," said the doctor. "That is the only way she will get well."

Mary could not afford to take her sister to Italy or southern France.

"I will ask the Board of Missions if I can take my sister with me to Africa."

Anxiously Mary waited for an answer to her letter. At last the letter came.

We are sorry, but we must answer your question with a No. We feel that to take your sick sister along to Africa would be an unwise mixing of family problems and missionary work.

What should Mary do now? A friend told her to take her sister to southern England where the climate was warmer than in Scotland. She wrote to the Board to ask whether they would let her be a missionary if she took out the time to take care of her sister. The Board of Missions wrote:

Dear Miss Slessor:

When the way is clear for you to return to Calabar we will be glad to send you out again as our missionary. In the meantime we will be glad to pay your missionary salary for three more months.

Mary was glad that she could go back again, but she would not take the missionary salary when she was not working as a missionary. This left her with a sick sister and no salary. She took her sister Janie and her mother to southern England. They had been there only a short time when Mary's sister, Susan, in Scotland, died. It made her sad to lose a sister, but she was happy in the thought that Susan was now with JESUS her Saviour in Heaven.

After a while Janie was better and Mary packed up and got ready to sail once more to Africa. Just as she got ready to go, her mother became sick. What should Mary do now? She took her troubles to GOD in prayer. As she prayed, a thought came to her which showed her a way out of her problem.

"I will send for my old friend in Dundee to come and take care of Mother and then I can go to Africa."

Mother Slessor agreed that this was the thing to do. Soon the friend came and now Mary was free to go to Africa. The weeks at sea were a good rest for her and she was in the best of health when she landed once more at Duke Town. Ten years had gone by since she first came to Africa.

"Where should I go now?" asked Mary of Daddy Anderson after she was once again in the mission house on Mission Hill.

"This time you are being sent up to Creek Town," said Daddy Anderson.

"Oh, I'm glad," said Mary. "That is the settlement farthest up the river."

"You will work with the Rev. and Mrs. H. Goldie," continued Daddy Anderson.

"That makes me happy, too. They are old friends. I met them on the trip the time before this one."

As soon as she was settled in Creek Town, Mary worked harder than ever for the salvation of the natives. She did not care about her health. The only thing she could think of was how she could win more of the natives to CHRIST.

She spent very little on herself because the money from her salary was needed back home in Scotland.

One day very sad news came from Scotland. Mother Slessor had died.

Mary was very sad. Her mother was the one who had interested her in missionary work by telling her stories about it when she was only a little girl. Her mother had always encouraged her in her work. Her mother was willing to do anything and suffer anything so that Mary could be in the work of saving souls. Her mother was always interested in everything that Mary did. No wonder Mary was sad even though she knew that her mother was now with the Saviour in Heaven.

"There is no one to write and tell my stories and troubles and nonsense to. All my life I have been caring and planning and living for my mother and sisters. I am now left stranded and alone."

But she was not alone. The words of JESUS, "**Lo, I am with you alway**," came as sweet comfort to her heart.

"Heaven is now nearer to me than Scotland," she said. "And no one will be worried about me if I go up country into the jungles."

Mary was very anxious to go to the deep jungles to Okoyong, but every time she mentioned it the Board and the Andersons said, "No, not yet." The tribes were cruel and wicked. They were always fighting among themselves and with other tribes. They did more bad and nasty things than any of the tribes she had ever worked with. They killed twin babies. They stole slaves and when they caught some stranger they made him a slave. They would hide along jungle paths and when someone went by, they would kill him.

They hated the people of Calabar and the British government.

At different times missionaries had tried to get into this land, but always they had to run for their lives. The natives of Okoyong trusted no one. It was to that country that Mary wanted to carry the love of JESUS and the story that He died for them. Every day she would pray:

"Lord, if this is Your time, let me go."

Meanwhile Mary worked hard at Creek Town. Besides her missionary work she was taking care of a number of native children. Some were twins she had saved from death, some were the children of slaves. Mary took care of these children at her own expense. In order to take care of them and have enough food for them, she ate only the simplest of foods, sometimes nothing but rice for a long time.

One day a man came to Creek Town to see Mary.

"I am the father of Janie, the twin," he said. "I am glad you have taken care of her."

"Come and see her," said Mary.

"No, no!" said the man, "the evil spirit will put a spell on me."

"You won't be hurt if you stand far away and look at her," said Mary.

As he watched Janie, Mary took him by the arm and dragged him to the little girl. She put his strong black arms around her little shoulders. At last the man took the little girl on his lap and played and talked with her. After this he came often to visit his little girl and brought her food and presents. At last the time came when word reached Calabar that the Mission Board had decided that the Gospel should be preached in Okoyong and that Mary could go. Mary was very happy. At last GOD had answered her prayer. She was going into a wild country. She was going to go ahead of the other missionaries to find a place where they could build a mission house and church.

When King Eyo Honest VII heard of it, he came to see Mary.

"So you are going into the wild country, to Okoyong," he said.

"Yes, and I am so happy. Those people need to have their hearts and lives changed. I am happy that I shall be able to tell them about the Saviour."

"Aren't you afraid to go among these wicked men? What if they should go on the warpath when you arrive?"

"I am not worried. GOD is on my side. If it is His will, He can keep me from all harm. If it is His will that I should die, then His will be done. If giving my life will help open Okoyong to the Gospel, I will gladly give it."

"GOD bless you, Ma. I am going to let you use the king's canoe for this trip. My rowers can take you there swiftly. They will do anything you ask, because they love you."

"Thank you, King Eyo; that will help me very much."

King Eyo fixed up his canoe for Mary, as though she were a queen. He put a carpet in it, and many cushions. He put a sort of tent on it so that Mary could be alone when she wanted to be. The boat was loaded with homemade bread, canned meat, rice, and tea.

At last everything was ready for the trip into the wild country. Mary said good-bye to her friends, the missionaries, and to her native friends. Then the thirty-five rowers pushed out from the shore and headed upstream toward the wild country. On both sides of the river were banana and palm trees. There were beautiful plants and flowers of many colors. The light shimmered on the flowing river as the rowers pulled the oars and sang their songs.

"What will happen if the Okoyongs are on the warpath?" Mary asked herself. "What will I do then?" Mary knew the answer. **"I will put my trust in God and not in man."**

She lay back on the cushions and prayed to GOD to protect her in the wild country and to lead her in His way. The rowers rowed swiftly and sent the canoe shooting up the river toward the wild country.

"There is the landing place," said the chief rower. "Now we must walk the rest of the way to Ekenge."

Mary got out of the boat. The rowers followed her. They carried the packages Mary had brought with her. They began to walk through the jungle. It was four miles to Ekenge where Chief Edem lived. As they came near to the little village of mud huts, the chief rower whispered to Mary,

"There is Chief Edem. Praise GOD, he is at home and sober."

Mary, too, thanked GOD that the Okoyongs were not on the warpath and she asked GOD's blessing on her visit with them.

When the people of Ekenge saw Mary they began to jump up and down and shout,

"Welcome, Ma. Welcome to Ekenge."

Chief Edem bowed to her and said, "You are welcome Ma Mary. It is an honor to have you come to us. We are happy because you did not come with soldiers. We know now that you trust us. I have set aside a house for you as long as you stay with us."

"Thank you, Chief Edem. I am happy to be here."

"This is my sister, Ma Eme," said the chief. Mary liked Ma Eme at once and Ma Eme liked Mary. They were friends as long as they lived.

"I want to go to visit the next village now," said Mary. "I want to go to Ifako."

"Oh, no, Ma," said Chief Edem. "The chief is a very bad man. He is not fit for you to meet. Besides he is drunk now and he doesn't know what is going on. You must stay at Ekenge."

"Very well," said Mary, "I will stay, but call the people together so that I can have a JESUS talk."

When the people had all come together, Mary told about GOD's great love for them. She told them about JESUS who died that they might be saved. She told them about the happiness JESUS would bring to their village by changing their lives when they came to Him.

That night Mary did not sleep very much. The chief had given her one of the best houses in the village, but we would not think it was much of a house. Her bed was made of a few sticks with some corn shucks thrown over them. In the room all night were plenty of rats and insects. But Mary's heart was happy.

Later Mary went to Ifako. The chief there liked Mary very much. He and Chief Edem agreed to let her start a mission in their villages. Each one promised to give her ground for a schoolhouse and a mission house. Mary chose the places for the buildings. They were a half-hour's walk apart.

"Now I must go back to Creek Town," said Mary. "When I come back again, it will be to stay."

"Come soon, Ma," said Chief Edem. "It will make us very happy to have you stay with us."

As they rode down the river, Mary could not sleep at first because the rowers kept whispering,

"Don't shake the canoe or you will wake Ma," or "Don't talk so loud so Ma can sleep." At last, however, tired from her days of work in Ekenge and Ifako, she fell asleep and did not wake up until she came back to Creek Town.

Now she was very busy getting ready to move to Ekenge. One of the traders heard about her going to Ekenge.

"Do you trust those wild people?" he asked. "Do you think you can change them? What they need more than a missionary is a gun-boat to tame them down."

"No, my friend," answered Mary, "they need the same thing that every person in the world needs and that is the Saviour JESUS CHRIST. Only JESUS can change the hearts of sinful people."

At last Mary was packed up. She was taking with her the five children she had saved from death. Another missionary, Mr. Bishop, was going along with her. Now at last Mary was going to work in the jungles as she had wanted to do. She had been in Africa for twelve years. She was now forty years old.

When Mary was ready to leave, all the people of Creek Town gathered around her. They told her good-by and wished her GOD's blessing.

"We will pray for you," they said.

One of the young men she had taught in school said, "I will pray for you, but remember you are asking for death when you go to that wild country."

It was getting dark when Mary's boat landed near Ekenge. The rain was pouring down. It was a four-mile walk to Ekenge. Mary and the five children started out. Mr. Bishop and the men who carried the baggage were to follow.

An eleven-year-old boy was in the lead. He was the oldest of the five children. He carried on his head a box filled with tea, sugar, and bread. An eight-year-old child followed him carrying a teakettle and cooking pots. Next came a three-year-old who held tight to little Janie's hand. Then came Mary carrying a baby girl and a bundle of food.

The children slipped in the mud. They became soaked by the rain. The jungle was dark around them and strange noises came from all sides. The children began to cry. They were hungry and scared.

"Don't cry children," said Mary. "Remember JESUS is watching over us. He will take care of us. Soon we will be in the village and then we can have something to eat and we can put on dry clothes."

They marched on. At last they came to the village. The village was dark and still. "Hello, hello," called Mary. "Is anyone here?"

No one answered. Mary called again. At last two slaves came.

"Ma," said the oldest slave, "the chief did not know you were coming today. The mother of the chief at Ifako died and all the people have gone to Ifako for the burying."

"All right," said Mary. "We will wait here then for Mr. Bishop and the baggage carriers."

"I will send a messenger to Chief Edem," said the slave, "to tell him that you have come."

Mary took some of her food and cooked it over an open fire in the pouring rain. She fed the children and put them to bed.

At last Mr. Bishop came to the village.

"I am sorry, Miss Slessor," he said. "The carriers will not bring anything until tomorrow. They are tired. They are afraid of the jungle trail."

"But tomorrow is Sunday," said Mary. "It would be a bad example for them to do work for us on Sunday. I will not have them work tomorrow."

"John," said Mary, turning to a young man who had come with Mr. Bishop, "you go back and tell the carriers they must come tonight for we need food and dry clothing."

After the young man had gone, Mary decided she should go and help. She took off her muddy shoes and started back through the dark and fearful jungle. Mary was afraid when she heard the snarls of animals in the jungle, but she put her trust in GOD and went on.

As Mary came near to the beach she met John.

"Ma Mary," he said, "the men will not come. They will not bring the things until the daylight chases away the hidden dangers of the jungle."

"I will talk to them," said Mary. She plodded on through the mud. She came to the canoe. The men were all sound asleep. Mary woke them and put them to work.

In the meantime Mr. Bishop had coaxed some of the slaves from Ekenge to help. Soon all the things Mary had brought were being carried to Ekenge.

Sunday morning was cloudy. Mary got things ready for church. Church time came. But where were the people? Mary and Mr. Bishop and the children began to sing hymns as loud as they could. Still no one came. How discouraging! All the people had been at the burying. When they buried somebody, especially somebody important like the chief's mother, they would have a wild party. The people would get drunk and do many other wicked things. The next day they would be too tired and sick to do anything.

Mary and the children and Mr. Bishop kept on singing. At last a few women came. Mary gathered them around her and told them the story of JESUS and His love. The women listened but they did not say anything.

After the service was over and the women had gone to their huts, Mary knelt down and prayed.

"O GOD, my heavenly Father, with Your help I have made a beginning in the jungles of Okoyong. Things look black and discouraging now, but I know that if it is Your will You can change all that. If it is not Your will that my work is successful here, then send me wherever I can work best for You. Forgive my sins. Make me a better and more faithful worker for You. And bless the work here in Okoyong. I ask this for JESUS' sake. Amen."

Would the work in Okoyong be a failure or a success? Time would tell. Mary knew that it depended on GOD.

At last Chief Edem and his people came back from the wild, drunken party at Ifako.

"Welcome Ma Mary," said Chief Edem. "I am glad you have come. I have a place for you. You take this room here in my women's yard. It is for you."

"Thank you, Chief," said Mary. It was a dirty, filthy room, but it was the kind of room all the people of Okoyong used. Mary cleaned out the dirt. She had a window put in. She hung a curtain over the door. While she was working a boy came up to her.

"Ma Mary," he said, "I am Ipke. I want to help you." Ipke worked hard. He helped Mary as much as possible. Whatever there was to do, Ipke was ready to do it.

A few days later Mary looked out of her room. She saw Ipke. He was standing near a pot of boiling oil. A crowd of people stood around yelling and shouting.

Chief Edem came up to the crowd. Then a man took a dipper and filled it full of boiling oil. Ipke stretched out his hands in front of him. Suddenly Mary knew what was happening. She rushed out of her house, but she was too late. Already the man had poured the boiling oil over Ipke's arms and hands.

"Why have you done this?" asked Mary. Chief Edem said nothing. He turned and walked away. The other people also kept still. Mary took Ipke to her room. She put medicine on the burns.

"Why did they do this to you, Ipke?" she asked.

"It is because I helped the white Ma. The people say I do not follow the old ways. It is bad to follow new ways. I must be punished. The bad spirit must be burned out."

"O GOD," prayed Mary, "heal this boy and help me to change the wicked heathen ways."

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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