Annotation Key

colonialism

white supremacy, racism

misogyny, femininity injunctions

sexism vs. men, Real Men injunctions

context, historical interest, general info

my personal commentary

https://open.spotify.com/playlist/7f2xO6c66Jg

Immersive Reading: Things Fall Apart

A playlist of traditional Nigerian music that I made to accompany Chinua Achebe's trilogy of novels.

VIII.

The Poison Test

"Tomorrow we will have our first service in our new church. You must dress right for it," said Mary.

She took out of her mission boxes clothes of all kinds and colors which the people in the homeland had sent to her.

"You must wear these to church tomorrow," said Mary. "In God's house you must be clean. You must be dressed. You must not bring your spears into church."

"Can we come?" asked the children.

"Indeed you can," said Mary. "The children can come and the slaves can come. God's house is open to everyone."

The next day was indeed a happy day for Mary. The church was filled with people. Many of them came just out of curiosity, but there were many who had learned to know and love and trust in Jesus.

Mary now started day classes and these too were crowded because many wanted to learn "book." They wanted to learn about Ma's God and about the Saviour who took away sins. It was not long before a change could be seen in many of these people. They had become Christians. The look of fear was gone from their eyes. They no longer feared the demons because they had a Saviour who loved them and took care of them. They did not do the wicked things they had done before. They tried to live as God wanted them to live.

Mary was happy. Now she wanted to build a larger and better mission house in Ekenge. Chief Edem wanted that too. He felt that the church schoolhouse in Ifako quite outshone the little two-room house in Ekenge. Mary wanted doors and windows in the new house. She could not make them. The natives could not. They had never seen any.

Slessor's house in Ekenge.

Mary wrote to the Mission Board about it. The Mission Board put a notice in the magazine they published asking for a practical carpenter who was willing to go to Calabar. Mr. Charles Ovens saw the notice.

"This is God's call to me," he said. "I have wanted to be a missionary ever since I was a little boy. I could not study to be a minister. I learned to be a carpenter. Now I can be a carpenter for God. I can build mission houses and churches and while I build I can tell the people about my Saviour."

It was in May, 1889, that Mr. Ovens started for Calabar. In Duke Town he found a native helper and the two of them went to Ekenge. Mary was very glad to have him come. He was a very jolly man. He sang at his work. Everyone liked him and the natives gladly helped him in building the houses.

For a long time Mary had been trying to get the chiefs of Okoyong to trade with the traders on the coast. They would not listen. Now she invited them to her new house. She showed them the things she had and how useful they were. The chiefs looked at the door and windows. They liked them. The women looked at the clothes and at the sewing machine. They liked them. They looked at the clock on the mantel. They liked it, too.

Slow destruction of indigenous culture and replacement with the trappings of foreign society. All of these items were undoubtedly more convenient for the Nigerians; was it a good or bad thing? Was furthering the immensely destructive trade in ivory worth what Europeans would have seen as an improvement to the lives of the indigenous people? Is it right to make them dependent upon goods they can't produce themselves?

"We will trade with coast people," said Chief Edem.

Mary wrote to the traders and invited them to Okoyong. She told them to bring dishes, dress goods, mirrors, clocks, and the like to trade for ivory, oil, and bananas and other things in the jungle.

"It is too dangerous to come up-country," answered the traders. "We are afraid the native guards on the jungle paths will kill us."

Mary wrote to good King Eyo, of Duke Town. She asked him to invite the Okoyong chiefs for a conference. She promised they would bring jungle goods to trade.

King Eyo invited the chiefs. They did not want to go. Mary told them of the interesting things they would see on the coast. She told them of the good things they could get by trading. At last they agreed to go. They collected two canoeloads of bananas, barrels of oil and other jungle crops. Then the chiefs and warriors came marching down to the river to go to the coast.

"Wait," said Mary. "You cannot take those spears and swords and guns along. You will only get into trouble. You must leave your swords and spears, your guns and knives at home."

When Mary said this, many of the natives disappeared into the jungle. They would not go without their weapons.

"Ma, you make women of us," argued those who remained. "Would a man go among strangers without arms?"

Um, women are more than capable of wielding arms. Meet Lyudmila Pavlichenko, the most successful female sniper in history. Pavlichenko had **over 300 confirmed kills** for the Russian Red Army, several of whom were decorated snipers in their own right. She went on to train other female snipers after being wounded in battle. She often worked alone behind enemy lines, and the Nazis were so scared of her that they would call her out over the radio, offering her all kinds of enticements if she would switch sides. So maybe men should stop saying shit like "you make a woman of us" as if it's an *insult* and have a little respect.

"You may not take arms," said Mary. "You are not going to war. You are going for a friendly visit."

"If we cannot take our swords and guns we will not go. We will stay home."

"But you promised and I promised King Eyo that you would come. Will you go back on your word and make me a liar?"

For two hours they argued with Mary. The beach filled with natives from the village who wanted to see the chiefs start on their trip. The chiefs did not want to look like cowards to the people of the village. At last they took off their swords and gave their guns to their white Ma. Those who had run away to the jungle came back and decided to go along.

"We do not like this," said the chiefs, "but we will go. We will not make you a liar, Ma."

They got off into their boats. As one of the boats rowed off, one of the bags shifted. Mary saw the gleam of flashing swords.

"Stop!" cried Mary. The rowers stopped. Mary took the swords and threw them into the river.

"Shame on you," said Mary. "I did not think you would try to fool me like that." The chiefs said nothing. They just rowed down the river.

The chiefs who went to Duke Town had a wonderful time. They went to the church services. King Eyo Honesty talked with them about the Gospel and what it meant for their lives. He took them to his house and had a big dinner for them. They traded the bananas, oil, and other things which they had brought for things to take home like mirrors, clocks, and white people's clothes. Then the next day they rowed back to Ekenge.

The village people were all gathered down at the landing place to welcome the chiefs home. They watched patiently for the boats. When the boats came the people shouted for joy.

"Welcome home, Chief Edem," said Mary. "How was your trip? Did you enjoy your visit at Duke Town?"

"The trip was fine, Ma," said Chief Edem. "Duke Town is a big village. They have a big churchhouse. We saw many things."

"Did you need your guns and swords?" asked Mary.

"No, Ma, you were right. We did not need guns or swords. King Eyo was good to us. We have many fine things."

"If you work hard and get things to trade, you can get many more fine things," said Mary.

"We are going to work hard. We want many of those fine things we saw."

The men did work. Because they were busy they had less time and less desire to get drunk and quarrel. Mary's missionary work was having its effect on the lives of the people. Slowly they were changing from their heathen ways, but there was still much to do.

This sounds like an improvement, but bear in mind that this version of events is coming from a European perspective. We don't really know if the men truly spent most of their time "drunk and quarrel[ing]," since Slessor clearly had a very different concept of productivity and a very different way of life than the indigenous Nigerians. She wants them to dress like Europeans in the middle of the jungle, so we know that Slessor is still operating according to the standards of European society.

One day while Mary and Mr. Ovens were working on the mission house they heard a wild scream from the nearby jungle. Mary jumped up.

"Something is wrong in the jungle," said Mary. "Johnny, go and see what it is."

One of her orphan boys ran off to find out what was wrong. In a few minutes he came back.

"Ma, Ma," he cried, "a man is hurt. Maybe he is dead. Come quick."

Mary grabbed her case of medicines and followed Johnny into the jungle. When she reached the place where the young man was lying, she looked into his face.

"It is Etim, the son of our chief, Edem. He is going to get married soon and is building his house. A tree fell the wrong way and hit him. He cannot move his arms or legs. This means bad trouble. The people will say it is witchcraft."

Mary with her helpers quickly made a stretcher to carry Etim. They carried him to his mother's home at Ekenge.

"I will nurse him," said Mary to Etim's mother.

For two weeks Mary took care of him night and day. She prayed God to spare the young man's life. She did everything she knew to help him. Etim did not get better. Day by day he became worse. Sunday morning came. Mary could see that he did not have long to live. She left him for a short time to arrange for Mr. Ovens to take care of the church services. Hearing Etim groaning and crying out, she rushed back to the house where he was.

The natives were blowing smoke into his nose. They were rubbing pepper into his eyes. His uncle, Ekponyong, shouted into his ears. They thought they were helping him to get well. Instead they made him die sooner. In a moment he gave a cry and fell back dead.

"Etim is dead!" cried the people in the house. "Witches have killed him! They must die! Bring the witch doctor at once!"

The people who were in the house quickly disappeared, and soon only Mary and Etim's relatives were left. When the witch doctor came, he did all kinds of queer things, which he said would tell him who had made the young man die. He pretended to be listening to the dead boy talk.

"It is the people of Payekong. They are to blame. They put a spell on him," said the witch doctor.

Chief Edem called for the leader of his soldiers.

"Take my warriors and go to Payekong," said Chief E'dem. "Capture the people and burn down the houses. Quickly now!"

The warriors were too late. Chief Akpo, the chief of Payekong, had heard the news. He and his people had run off into the jungle. Only a few people were left in the village. Those were captured by Edem's soldiers and brought to Ekenge.

Mary was sure that Chief Edem would make the people take the poison bean test. This is how the test was made: A small brown bean full of poison was crushed and put into water. The person who was tested had to drink the poison water. The natives thought that if the person drank the water and died, he was guilty; if he lived, he was innocent.

"That is no way to honor your son, Chief Edem," said Mary. "You know it is wrong and sinful to kill people."

"But they are bad people. They deserve to die."

"You do not know that. That water is poison. Anyone who drinks it would die."

"Oh, no, Ma, if the one who drinks it is innocent he will live."

"I do not agree with you. Come, let us honor your son in a better way."

Mary wrapped the young man's body in silk. She dressed him in the finest suit she could find. She wrapped a silk turban around his head and then placed a high red and black hat with bright colored feathers on his head. No chief had ever been dressed so fine for his burial. The body was carried out into the yard and seated in a large chair under an umbrella. A silver-headed stick and a whip was placed in his hand. This showed he was a chief's son. A mirror was also put in his hand so he could see how wonderful he was. On a table beside him were placed all his treasures. Those included skulls he had taken in war. Then the people were let into the yard to see Etim.

Now I'm imagining having my dead body displayed at my little desk in our carport with my laptop, wearing my Sherlock Holmes deerstalker and "Introvert but will fight fascists" t-shirt, with an enormous cup of coffee and my violin nearby.

The people shouted. They were so happy they danced around. They called for whiskey to drink. Chief Edem gave them much whiskey to drink. They became wilder and wilder.

Mary and Mr. Ovens took turns watching the prisoners. They were afraid the people would kill them. As Mary was going to her house for a little rest, she saw some poison beans on the pounding stone. This filled her with fear. She was not afraid for herself, but for the poor prisoners. She fell on her knees and prayed.

"Dear Father in Heaven," prayed Mary, "watch over these poor people. Do not let harm come to these prisoners. Keep the other people from doing murder. Give me the courage to face the chiefs and tell them they are wrong. In all these things may Thy will be done. I ask this in Jesus' name."

After she had prayed Mary got up and went to Chief Edem and his brother Ekponyong.

"You must forbid the poison bean test," said Mary. "It is wrong and sinful. God is watching what you do. Do not do that sinful thing."

"That is my business," said Chief Edem. "I am the chief of this tribe. I will do what seems good to me."

Mary argued with the chief, but he would not listen. Ekponyong, his brother, encouraged Edem to make the prisoners take the poison bean test. Mary then went to the yard where the prisoners were kept. She sat down in the gateway. She was not going to let anyone get the prisoners. This made the chiefs very angry. The crowd of village people howled and yelled. Chief Edem's warriors shook their swords and guns at her and stamped the ground angrily.

"Raise our master from the dead," shouted the people, "and we will free the prisoners!"

Mary kept her place. She wrote a note to Duke Town asking for help and sent it off secretly by one of her orphan boys. Still she watched over the prisoners. She would not leave her place in the gate. The people were angry with her, but still many of them loved and respected their white Ma and would not hurt her. Suddenly a man pushed his way through the crowd. He shoved Mary aside. He grabbed one of the women prisoners. He dragged her in front of the body of Etim. He handed her the cup of poison.

"Drink!" he cried. "Drink and prove that you are innocent, or drink and die!"

IX.

Victories for Mary

"Oh ma, do not leave us. Please do not leave us," begged the other prisoners as the poor woman prisoner got ready to drink the poison.

"Lord, help me and help these poor people," prayed Mary.

Mary went up to the woman. The woman raised the cup of poison to her lips. Mary grabbed her arm.

"Run," she whispered. "Run to the mission house."

Before the crowd knew what was happening, Mary and the woman had run far into the jungle. They went to the mission house. No one would dare to harm anyone in the mission house. Mary then went back to the other prisoners.

"O God, I thank Thee that I was able to help this poor woman get away. Help me to save these other prisoners also."

When Mary got back to the other prisoners, the argument with the chiefs started again.

"An innocent person will not die if he drinks the poison," said Ekponyong. "Only a bad, guilty person will die."

"That is not right," answered Mary. "Poison will kill anyone, good or bad. Chief Edem, you know it was an accident that your son died. It was not the fault of any of these people. Please let them go free."

"I want my son to be buried in a box like the white people," said Chief Edem. "Will Bwana Ovens make a fine box for my son?"

"I will make a coffin for your son if you will let the prisoners go free," said Mr. Ovens.

"No, no," said Chief Edem.

"Then I will not make a box for you."

"Well, then I will let some go free," said Chief Edem.

"No, you must not let them go free," said Ekponyong.

"If I want to let them go free, I can," said Chief Edem. "I am chief, don't forget that."

"Show that you are a great and wise chief," said Mary. "Let them all go free."

Chief Edem thought a while. Then he spoke.

"If Bwana Ovens will make a fine box for my son then I will let all go free but Mojo, Otinga, and Obwe," said Chief Edem.

"But why keep them?" asked Mary.

"Mojo and Otinga are related to Etim's mother. They planned bad things against my boy. Obwe is related to Chief Akpo who has run away because he is guilty. Now if I let these others go will you build me a box Bwana Ovens?"

"Yes, I will build you a box," said Mr. Ovens.

"Please let the three go free, too," said Mary. "They have done you no wrong."

"We have done more for you than we have ever done before. We will do nothing else," said Chief Edem. He turned his back on Mary and walked away.

People from other villages came to take part in the wild parties that were always held when there was a funeral. Mary tried again and again to get Edem to free the three prisoners. Mary and Mr. Ovens managed to take Mojo and Otinga to the mission house where they were safe. Again Mary pleaded for Obwe. Chief Edem was very angry.

"Will you not have me honor my son? You have run off with my prisoners. I will burn down the mission house. I will send you back to Duke Town. Then you cannot trouble me any longer."

"Brother, you do not speak wisely," said Ma Eme, E'dem's sister. "The white Ma has done many good things for us. If we burn down the mission house you will have a bad name among all tribes. Chain Obwe in the white Ma's yard so that the village people cannot harm her. She cannot get away and you can find out later whether she is guilty or not."

"Very well," said Chief Edem, "I will do that. But the three must be killed for the funeral. What kind of a funeral will that be for a chief's son if no one is killed? He will have no one to go with him on the way to the dark land."

The next day two missionaries came from Duke Town in answer to Mary's note. It was a great honor to have so many white people at a funeral. Chief Edem was no longer as angry as he had been. The missionaries showed slide pictures. The natives had never seen anything like it before. It pleased them very much and it also quieted them down. The next day when the funeral was held, a cow was killed and put in the coffin with Etim instead of the people who were thought to have worked witchcraft against him.

Mary was glad and thankful to God that she had been able to save the prisoners. The last of the prisoners was let go free on the promise that if Chief Akpo was caught he would take the poison test. Mary heard that Etim was the only chief in Okoyong ever to be buried without some people being killed as a human sacrifice. The people of the jungle thought Mary was wonderful indeed.

Mary thought that this trouble was over, but a short time later Etim's uncle, who lived in a nearby village, was accused of having killed the young man. He came to Ekenge and met with the village chiefs.

"I am willing to take the poison bean test," said the uncle, "if all of the chiefs will take the test. That means you, too, Edem. Those who are innocent will not be hurt. I will take the test, but all the other chiefs must, too."

When Mary heard that Etim's uncle was going to take the poison bean test if the other chiefs would, she rushed to the village. The men were arguing. They were shaking their swords and guns at one another. Mary looked around until she found the bag of poison beans. She took them and ran off with them.

The chiefs could not find the poison beans. Finally, they quieted down. Chief Edem went to Mary.

"Give me the poison beans," he said. "I know you have taken them."

"Yes, I took them," said Mary, "but I will not give them to you. There has been enough trouble and sadness and fear. When will you be satisfied that your son's death was an accident?"

Chief Edem turned around and went back to the village. He sent all the chiefs home. Nothing more was said about the poison bean test.

Now Mary began to plead for Akpo, the chief of the village which the witch doctor had said had caused Etim to be killed.

"Chief Edem, let him come home. Forgive him. He has done you no wrong."

God softened Edem's heathen heart. After several weeks he agreed to let Akpo come home.

"You may tell him," Edem said to Mary, "that all thought of revenge is gone from my heart. If he wishes to return to his own village, he may do so, or he may go anywhere in Okoyong in safety."

Nothing like that had ever been done before in the jungle. The heathen people did not forgive. They always took revenge. Akpo did not believe Edem had forgiven him. He did not want to trust Edem. At last Mary convinced him that Edem meant just what he said and that Akpo could really go home.

Mary and Akpo came to his home village of Payekong. The houses had been burned. The cattle had been stolen. But it was still home. Tears came to Akpo's eyes. Thankfully the chief kneeled at Mary's feet.

"Oh, Ma, thank you, thank you for what you have done for me and my people. I and my people will always do whatever you ask." Akpo kept his promise. Other chiefs often argued with Mary and threatened to hurt her, but Akpo and his people always helped her and did whatever she wanted them to do.

Chief Edem now was kind to Akpo and his people. He built houses for them and helped them get their gardens started again. He gave them some cattle, too. After some time had gone by, Chief Edem came to Mary. He kneeled down before her.

"Thank you, Ma, for being brave. Thank you for keeping after me until I let those prisoners go. I am glad that people were not killed at the time of Etim's death. Your ways are better than ours. We are tired of the old ways."

Many other people came and told her how glad they were that the old ways were changing. They said that they knew the old ways were bad. Mary had had a very hard time in the jungles, but now things were going better. She was busy all the time, teaching and preaching and nursing. She journeyed through the jungle where the wild animals were, but she did not fear. She was trusting God to take care of her as He had taken care of Daniel in the lions' den. Always she told the people of the loving Saviour who had died for their sins.

After a time Mary fell sick. She caught the jungle fever. She became very weak.

"Mary," said Ovens, "you must take a vacation. You must get away from the jungle for a while. You must go to England for a long rest. That way you can get well and come back to work here at Okoyong."

"You are right," said Mary. "Much as I hate to leave my work here, I know I must go. I will ask for a furlough at once."

For three years Mary had worked in Okoyong. But already there was a change among the heathen people. The Gospel of Jesus has a wonderful power to change hearts and lives. As soon as word came that another worker was being sent to take her place, Mary got ready to leave for England.

At last the day came that Miss Dunlop, the new worker, arrived. Mary was ready to leave. Her friends carried her trunk and suitcases down to the Ekenge landing. A great crowd had come to the landing to tell her good-by and wish her a safe journey. Mary was telling them to help Miss Dunlop and to remain true to the Bible teaching. Suddenly a man was seen running through the crowd. He ran up to Mary.

"Come, white Ma, a young man has been shot in the hand, and he wants your medicine!"

Was it right for Slessor to interfere in tribal politics in this way? I vacillate.

I would be interested to hear an indigenous account of this incident. I wonder if I can find one...

This made me snicker, although I have to acknowledge that "jungle fever" is a racist trope stemming from white men's insecurities about white women in mixed race relationships.

"Don't go Ma," said Ma Eme, Mary's friend. "You are tired and sick. You must get back to England. If you go with this man you may miss your boat. Let someone else go."

"It is a bad tribe. They are always fighting. It is dangerous to go," said Chief Edem. "Do not go with the man."

"You cannot go," said her other friends at Ekenge. "You are too sick to walk. The wild animals in the jungle will kill you. The wild warriors are out. They will kill you in the dark, not knowing who you are."

"But I must go," said Mary.

"If you must go," said Chief Edem, "then you must take two armed men with you. You must get the chief of the next village to send his drummer with you. When the people hear the drum, they will know that a protected person is traveling who must not be hurt."

It was night. Mary Slessor and the two men marched out into the darkness. The lanterns threw strange shadows that looked like fierce men in the darkness. At last Mary and her guard came to the village where they were to ask for the drummer. They told the chief what Chief Edem had said, but the chief did not want to help them.

"You are going to a fighting tribe," said the chief. "They will not listen to what a woman says. You had better go back. I will not protect you."

"You don't think a woman can do much. Maybe you are right," said Mary to the chief. "But you forget what the woman's God can do. He can do anything. I shall go on."

How women's disenfranchisement from religion, which forces them to approach god through a human male, is a form of dehumanization that women shouldn't put up with. Mary Magdalene was Jesus's first disciple, after all; early Christians (desert fathers) lived together

Mary went on into the darkness. The natives watched her go. She must be crazy, they thought. She had talked back to their chief who had the power to kill her. She had walked on into a jungle where wild leopards were ready to jump on her. She was going where men were drinking and making themselves wild. But Mary was not afraid. Once in talking about her trips through the jungle Mary said, "My great help and comfort was prayer. I did not used to believe the story of Daniel in the lions' den until I had to take some of those awful marches through the jungle. Then I knew it was true. Many times I walked alone, praying, 'O God of Daniel, shut their mouths!' and He did."

After pushing on through the darkness, Mary saw the dim outlines of the huts of the village. All was quiet. Suddenly she heard the swift patter of bare feet. She was surrounded by warriors shouting, pushing and shaking their spears.

"What have you come for?" asked the chief.

"I have heard a young man is hurt. I come to help him. I also heard that you are going to war. I have come to ask you not to fight," said Mary.

The chief talked with some of his men. Then he came up to Mary.

"The white Ma is welcome," he said. "She shall hear all we have to say before we fight. All the same we shall fight. Here is my son wounded by the enemy. We must wipe out the shame put on us. We must get even for this bad thing. Now Ma you may give my son your medicine. Then you must rest. Women, you take care of the white Ma. We will call her at cockcrow when we start."

Mary fixed the young man's hand. Then she laid down in one of the huts for an hour's sleep. It seemed as though her eyes were hardly shut, before she heard a voice calling her.

"Ma, they are going to battle. Run, Ma, run!"

The warriors were on the warpath. Mary could hear their wild yells and the roll of the war drums. Mary ran after them. She was tired from the hard trip to their village. She was weak from the sickness she had. But nothing could stop her. She caught up with the warriors just as they were getting ready to attack an enemy village.

"Behave like men," she yelled, "not like fools. Be quiet now. Do not yell and shout."

The warriors became silent.

"God says that revenge is wrong," said Mary. "He will pay back wicked people for the wrong things they do. You should not try to get even. Leave that to God."

Except when God is the one exacting it. "Vengeance is mine, sayeth the Lord."

"No, no," said the chief. "If we do not pay back for the wrong done us, the tribe will not be afraid of us. They will do more bad things to us."

"Yes, yes," shouted the warriors. They kept shouting and shaking their swords and guns.

"Did the whole village hurt you? Did the whole village shoot the young man? When you fight against the village you will hurt many women and children. They are innocent. They have done nothing. Let us pray to God about it."

All the warriors were quiet as Mary prayed. She asked God to please stop the war if it was His will. She prayed for the young man who had been hurt. She prayed for whoever it was that hurt him, that he might turn away from his wickedness and become a Christian. She prayed for the people of the village.

Then Mary spoke to the warriors.

"You stay here," she said, "I am going over to the village."

Fearlessly she walked over to where the line of village warriors were drawn up with their swords and spears.

"Hello," said Mary.

The warriors said nothing. Mary looked over the angry faces. Then she laughed.

"Nice bunch," she said. "Is this the way you welcome lady visitors?"

You could eliminate sexism and maintain accuracy by simply eliminating the word "lady." Greeting people with swords and spears is hostile regardless of their gender.

The warriors stirred uneasily. They did not say anything.

"Where is your chief?" asked Mary. "Surely he is not afraid to talk to me."

An old chief stepped out from behind the village warriors. To Mary's surprise he kneeled down in front of her.

"Ma," he said, "we thank you for coming. It is true we shot the young man, the young chief of those who have come to fight us. But it was one man who did it. The whole village was not at fault. Please make peace. Tell us what we must do."

Mary looked into the face of the chief. It was Chief Okurike. Long ago she had made a hard trip through the jungle in pouring rain to help when he was deathly sick. Because of what she had done then, he was now at her feet asking her to make peace. Mary shook hands with Chief Okurike. Then she spoke to his warriors.

"Stay where you are," she said. "Some of you find a place where I can sit in comfort. I am hungry. Bring me breakfast. I will not starve while men fight."

The warriors did as she told them.

"Now," she said, "choose two or three men to speak for you. We shall have a palaver. In that way we will settle this thing."

The four men met and talked with one another while Mary ate breakfast.

"Why do you want to fight and kill because one drunken man wounded your young chief?" Mary asked the men from the fighting tribe. "Let the tribe of the drunken youth pay a fine."

A long talk followed. Sometimes it became very exciting. The arguing grew loud. The father of the young man wanted to have the man who had shot him punished hard. When the men became angry, Mary would stop them.

"Let us pray about this," Mary would say. After she had prayed they would settle the point. Finally Mary and her God won out.

The fighting tribe at last agreed to be satisfied with a fine. The village paid the fine. They did not use money. So the fine was paid in barrels and bottles of trade gin. Now Mary was worried. What should she do? She knew the warriors would drink the gin right away. She knew this would make them fight after all in spite of their promises. A quick thought came to her. According to the law of these people, clothes thrown over anything gave it the protection of your body. No one else could touch it. Mary snatched off her skirt. She took off all the clothes she could spare. She spread them over the barrels and bottles. Now no one could touch them.

Mary took the one glass the tribe had. She gave one glassful to each chief to show that there was no trick and that the barrels and bottles were really filled with gin. Then she spoke to them about fighting. "If all of you go to your homes and don't fight," said Mary, "I'll promise to send the stuff after you. I must go away. I have been sick and I must go where I can get strong again. I am going across the great waters to my home. I shall be away many moons. Will you promise me that you will not fight while I am gone? It will make me very happy if you will make that promise. It will make me sad if you don't, for I will always be wondering whether you are fighting and hurting one another."

"I will promise," said the chief of the village, "if the other chief will."

All the warriors looked at the chief whose son had been hurt. For a long time he said nothing. His tribe had always been fighters. It would be hard for them to give up fighting. The chief rubbed his chin. He scratched his head.

"Yes, Ma," he said finally, "I will promise that we will not fight while you are gone." The two villages kept the promise made by their chiefs. When Mary came back the two chiefs could say, "It is peace."

Mary was very tired. Slowly she tramped through the hot jungle. After many hours she came to Ekenge.

"We have sent your trunks and things on ahead," said Chief Edem. "Here are my best rowers and best soldiers. They are ready to take you to Duke Town."

Mary once more stepped into the canoe. This time there was no one to call her back. Little black Janie, whom Mary had adopted, was with her.

"Good-by, good-by, Ma," shouted the crowd. "God keep you safe and bring you back to us again."

The rowers pulled their oars strongly, and swiftly down the slow moving river went the canoe. Three years Mary had spent in Okoyong. Already she had seen a change in the heathen people. A greater change was still to come. Mary was going to see more of the power the Gospel has to change heathen hearts and lives.

X.

A Disappointment

Mary wrote to the Mission Board;

Charles and I are very much in love. We would like to be married. Charles is a wonderful Christian and a very fine teacher. He would be a very great help in my jungle work. We hope that you will agree to our marriage and let Charles go into the jungle with me.

I am ready to do what you say. I lay the whole matter in God's hands and will take from Him what He sees best for His work in Okoyong. My life was laid on the altar for that people long ago, and I would not take one jot or tittle of it back. If it be for His glory and the advantage of His cause there to let another join in it, I will be grateful. If not, I will be grateful anyway, for God knows best.

The Board was very much surprised to get this letter. If the Board members had thought about it at all, they had thought that Mary would never marry. She was forty-three years old and Charles Morrison, her sweetheart, was twenty-five. He was a mission teacher at Duke Town. The difference in their ages did not bother the sweethearts. They met and had fallen in love. They wanted to marry.

A refreshing reversal of the usual male-female age disparity.

"I will marry you if the Mission Board will agree to letting you work in the jungle with me," said Mary.

"But suppose the Board will not let me go into the jungle, wouldn't you be willing to come back to Duke Town with me?" asked Charles.

"No, Charles, I couldn't. I love you very much, more than anyone I have ever known, but my work for God is in the jungles. There no one else has yet planted the Gospel seed. To leave a field like Okoyong without a worker and go to one like Duke Town with ten or a dozen workers where the people have the Bible and plenty of privileges—that's foolish. If God does not send you into the jungle with me, then you must do your work and I must do mine where we have been placed."

It was not long after Mary had returned to England that the Mission Board gave its answer to her request. The answer was no.

"What the Lord decides is right," said Mary. "I believe that the Mission Board is giving me God's answer because they are His servants."

What Mary suffered no one knew. She longed to have a life's partner by her side in the great work of bringing the Gospel to the jungle, but having given her life to God, she felt that He must be her first love. Charles Morrison, however, took the refusal very hard. He became sick and had to go home. Later he went to America where he died.

Now that Mary was home in England, she soon got over the jungle fevers. People wanted to hear about the missionary work in Africa. Mary went from church to church telling about her work. She did not like to do this. She would rather be in the jungle telling the natives about Jesus.

"It is hard for me to speak," said Mary, "but Jesus has asked me to do it, and it is an honor to speak for Him. I wish to do it cheerfully."

Everywhere people were thrilled to hear about the work for Jesus in the jungle. They wanted to do something, too. They gave money. They sent boxes of clothes and food and other things out to Africa to help the heathen.

Then Mary got sick with influenza and bronchitis. She could not go around speaking any more. Instead, she wrote some articles for a missionary paper.

"The Gospel must be preached to the people of Calabar," she said. "Then the people ought to be taught some trades. They should learn to be carpenters and farmers and the like. We ought to send out people who can teach them these trades so that they can make a living."

Were they not making a living before she arrived? A living independent of exploitative trade with Europe, but a living nonetheless.

This was a new idea to many people. They wrote to other missionaries to find out what they thought about it. Later a school, "The Hope Waddell Training Institute," was started. This school taught the boys and girls of Calabar many trades.

Mary was slow in getting well. She and Janie, the black girl she had brought with her, went to the southern part of England, where the climate was milder. It was hoped that the sea breezes and the mild climate would bring back her health. Days and weeks went by. Little by little Mary got better. The year 1891 came to an end. The bells rang in the New Year.

"Soon we can go back to dear Calabar," said Mary. "Oh, how I want to get back and tell more people there about the Lord Jesus."

In February, 1892, Mary and Janie sailed for Calabar. What new adventures awaited them in Africa?

"Welcome home, Ma, welcome," shouted the people of Okoyong. "God bless you. Praise the Lord for sending you back to us!"

When Mary came back to Okoyong, things were much different from what they had been the first time she came. Now there was a fine mission house. Churches and schoolhouses had been built in many of the villages. The people were slowly but surely turning away from their heathen customs. Formerly no chief ever died without the sacrifice of many human lives, but this was not done any more. One of the chiefs said, "Ma, you white people are God Almighty. No other power could have done this."

Interesting that she didn't refute this, whereas on other occasions she has given credit to God for her accomplishments.

There were still many chiefs who liked to go to war and to fight with other tribes. But Mary had friends who would tell her of the plans of these chiefs. She would have to go to them and persuade them not to fight. One of Mary's dearest friends was Ma Eme. When she would hear of trouble, she would send a messenger to Mary with a medicine bottle. This would mean, "Be ready for trouble."

Mary was so good at settling the arguments between the chiefs that the British government made her a vice-consul. This was something like a governor and judge. The jungle people would not let the white men come and make new laws or settle their arguments, but they did listen to Mary. She was a very fair and honest judge. The people loved and obeyed her.

But life was not easy. Not all the natives were Christians. Even those who were, were not always good Christians but would sometimes slip back into the old heathen ways. Then it was hard for Mary and her helpers to get to the different places. There were no easy roads through the jungles, and wild animals were always there ready to kill the careless traveler.

Mary received many gifts both from the natives and from her friends in England and Scotland. One of the gifts she loved the best was a little steamboat, which the natives called "smoking canoe." The boys and girls in Scotland had given the money to buy this boat.

But Mary was not satisfied. She did not want to take life easy. As soon as she had built a church and the people were beginning to become civilized, she wanted to move on to wilder places.

Mary seems to have a kind of rapacious patriarchal mindset for expansion.

"I want to start new work," said Mary. "Let those who are younger and who have not been in this work as long as I have, take the places where the work has been begun."

Many of Mary's friends among the natives had gone to Akpap, which was a village south of Ekenge. This village was about six miles from the Cross River. It was a large trading center. Many heathen came to this village to trade their goods for other things they wanted. Mary wrote to the Mission Board and asked them to let her begin work in this new place.

"We cannot at this time let you start work at Akpap," wrote the Mission Board. "To start there we would have to build a mission house, and we do not have the money for that. Besides the nearest landing place is Ikunetu. This is six miles from Akpap. The forests are wild and hard to get through. We believe you should continue the work at Ekenge."

Mary wrote again and again, trying to persuade the Board to let her start work at Akpap. At last the Mission Board agreed to let her start work there. They promised to build a mission house and a boathouse for her steamboat.

Mary did not wait for the house to be built. In 1896 she built a two-room native shed. Here she began her work. The house was not as good as the first house she built in Ekenge. This did not bother Mary. She was more concerned about bringing the Gospel to the heathen.

The work here was like that in Ekenge. The chiefs came with the troubles they were having in their tribes. They wanted her advice. The people came with their family problems and wanted her to tell them what to do. There were many heathen people who came from the jungle to visit her. Mary taught her classes. She conducted Sunday services. She was busy all the time. Then one day the smallpox sickness broke out.

I think Mary was at least partly motivated by the power that starting these missions allowed her to wield and the way that she was treated almost as a messiah.

"You must all be vaccinated," said Mary to the natives. "I will scratch your arm with this medicine and the smallpox will stay away from you."

Hour after hour, far into the night, day after day, Mary vaccinated the natives. When her medicine ran out, she took blood from the arms of those who had been vaccinated to use as vaccination medicine.

One day a man came running to the house where Mary was living in Akpap. He had run a long way. He was scratched up and sweating. He had run through the jungle without stopping.

"Ma, Ma," he cried, "the smallpox sickness has come to Ekenge. Chief Ekponyong and Chief Edem are sick and many, many more. Come quick, oh, come to Ekenge or we shall all die."

"I will come with you at once," said Mary to the messenger from Ekenge. "I will help your people fight the smallpox sickness."

Mary went back to Ekenge. The smallpox sickness was very bad. Nearly the whole village was sick.

"We must have a hospital," said Mary. "I know what we will do. We will make my house here a hospital."

Soon the house was filled to overflowing with sick people. She had to be doctor, nurse, and undertaker. Many of her close friends died. Chief Ekponyong, who at first had worked against Mary and then had become her friend, died. Chief Edem, the chief of Ekenge, was very sick. The tired missionary did everything she could to save the old heathen's life. But one dark night he died.

Mary was all alone. Mary made a coffin for the chief. She put his body in it. Then she dug a grave. She dragged the coffin to the grave and buried it. Completely tired out she dragged herself back to Akpap.

Just at this time Mr. Ovens and another missionary came up from Duke Town. They came to Mary's hut at Akpap. All was still and quiet. Mr. Ovens looked at the other missionary.

"Something is wrong," he said. He knocked loudly at the door. He knocked and knocked again. Finally Mary awoke and opened the door. The missionaries saw how tired and sick she looked.

"What is wrong?" asked Ovens.

Mary told them about the sickness at Ekenge. She told them of what she had done. "I don't see how you could have done that work alone," said Mr. Ovens.

"Won't you go and bury the rest of the dead?" asked Mary. "I was just too tired to do it."

"Yes, we will," said Mr. Ovens. The two missionaries went to Ekenge. There they found the mission house filled with dead bodies. They buried these people and preached to those who were still living about the Saviour.

Mary was weak and sick, but she kept right on working. In one of her letters to a friend she tells about some of her work:

Four are at my feet listening. Five boys outside are getting a reading lesson from Janie. A man is lying on the ground who has run away from his master, and is staying with me for safety until I get him forgiven. An old chief is here with a girl who has a bad sore on her arm. A woman is begging me to help her get her husband to treat her better. Three people are here for vaccination.

Every evening she would have family worship. Mary sat on the mud floor in one of the shed rooms. In front of her in a half-circle were the many children she had adopted and was taking care of. Behind them were the baskets holding the twin babies she had recently rescued. The light from a little lamp shone on the bright faces. Mary read slowly from the Bible. Then she explained the Bible reading to the children and prayed. Then she sang a song in the native language. The tune was a Scottish melody and as she sang she kept time with a tamborine. If any of the children did not pay attention, Mary would lean forward and tap his head with the tamborine.

Mary did not get her strength back. She was not well. The mission committee at Calabar decided that even though they had no worker to take her place, she must go home on a vacation which was long overdue.

"But who will take care of the work at Akpap?" asked Mary.

"Mr. Ovens, the carpenter, who is building the mission house at Akpap, can do the work until we find someone to take your place," answered the chairman of the committee.

Okay, this is just gross now.

"But what shall I do with my many black children? I don't want them to go back to heathen ways of living while I am gone. I don't like to ask the other mission workers to take care of them for me."

"Don't worry, Mary. We will find places for them."

Places were found for all the adopted children except the four black children whom she planned to take along with her. These were Janie, who was now sixteen years old, Mary was five, Alice three, and Maggie was only eighteen months old. Now Mary had to find ways of clothing the children. The rags they wore in the jungle would not do for the trip to Scotland. Mary took her trouble to the Lord, and He wonderfully answered her prayer. When she reached Duke Town, she found that a missionary box had just come, and it had just the things she needed.

Mary took her children on board the big ship. It was the biggest "canoe" that any of the children except Janie had ever seen.

"We're on our way to bonny Scotland," said Mary.

XI.

Clouds and Sunshine

"The other missionaries at Calabar," said Mary, "work as hard, if not harder, than I do. We need more workers to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ for your lost black brothers and sisters. They have souls just as you do. Jesus loves them just as He does you. We must tell them of His love. I would like to go farther inland to people who have never heard the Gospel and make a home among the cannibals."

Mary was giving a talk at one of the churches. As soon as she was well enough to make speeches, many of the churches wanted to hear her. The people were very much interested in the black children she had adopted and brought with her. Many of them had never seen black people before. Mary had some trouble speaking in English. For many years now she had been speaking almost all the time in the African language. It was sometimes hard for her to say the right English words, but the Holy Spirit helped her, and the people remembered her talks and gave generously for the work in Africa..

Late in the year 1898 Mary and the black children got on the big "canoe" and sailed back to Africa. They spent a happy Christmas on the ship.

Once more strong and well, Mary went back to work in Akpap. She taught the children and grownups. She healed the sick. She visited in the bush and in the jungle. During this time Mary had the joy of seeing six young men become Christians. These young men she trained and sent to the neighboring villages as Gospel workers. She had hoped for more helpers, but was grateful that God had given her these. More and more of the jungle people heard about her. Bushmen traveled hundreds of miles to see the white Ma who told them about Jesus.

Mary used every chance she had to tell the Gospel to heathen who had never heard it. The stories the visiting people told about their lands and the inland tribes filled Mary with the desire to explore other parts of the country. Often in the mission boat or in a canoe she traveled to villages farther away. On one trip the canoe in which Mary was riding was attacked by a hippopotamus. Mary thought her end had come. Nevertheless, she bravely fought off the animal, using metal cooking pots and pans as weapons.

In the southern part of Nigeria was a strong, wild tribe called the Aros. They were a proud but wicked people. They made war on peaceful tribes. They would steal people from peaceful villages and make them slaves. They prayed to the Devil, and they killed people as human sacrifices to please their idols. They were cannibals who ate people.

The government decided to make this tribe stop doing these bad things. A small band of soldiers was sent against this tribe to make them obey. This made Mary sad. She knew that sending soldiers to fight against these people would not change them. She knew that only the Gospel could change the black men's hearts. She wished she could go to this tribe with the Gospel of Jesus, but the government said no. The government officers feared there might be a tribal war which would even come to Okoyong. They decided that Mary would be safer in Creek Town than Akpap. Sadly Mary left her friends and spent three months in Creek Town.

Her Okoyong friends did not forget her. They came often to visit her and brought her gifts. They also brought their quarrels to her to settle. They called her their queen. Finally, Mary was allowed to go back to Akpap.

Three years went by. It was now fifteen years since Mary had first come to Okoyong. On the anniversary of the day that she came a celebration was held. Seven young men whom Mary had won for Christ were baptized. The Rev. W.T. Weir, a missionary from Creek Town, helped in organizing the first Okoyong Christian Church. The following Sunday the church was filled to overflowing. Mary presented eleven children for baptism. The Lord's Supper was served for the first time to natives and white workers who had accepted Christ as their Saviour. After songs had been sung and speeches made by others, Mary got up to speak.

"You must build a church large enough to take care of all who come to hear God's Word. Okoyong now looks to you who have accepted Christ as your Saviour and who have joined the church for proof of the power of the Gospel, more than it looks to me. I am very happy over all that has been done these past fifteen years, but it is God who did it. To Him belongs all the glory. Mission houses, schools, and a church have been built. Wicked heathen customs have been stopped. Chiefs have quit fighting, and women are much better off than they were when I came. Let us praise God for this and let us go on and do greater things. The Lord will help us and will bless our work."

Mary was happy the way the work was going, but she was not satisfied. She wanted to go to other places.

"This cannibal land of deep darkness with woods of spooky mystery is like a magnet," said Mary Slessor. "It draws me on and on."

"Where is this country where you want to work?" asked Miss Wright, one of the teachers at the Girls' Institute at Calabar.

"It lies to the west of the Cross River. It stretches for miles and miles toward the Niger River."

"Haven't any missionaries been there?"

"None have gone into the forest. Missionaries and traders have gone along the edge of it when they went up the Cross River."

"What tribes live in this dark and mysterious country?" asked Miss Wright.

"The Ibo tribe lives in most of the country, but they are ruled by the Aros clan," said Mary.

"Who are they? Tell me something about them, Mary. I know so little about the tribes, except those who come to Calabar or send their girls to our Institute."

"The Aros clan are a wise but tricky people. They live in thirty villages near the district of Arochuku, where I would like to begin a mission. They are strong and rule the Ibo tribe because of their trade and religion. They trade slaves, which their religion furnishes. When they cannot get enough slaves that way, they raid Ibo villages and capture the people who live there and sell them."

"You say their religion furnishes them with slaves? How is that possible?"

"The Ibo tribe and the Aros pray to the juju god. They believe the juju god lives in a tree. They think this tree is holy. Each village has its own god and sacred tree, but the main juju used to be about a mile from Arochuku."

"But you haven't told me about the slaves," interrupted Miss Wright.

"I am just coming to that," said Mary. "This main juju, called the Long Juju, was reached by a winding road that goes through a dense jungle and leads at last to a lake. In the center of the lake is an island on which was the Long Juju. Here hundreds of people came to ask advice from the priests and to worship. When the people came here, the Aros clan had captured them. Then they were either sold as slaves, sacrificed to juju, or eaten by the tribe."

"How terrible!"

"The Aros are tricky. One of their tricks, was to throw some of the people they captured into the water. The water at once turned red. The priests would tell the people that juju had eaten the men. The people believed it, but really the red was only coloring the priests had thrown into the river."

"Is the juju still there?" asked Miss Wright.

"No. The British soldiers went over the Cross River. They had a battle with the natives and beat them. They captured Arochuku. Then they chopped down the Long Juju. But of course the natives still have their village jujus. They still do many wicked things."

"And you want to work among those terrible people?"

"Yes, don't you think they have a great need for the Gospel?"

"Oh, they do! But I would not have the courage to work among them."

"I have no courage," said Mary, "except what God gives me."

"Tell me, Mary, have you gone into that country at all?"

"I have made some short exploration trips. I told the traders to tell the chiefs that some day I would come to their country to live, but their only answer was, 'It is not safe.' That is what the people told me when I wanted to go to Okoyong. I trust in my heavenly Father and I am not afraid of the cannibals no matter how fierce and cruel they may be."

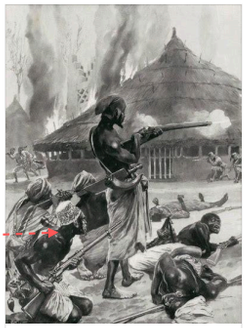
"But Mary, did you know that when a chief died recently, fifty or more people were eaten at the funeral ceremonies, and twenty-five others had their heads cut off and were buried with the chief?"

"Yes, I heard that. But things were almost as bad when I came to Okoyong. God blessed my work, and He can protect me in this strange new land of the cannibals. I do hope the Mission Board will let me go and work among the Aros and Ibos."

The missionaries in Calabar wanted Mary to work at Ikorofiong and at Unwana, which were two towns farther up the Cross River from Akpap. But Mary did not think these were good places for her work. She wanted to be where she could reach the most people. She wanted to work at Arochuku, the chief city of Aros which was also near the Efik, Ibo and Ibibio tribes. She wanted to open her first station at Itu, which was on the mouth of Enyong creek, her second station at Arochuku and a third at Bende. The missionaries at Calabar did not agree, but they decided to wait until a worker could be found to take Mary's place at Akpap. Mary would not reave these people until they could be taken care of by Christian workers.

"Send a minister to take care of a station. I cannot build up a church the way a minister can," said Mary.

This kind of sounds like one of the Gospels. I'm waiting for her to perform a miracle; we know she sure won't be turning any water into wine! Or having any fun at a wedding at all, really.



The Aro are a subgroup of the Igbo people.

The Bible has definitely been used to justify slavery, so the pearl-clutching in this passage gets under my skin. The Bible was also fundamental to many abolitionist arguments, to be fair; this just hit me in the 'tism.

It looked as though Mary would not get to go to the land of Aros. Then Miss Wright, the teacher from the Girls' Institute, asked to be sent to Akpap as an assistant. This request was sent to Scotland for the Board to approve. Mary now decided to start work at once. In January, 1903, with two boys, Esien and Efiiom, and a girl, Mana, whom she had carefully trained, she loaded her canoe with food and other supplies and set off for the land of the cruel cannibals.

Interesting that the boys didn't get *carefully trained*. Boys will be boys, amiright?

They did not know how the people there would treat them, but they trusted in God to take care of them and help them in their work. Mary found a house for them.

"I am leaving you here," said Mary to the three natives, "to begin a school and hold church services for the people of Itu. I must go back to Akpap but I will come again as soon as I can."

But Mary had to stay at Akpap longer than she expected. At last she was able to come again to Itu and to visit the school and the church services.

"You have done wonderfully well," she told the three workers. "God has blessed your work. My heart was filled with joy when I saw so many people, young and old, at the services. And your school is filled with people who want to learn book and learn the will of God. Now we must build a church and a schoolhouse."

Mary began mixing the mud and doing the other work that was necessary for building a building in Africa. The native workers and the people of Itu helped her gladly. It did not take long with many willing hands to build a church and school. Two rooms were added to the church building.

"These two rooms are for you, Ma," the people said. "You must have a place to stay when you come to us."

After the church and school were built, Mary went back to Akpap. Here she heard good news.

"The Board in Scotland has given me permission to be your assistant at Akpap," said Miss Wright.

"Wonderful!" said Mary. "Now I can spend more time at Itu and more time in the jungle."

On a beautiful morning in June, 1903, Mary packed her clothes and supplies and marched the six miles down to the landing beach at Ikunetu. Here she waited for the government boat which would take her to Itu. She waited and waited. At last she found one of the natives and asked, "Where is the government boat? Is it late?"

"No, Ma, it long time gone."

So Mary had to walk back six miles through the jungle to the mission house at Akpap.

"Why, Mary," said Miss Wright, "what are you doing here? I thought that by this time you would be traveling on the government boat to Itu."

"I am in God's hands," said Mary, "and He did not mean for me to travel today. I have been kept back for some good purpose."

The next week when she again made the trip to board the boat, Colonel Montanaro who commanded the government soldiers in that part of the country, was on the boat.

"I will be happy to have you travel with me and my soldiers," said the colonel. "You will be safer that way. I am going to Arochuku."

"That is just what I would like to do," said Mary. "Now I see why God did not let me travel last week. I have been wanting for a long time to visit the chief city of the Aros. I want to see more about this juju religion."

Some time before, the government had sent soldiers into the country to make the chiefs stop the juju worship. The chiefs had promised to stop it, but it still went on secretly. After reaching Arochuku, Mary followed the jungle paths over which the slaves had been made to walk for hundreds of years. She came to the place of the Long Juju. There Mary saw the human skulls, the bones and the pots in which the bodies had been cooked. Mary shivered when she thought of the cannibal feasts.

A display of human skulls doesn't necessarily indicate the practice of ritual cannibalism. (See also: the Paris catacombs.)

Mary thought the people might be against her, but instead they welcomed her. They had heard about the good things she had done in the jungle.

"O God," prayed Mary, "I want to bring the Gospel to these man-eaters for whom Christ died. Please, dear God, make the home church and the Mission Board see the great need here so that they will let me win this part of the country for Christ."

Mary promised the people of Arochuku she would come again and open a school. Then she returned to Akpap and wrote the Mission Board for permission to open a station at Arochuku. Soon the answer came back!

We are sorry, but it will be impossible at this time to open work at Arochuku. We do not have the money or the workers.

XII.

Among the Cannibals

"The mission Board says that they cannot open a mission station at Arochuku now," said Mary. "I have asked God to give me a mission station where His Gospel can be preached to the Aros. I trust in Christ who is able to do more than I am able to ask or think. I know God will give me what I have asked."

"What are you going to do now?" asked Miss Wright.

"I am going to do what I believe God wants me to do. I am going to take some native Christians and make a beginning in the land of the Aros."

It sounds an awful lot like she's just doing what *she* wants to do and then ascribing it to the will of God.

Mary took some native boys whom she had trained. They were able to help with school-work and church services. Mary and the boys went to Amasu, a little village which was nearer the creek than Arochuku. Here she opened a school. It was soon filled with boys and girls thirsty for book and the loving God. She held church services for the people, and many of them came to hear the white Ma teach about Jesus.

At last it was time for Mary to go back to Akpap. She left the native Christians to carry on the work of the school and church. The people of the village gathered around her. They said,

"Come again soon, white Ma. If you do not care for us, who will care for us?"

Once again, I find it interesting which of her accomplishments she attributes to God and which of them she does not.

As Mary went down the river in her canoe, she thanked God that He had let her open this new field to the Gospel. Suddenly there was a canoe barring her way. In it was a tall native.

"I have been waiting for you. My master at Akani Obio sent me to stop you and bring you to his house."

Mary told her rowers to follow the native to his master's place. Soon they came to a trading place. Here Mary was greeted by a handsome young man.

"I am Onoyom Iya Nya, the president of the court and the chief of this district. This is my wife. Won't you please honor us by coming into our house?"

Onoyom and his wife led Mary to a European-type house, which was very nicely furnished. Onoyom's wife invited Mary to have some food with them. While they ate, Onoyom talked.

"Many times I have sent my servants to find you," said Onoyom, "but they never found you until today. I am happy that you have come."

"But why did you seek me? Why did you want me to come to you?" asked Mary.

"When I was a boy," said Onoyom, "I served as a guide to a missionary. He told me the Gospel story. I wanted Jesus for my Saviour. But my tribe beat me and punished me in other ways until I gave up the white man's religion and followed the juju religion of the tribe. I took part in Arochuku feasts where we ate 'long pig,' that is, men and women."

"Long pig," a term for human flesh prepared for consumption, likely originated from stories about the Fiji Islands. To the extent that this dialogue ever happened, an African would have used a different term. Idk why I feel compelled to point this out.

"But why do you want to talk to me?" asked Mary.

"I never forgot what the missionary told me about Christ. Later I had troubles and sickness. I tried witchcraft to find the person who placed the troubles and sickness on me. Instead, I met a white man. He said to me, 'How do you know it is not the God of the white man who is angry with you? He is all-powerful.' I said, 'How can I find this God?' I hoped he would tell me, but he said, 'I am not worthy to tell you. Find the white Ma who goes to Itu and she will tell you.' O Ma, please tell us about your God."

Tears of joy ran down Mary's cheeks. Onoyom called all the members of his family and the servants together. Mary told them of Jesus and His power to save them. She read from the Bible, prayed with the people, and promised to come back again on her next trip.

"I will build a church for you," said Chief Onoyom. "I have money. I will give $1,500 for a mission house and school."

As Mary rode down the Enyong creek she thought of the new missionary work that was opening up.

"O God," she prayed, "I thank You for the new places at Itu and Amasu. I thank You for the chance to build a church at Akani Obio. Please let me open a station soon at Arochuku. There with Your blessing I hope to conquer the cannibals for Christ."

"I do hope," she said to herself, "that the Board will soon send an ordained minister to take over the Akpap station. I must persuade Miss Wright to go with me to Itu. I am sure God will give her courage to come with me. This Enyong creek region will give us all the work for Christ we can handle and more. We must go forward for Christ."

Thank goodness that nothing bad has ever followed an utterance of these words.

Mary made many trips to Akpap, to Itu and Amasu. She stopped at many little villages and lonely huts along Enyong creek to tell the people about the Saviour who had died also for those with black skins. Often she slept on mud floors. She ate yams and native fruits.

God blessed the work at Itu and Amasu. The people of Itu built a church and more than three hundred of them attended the services. At Amasu the school pew fast. The natives were learning to read.

The natives at Itu started to build a six-room house at Itu for Mary. It was to be one of the finest homes in which the missionary had ever lived.

"I am afraid it is too much work for you," said Mary to the natives. "It is too big." "No, it is not too much." said the people of Itu. "Nothing is too much to do for you. We shall do it."

Another time a native woman knelt at Mary's feet. She washed Mary's tired feet in warm water.

"You are so kind to me," said Mary thanking her.

"I have been so afraid, Ma, that you would think us unworthy of a teacher and take her away," said the woman. "I could not live again in darkness. I pray all the time. I lay my basket down and pray on the road."

"That is good," said Mary. "Prayer can do anything. I know. I have tested it. Of course, God does not always answer our prayers the way we want them answered, but He does answer them and in the way that is best for us. Trust God always."

One day Mary thought of a new plan she wanted to try out. She had been in the jungle for five years. She was due to get a year's vacation at home in Scotland. Instead of this she asked for something else. She wrote to the Mission Board:

I would like to have leave from the mission station at Akpap for six months. This time I would spend traveling between Okoyong and Amasu. I would visit many places which I do not have time to visit now. Already I have seen a church and a mission house built at Itu, and a school and a couple of rooms at Amasu. I have visited several towns at Enyong and have found good enough places to stay.

I shall find my own canoe and crew. I shall stay at any one place just as long as I think wise. The members of my family [she meant the twins and slave children and other unwanted children she had adopted] shall help in teaching the beginners in the schools.

I plan to live at Itu as my headquarters. I will look after the small schools I have started at Idot and Eki. I will visit and work for Jesus in the towns on both sides of Enyong creek all the way to Amasu. I will live there for a while or travel among the Aros telling them of Jesus. Then I will come back by easy stages to Itu and home.

Please send an assistant to help Miss Wright at Akpap, so I will be free to do this new work in the jungle. I would like Miss Wright to help me with some work among the cannibals, in some places, so that I will have more time for pioneer work in the places farther away.

Omg, she's just relentless...

Itu should be our main station. We can reach the various tribes best from it. It is the gateway to the Aros and the Ibibios and near many other tribes. That is why it became a slave market. It could be reached so easily. It is only a day's journey from the seaport of the ocean steamers, having waterway all the year round and a good beach front. Itu is a natural place for our upriver and downriver work to come together.

Mary was now fifty-six years old. She had suffered much from sickness and from the lack of many things. Now she wanted to go on a "gypsying tour of the jungle," as she called it. This was hard and difficult work. There were many dangers from wild animals and wild people. These tribes she wanted to visit did not know anything about the Saviour, or God's Word, but they did know how to do many wicked things like killing and eating people. Many a younger and stronger person than Mary would be afraid to tackle the job she had planned to do. Mary was not afraid. God had given her the chance to reach the wild cannibals. She was willing to die trying to bring the Gospel to them.

Okay, this is kind of feeling like pathological behavior now. And I thought she was going to humbly go where God sent her, and that God didn't always answer our prayers in the way that we wanted...?

"I am willing to go anywhere," said Mary, "provided it be forward among the cannibals."

Mary anxiously waited for the answer from the Mission Board giving her permission to work for six months in the cannibal country. The answer did not come and did not come. At last she decided to go on a short trip through that country to encourage the black workers she had sent there. She went to see the Wilkies and Miss Wright.

"I am going on a short trip through the cannibal country," said Mary. "I am inviting you to be my guests on this trip. I want you to see what God is doing among the cannibals. Won't you come with me?"

"We'll be glad to go with you," said Mr. Wilkie.

Mary and her friends first visited Itu, where they met Colonel Montanaro, who had first taken Mary to Itu. Then they went to Akani Obio. Here Chief Onoyom had a big party for them.

"Ma, when are you going to come and stay a long time with us?" he asked. "I want you to bring the Gospel to me and to my people."

"I hope it will be soon," said Mary. "I am praying every day that the Mission Board will let me work in your country."

Mary and her friends now went to Amasu to see the Gospel work that was being done there. Then they visited the villages around Arochuku where the Long Juju was. Then they started back to Akpap. They visited many very small villages on the way back. Everywhere the people said to them, "We want to learn book." They meant they wanted someone to teach them to read the Bible.

At last they arrived at Akpap. Here there was the letter from the Mission Board. Mary's hands shook as she opened the long-awaited letter. Would it give her permission to go to cannibal land or would it tell her to come home and take her furlough in the usual way?

You may make the jungle trip that you plan, but you will have to pay your own expenses during this time. We do not have any money for that work.

Mary was happy. Mary took the little money she had and bought supplies at Duke Town. Then she got her canoe ready. She took a crew of black rowers to row the canoe and a group of the black children she had adopted.

"It seems strange to be starting with a family on a gypsy life in a canoe," wrote Mary, "but God will take care of us. Whether I shall find His place for me upriver or whether I shall come back to my own people again, I do not know. He knows and that is enough."

At last Mary and her group of travelers came to Itu, which was deep in cannibal land. Mary had started the work here and then left native workers to carry on. Now there were three hundred people in the church. Mary found that the mission house at Itu was not finished. Mary herself mixed the cement for the floor while Janie did the whitewashing. Someone asked Mary how she learned to make cement.

This is a refreshing reversal - usually Africans are forced to do all of the hard labor while the Europeans whitewash them out of history and take all of the credit.

"I just stir it like oatmeal, then turn it out smooth with a stick and all the time I keep praying, `Lord, here's the cement. If it is to Your glory, set it,' and it has never gone wrong."

Every day Mary made calls and helped to solve the problems of the people of Itu. In the evenings she would hold prayer in the yards of many of the people. Always Mary told the people of the Saviour who died for them.

The news that Mary the white Ma was in cannibal land soon spread far and wide. The tom-toms calling through the jungle told the different tribes where Mary was. From Ibibio southward, the natives sent messages to Mary.

"Please, Ma," they said, "send us a teacher."

"It is not `book' I want," said a chief in his message, "I want God."

"We have three in hand for a teacher," said Chief Onoyom of Akani Obio. "Some of the boys have already finished the books Mr. Wilkie gave us. We can do no more until you send us help."

Mary spent the night praying to God to send more workers to Africa. "O Britain," said Mary, "filled full of ministers and church workers, but tired of Sunday and of church, I wish that you could send over to us what you are throwing away!"

XIII.

Blessings Unnumbered

God blessed Mary's work in cannibal land and more and more people were won for Jesus. Chief Onoyom stayed true to his faith.

"Come," he said to his people, "we must build a church here at Akani Obio. Let us go to the jungle and cut down trees for the house of God."

Chief Onoyom and his people went to the woods. The chief went to a tree and got ready to cut it down.

"Chief," they cried, "you are not going to cut that tree, are you? You know that is the juju tree."

"I know it is the juju tree," said Onoyom, "and I am going to chop it down."

"The juju will be angry. He will not let us. He will kill us," cried the people.

"Ma's God is stronger than our juju," said Chief Onoyom. "Cut it down."

The people began to chop. The trunk of the tree was thick. After a while they stopped.

"See, we cannot cut it," they said.

The heathen natives were glad.

"Aha," they said, "our juju is stronger than Ma's God."

The next morning Chief Onoyom took some men who wanted to be Christians. Before beginning to chop at the tree they knelt and prayed that the white Ma's God would prove stronger than the juju. Then they got up and began to chop. Soon the tree fell with a mighty crash. Ma's God had won!

The juju tree was used for a pulpit and seats in the church building. A large group of people came to the dedication services. They were quiet and well-behaved. What a great change the Gospel had made! Only two years before the people were wild savages.

Mary had to hold services at Arochuku out-doors, but now the people built a church and a schoolhouse. At other villages along Enyong creek congregations were organized, and churches and schoolhouses were built.

In 1905 Mary had to go to the Mission Council meeting at Calabar. During the meeting Mary was called on to tell about her work.

"God has done great things in cannibal land. We have congregations at Itu, Arochuku, Oko, Akani Obio, Odot, Amasu, and Asang. In all of these places churches have been built. In many of them we have built schoolhouses too. Many of the cannibals are being won for Christ. But we need more workers. In all this wide country of the Aros, I am the only white missionary. My six months' leave is almost up. Who will take care of these people who are as dear to God as you or I? Now they are being taken care of by native workers, but these have only little training. Send workers to cannibal land to change these man-eaters into Christians."

The Council was thrilled by Mary's report. They voted that she could spend six more months in cannibal land, but again they said she would have to pay her own expenses. This did not bother Mary. She had never been paid, much salary. In the first years she sent most of it back home to take care of her mother and sister. After they had died she used me most of it for her colored Christians. She had adopted many black children whose parents had thrown them out. But money never bothered Mary. She had a little bit saved up. She was happy that she could go to cannibal, land and win souls for Christ.

"But where shall I work now?" Mary asked herself. "Shall I keep on working on upper Enyong creek or shall I go south to the Ibibios? The Ibibios are the worst heathen in this part of Africa. The worse the people are, the more they need help. I should go to the Ibibios."

Meanwhile the Mission committee in Scotland decided to build a hospital at Itu. Dr. Robertson was to be the head of it. The Mission committee chose a name for the hospital. They named it, "The Mary Slessor Mission Hospital." The people in Scotland gave the money so the hospital could be built.

"It seems like a fairy tale," said Mary when she was told about it, "and I don't know just what to say. I can just look up into the blue sky and say, 'Even so, Father; let me live and be worthy of it all.' It is a grand gift and I am so glad for my people."

Now that Itu was taken care of, Mary had all the more reason to go south to the Ibibios. In their country the government was building roads and setting up courts. The government people wanted Mary to come to that country too, because she knew so much more about the people and customs in cannibal land.

"Get a bicycle, Ma," said one of the government men. "Here is the road. Come as far as you can. And we'll soon have a motorcar for you."

Mary started out. She took along one of the boys she had adopted. It was twelve-year-old Etim. He could read and she needed his help. Once more Mary was beginning mission work in a new part of the country where Christians had never been.

Mary and Etim went to Ibibio-land. Mary started a school and a small congregation. Etim was made the teacher of the school. He proved to be a very good teacher. Soon he had a class of fifty children.

"It is my hope," said Mary, "that Ikotobong will be the first of a chain of stations stretching across the country."

Mary went to visit the old chief of Ikotobong.

"What do you think of our work here?"

"It is good," said the chief. "I am happy you came. There are many things that are strange to me and my people. We do not understand them. I am glad for the light. We will give Etim food as pay for teaching. We will help build a schoolhouse and a church."

Mary was happy that the people were willing and anxious to learn. But she wanted to go to a new part of the country and start more places. The government officer at Ikot Expene gave Mary a bicycle.

"I think it's God's will that I learn to ride this bicycle. Think of an old lady like me on a bicycle!" said Mary. "The new road makes it easy to ride, and I'm running up and down and taking a new work in a village two miles off. It has done me all the good in the world, and I will soon be able to do even more work."

The treatment of the women in Ibibio was very bad. They were treated worse than slaves. The men could do whatever they wanted to do with them. They were often beaten. They were bought and sold like cattle. Mary wanted to help the poor women.

"I want to build a home for girls, orphans, twins and their mothers, and those who have run away from harems," said Mary. "I also want to start a school where trades and skills can be taught. All the women know how to farm. They know how to weave baskets and make simple sandals. But I want them to know many more things so that they can take care of themselves. I am going to look for a place with good land and pure water near the roads and the markets. Then I will write to my friends and to the Mission Board for help."

Mary's furlough had first been for six months and then was made six months longer. In April, 1906, it came to an end. She was supposed to go back to Akpap, because the Mission Council expected her to settle down in one place and work there. They appointed her to work at Akpap and that is where they expected her to work.

"I do not want to settle in one place," said Mary. "God gives me different gifts; I think my gift is to explore and start new congregations. Others are better fitted to take care of them after they are started than I am. God is pushing me onward. I don't dare look backward. Even if my dear church turns against me and will not have me as its missionary, I must go forward. I can find food for myself and the children. That is all I need. God will help me."

Mary thought and prayed much over this matter. She thought of starting a store or taking a government job so she could earn money to take care of the missionary work. She wrote a long letter to the Mission Board. She told how God had blessed the work at Itu and the villages on Enyong creek. Then she wrote:

In all this how plainly God has been leading me. I did not think of doing these things in my lifetime, but God has led me on. First Itu, and then the Creek, then back from Aro, where I had set my heart, to a lonely, spooky, wilderness. There no one ever went, but now miles of roads are being built.

The Board says I am to go back to Akpap in April. I love no other place on earth so well. But I dare not think of leaving the crowds of untamed, unwashed, unlovely savages, and take away the little sunlight that has begun to flicker out over its darkness.

It has a name, you know...

This hurts my autism so bad. Why not worship axes, then, instead of making up a supernatural deity?

Why could she not have said "God has done great things in Itu, Arochuku, Oko..." and just skipped the racist cannibal shit entirely?

Spoken like a true Hernan Cortez.

I know that I am pretty old for this kind of work. But God will help. Whether the church permits or not, I feel that I must stay here. I must even go farther as the roads are made. I cannot walk now and I must be careful of my health. But I can get four wheels made and set a box on them and the children can pull me. I dare not go back. If the Board insists, I will risk finding some other way to support myself and my family.

As April drew closer day by day, Mary anxiously waited for the Mission Board's answer. The Mission Board wrote to Mary:

We are sending John Rankin to look over the field where you have been working. After he has made his report we will decide what you should do.

Mr. Rankin visited the different places in cannibal land where Mary had started congregations. He talked with the chiefs and the people. One chief talking about Mary and the other women missionaries said, "Them women be the best men for the mission." He wrote to the Board:

Close to Arochuku, within a circle of less than three miles in diameter, there are nineteen large towns. I visited sixteen of these. Each of them is larger than Creek Town. Most of the people are anxious to help. Already many of them have begun to live in God's way. Even the head chief of all the Aros wants us to do mission work in his country. He told the other chiefs he is going to rule according to God's way. He wants missionaries to be sent to his people. He offers to build a house at Arochuku for any missionary who will come.

I'm curious to know if there were other enticements aside from a different religion that were involved. This story is not only simplified for young adults, it's also clearly intended to paint white Christian missionaries in the best possible light.

The Mission Board was thrilled when they read this report. They agreed to give the money for the work which Mary had planned. They appointed Rankin to take charge of the stations at Itu and Arochuku. They agreed to let Mary go into the new territory. She did not have to go back to Akpap.

This made Mary very happy. Now she could work full time among the Ibibios. She offered to pay for the building of a mission station among the Ibibios if there was no money in the homeland treasury. In May the government appointed Mary to take charge of the courts in the Ibibio district as she had done in Okoyong. It paid her for this work so now she had money to carry on her mission work whether the Board paid her or not.

I think Mary just liked being a missionary in Africa because it allowed her to play God and to wield much more power than she ever would have been able to enjoy at home in Scotland.

Court was held at Ikotobong. Three chiefs and a jury helped Mary in trying the cases, but Mary's word was law. Mary was fair and kind, but at the same time she saw to it that those who did bad things were punished. In a letter to a friend she wrote:

God help those poor helpless women. They are treated worse than animals. Today I had a crowd of people. How wicked they were! I have had a murder, a poison bean case, a suicide, a man branding his slave wife all over her face and body, a man with a gun who shot four people. It is all horrible.

But her work as judge did not stop her from doing her mission work. Everywhere she went she told the natives of Jesus' death for them. She opened schools and churches for natives. She also was thinking about the other missionaries. She planned a place for them where they could spend weekends or where they could rest when they were getting over sickness. She chose a place half-way between Itu and Ikotobong on Enyong Creek. It was high above the lowlands where most of the sickness was. A friend sent her a check for $100 and Mary used it as a start for this rest home. She had the ground cleared and a small English house built.

Although Mary was busy she was not well. During most of 1906 she had been ailing.

"If you want to keep on with your missionary work," said the government doctor, "you must go home to Scotland where you can rest up and get the fever out of your system."

Mary did not want to leave her work. A few days after her talk with the doctor, when he came to see her again, she was much better.

"It looks as if God wants me to stay. Does that sound like He could not do without me! I do not mean it so. How little I can do! But I can at least keep a door open for missionary work so others can come and do more."

The year 1907 came. Mary was much worse. She could walk only a few steps. When she wanted to go anywhere, she had to be carried. At last she decided to do as the doctor told her and go to Scotland for a vacation.

"Oh, the dear homeland!" she said with tears in her eyes. "Shall I really be there and worship in the churches again? How I long for a look at a winter landscape, to feel the cold wind, and the frost in the cart ruts! How I want to take a back seat in a church and hear the congregation singing, without a care of my own! I want to hear how they preach and pray and rest their souls in the hush and silence of our home churches."

Mary took her six-year-old Dan, one of the many children she had adopted. The government officers were kind and helpful to her in getting ready for her trip.

"God must repay these men," said Mary, "because I cannot. He will not forget that they did it to a child of His, unworthy though she is."

Mary was now a wrinkled, shining-eyed old lady, almost sixty years old. She was carried on board the ship that would take her to Scotland. Her friends, both white and native, cried and wondered if she would ever come back to Africa again.

XIV.

Journey's End

"Send us workers for dark Africa," said Mary. "If I can get the Board to send us one or more workers, I will give half my salary to add to theirs. I will give the house for them to live in and find the servants. You who have so much, won't you do something for these poor people of Africa?"

Mary was speaking in the churches of Scotland telling about her work in Africa. After she had returned to Scotland, she felt much better. The air and climate was much better than in the steaming jungles of Africa. As soon as she was strong enough, she began to go about telling about her work. She urged the people to give money and to send workers to Africa.

Above all, she wanted to get money to support the industrial home for women which she had planned. From May until October she went among the churches telling about the "African sheep" whom the Good Shepherd Jesus wanted brought in.

In October Mary asked to be sent back to Africa. She wanted to carry on her work there.

"I am foolish, I know," said Mary, "but I just feel homeless without any relatives here in Scotland. I am a poor, lonesome soul with only memories."

Back in Africa Mary was busier than ever, holding court, looking after her home, and doing missionary work. On Sundays she held a half-dozen or more services in the nearby villages in which lived the people with whom she worked during the week. On some of these trips she brought back orphan children to join her already "overstuffed" household. But all this work was too much for her. She became sick again and very weak. Now her eyes began to get weak, so that she could not see as well. But nothing could stop her. She started the building of the industrial home for women and girls. She planted fruit trees there and planned to raise rubber and cocoa and cattle.

Mary wanted to move again. Some natives had come from Ikpe to see her before she went on her vacation to Scotland. They asked her to bring the Gospel to them. Now they came again.

"We have heard of the great white Mother and we want to learn to be God's men," they said.

Mary made a two-day canoe trip to their town. Ikpe was a large town with many people in it. But the people were very wicked. They did all the wicked heathen things that were against God's commandments. But there were people in it who wanted to become Christians. They had begun to build a small church building to which they had added two rooms for the missionary.

Mary held a service in the church. Many people had gathered to hear for the first time the news of how Jesus saves us. After the end of the service Mary decided that it was God's will for her to move to Ikpe. But she had to arrange for someone to take care of her other work first.

When she came home from this trip she was sick again. As soon as she was a little better she busied herself with the women's home. She wanted to get that running well before she left for Ikpe. The natives of Ikpe sent some more of their people to visit her and beg her to come to Ikpe. Whenever she could, she made trips to that village. Often she took other missionaries with her.

In November, 1909, she resigned from her court work. The government did not like to lose her because she knew so much about the natives and their customs. But the government knew that Mary's first love was her missionary work. They let her give up her court work and thanked her for all she had done.

"Just a few more things to take care of," said Mary, "and I will be ready to start for Ikpe. Those faithful people deserve a worker. They are holding services even though they know very little of Christianity. I must go there. I know God wants it."

It was the year 1910 and Mary was sure that now she could begin her work in the new territory that looked so promising. Suddenly Mary became very, very ill. The government sent its official automobile to take her to the Mary Slessor Hospital at Itu. Did God want Mary to work at Ikpe? Or would someone else preach the Gospel there?

For many weeks Mary lay sick in the hospital at Itu. At last she was much better.

"You must go to Duke Town for a longer rest," said the doctor.

"But, Doctor," said Mary, "I have my work to do, I cannot spend my time lying in bed."

"If you are unwilling to rest at Duke Town, I shall have to send you to Scotland on a long vacation."

"Very well," sighed Mary, "I will go to Duke Town."

The next day the government sent its boat, the "Maple Leaf," to take Mary down the river to Duke Town. Here she spent many weeks resting and gaining her strength. At last the doctor agreed that she could go back to her work at Ikotobong. Once more the government sent its boat to take her back to her mission station.

"I want to go to Ikpe soon," said Mary, "but first I want to establish a station at Ikot Expene and at other places along the way."

Whenever she felt strong enough, she rode her bicycle through the jungle to Ikot Expene choosing places for schools and churches along the way, talking to chiefs, and getting the things ready for more places where the Gospel could be preached.

The people at Ikpe were holding services even though they knew very little about Christianity.

"Soon the white Ma will come," they said. "She will tell us more about Jesus."

A native teacher from another station, who had received training from Mary, taught the people what he knew about the Gospel.

"Oh, why cannot the church send two workers to Ikpe?" said Mary. "Why don't they use the money on hand for that? If there isn't enough money left after two years, let them take my salary. I shall be only too glad to live on native food with my children."

Mary was busy collecting building materials and other things for the church of Ikpe. At last the time came. God wanted Mary at Ikpe. How happy Mary was! How happy were the faithful people at Ikpe who had waited so long!

Mary at once was busy with much work. She quieted mobs, she calmed quarreling chiefs, she held meetings with the crowds, and on Sundays conducted services. One day the smallpox broke out. The government sent down men to vaccinate the natives so the sickness would not spread. Mary heard shouting and yelling in the streets. She looked out of her house. The natives were yelling and shouting and waving guns and swords. Mary went up to the crowd.

"What is this?" asked Mary. The crowd kept yelling.

"Be quiet," shouted Mary and held out her hands. "Let your chief speak."

"Ma," said the chief, "my people are afraid of the white man's juju. It makes the people sick." He meant the vaccination.

"The vaccination may make a little sickness, but it keeps you from getting the big sickness," said Mary. Then she told them how vaccination had helped other tribes. She showed them her vaccination. After a long talk with the chiefs and the people the matter was peaceably settled.

Mary wanted to keep in touch with her former headquarters at Ikotobong. She made many canoe trips back and forth. These trips were very hard on her and she did not rest well. Many people wondered how Mary could keep on working, but she trusted God who made her strong to carry on.

During 1911 a tornado struck Mary's house at Use, one of the stations. She fixed the house herself. During this she strained herself and had a heart attack which was followed by a severe fever. Sometimes the fever was so great she was delirious. But still she would not stop working. She continued to teach school and hold worship services on Sunday.

Dr. Hitchcock of the Slessor Hospital came to see her every week.

"You must not go to Ikpe again," he said. "You must not ride your bicycle. You must spend more time resting."

But Mary disobeyed the doctor and held services the following Sunday. It was too much for her. She almost fainted before the service was over.

"You must stay in bed," said Dr. Hitchcock, "until you are well enough to get up."

"All right, doctor," said Mary.

"And you must eat meat twice a day," said the doctor.

"But I'm not a meat-eater," answered Mary.

"You're going to be, or I will send you to Duke Town for a long rest."

Mary laughed. "I've all my plans made and I must not draw a salary without doing something for it."

At last the doctor sent her to the Slessor Hospital for a rest. Because of her hard work, she had a bad fever sickness. Now Mary saw that she was foolish in not listening to the doctor.

"Life is hardly worth living," she said, "but I am doing what I can to help the doctor to help me, so I can be fit again for another spell of work."

The Christians at Ikpe sent some men to see Mary to ask her when she would be back. "Seven weeks," said Dr. Hitchcock.

"I may run up sooner than that," said Mary. "I'm very well if the doctor would only believe it."

Near the end of 1911 Mary was allowed to leave the hospital. She hurried to her friends at Ikpe. But Mary still was not very strong. Her friends in Calabar and in Scotland urged her to take a long-earned furlough. While thinking about this, Mary decided to have a box on wheels made so that she could get around since the doctor would not let her use her bicycle. Some friends heard about this and they sent her a light cart which could be wheeled by two boys or girls.

"Now I don't need a furlough," said Mary. "Instead of going home as I had planned, I shall stay here and enjoy going over ground in my cart that I couldn't get over otherwise."

A new government road was being built between Ikpe and Ikot Expene. Mary wanted to start schools and churches all along this road. But she was not strong enough to carry out her idea. Her heart was very weak now and she had to rest often. If there had been someone to take her place, she would have gone home for a rest. Mary wrote to a friend:

We were never so shorthanded, and I can do what others cannot, what indeed, doctors would not allow them to try. No one meddles with me and I slip along and do my work using less strength than many would have to use.

Mary knew if she took a furlough her work at Ikpe and the other stations would stop because there was no one to take her place. This she did not want to happen. She worked on through the summer of 1912. In September she completed thirty-six years as a missionary in Africa.

"I'm lame and feeble and foolish," said Mary, "but I grip on well."

Her friends were very much worried about her health. It was suggested that she be sent on an expense-paid trip to the Canary Islands. There the climate was milder than it would have been in Scotland during the winter. She was glad to go. Mary wrote:

What love is wrapped around me! It is simply wonderful. I can't say anything else. Oh, if I only get another day to work. I hope it will be fuller of earnestness and blessing than the past.

This vacation was a real blessing to Mary. The fevers left her. With no committee meetings, no court cases or other problems to worry about, she grew stronger very quickly. It was not many months before she was back at Duke Town. The doctor gave her an examination.

"You're as sound as an elephant's ivory tusk," said the doctor. "You are good for many years, if you will only take care."

Mary did not like that. She had never been willing to sit and twiddle her thumbs. Now her mind was full of new plans for more work. She wanted to get busy with her work for the Lord.

I believe the term which would have been used to describe this behavior at the tiem would have been "monomania."

For the next two years Mary worked hard at Use and Ikpe. She traveled between these two places, sometimes in a canoe, sometimes in the government boat, but mostly in her two-wheeled cart. There was still much to do. She was still fighting the juju worship, the sinful practice of eating people and the murdering of twins.

Eight years had gone by since Mary had left Akpap. A new church was being finished and the missionaries who now worked there invited Mary to attend the dedication service. Mary wanted to see the dear friends she had loved for years. She decided to go and take her adopted children with her.

From all over Okoyong the people had come to see their Ma, their White Queen. Ma Eme, the missionary's old friend, was there. When they met tears filled their eyes, they were so happy to see one another again. But Mary was sad, too, because Ma Eme had never openly accepted Christianity. Speaking of Ma Eme, Mary said, "My dear and old friend and almost sister, she made the saving of life so often possible in the early days. It is sad that she would not come out for Christ. She could have been the honored leader of God's work. Hers is a foolish choice. And yet God cannot forget all she was to me and how she helped me in those dark and bloody days."

Hundreds of people crowded into the new church at Akpap. Mary remembered the wild parties and drunken fights of the first days of her work among the people. How they were changed! How God had changed them through His Gospel! It was wonderful! Mary thanked God for His wonderful blessings.

Shortly after her trip to Akpap, Mary was honored by the king of Great Britain. She was chosen by him to be a member of the order of St. John of Jerusalem. This was an honor given only to English Christians who had done great things for God. The government people of Calabar decided that they must have a public celebration of this great honor. They sent the government boat for Mary. The little old missionary, now nearly sixty-five, was brought to Duke Town. Here a great crowd filled the biggest hall in town.

The governor made a speech and pinned the cross on Mary's left shoulder. During the speech Mary sat with her head in her hands. When it came time for her to speak, she found it hard to talk. Turning to the boys and girls who were in the hall she said, "Be faithful to the government. Be Christians. Be friends of the mission and be followers of Jesus."

Later she wrote to her friends in Scotland:

Don't think there is any change in me because I received this honor. I am Mary Slessor, nothing more and none other than the unworthy, unprofitable but most willing servant of the King of kings.

The only change the honor made in Mary was that she worked harder than ever. A government road was opened to Odoro Ikpe. Mary at once started a mission there and reached out into the small jungle settlements. There she talked with the chiefs and the natives. At last she won their consent to build schools and churches. They gave her the land to do this. Now she was beginning all over in a new territory. She had the same hard work, the same troubles, the same heathen customs to fight. But Mary was glad to do it. She thanked God for the chance to bring the Gospel to people who had never heard about it.

Mary saw to it that a house was built and then began teaching in the school, holding services, settling quarrels, winning souls for Jesus. In August, 1914, rumors reached her that Europe was rushing into war. This made her feel sick. She knew that this war would not only bring suffering, horror, and death to many of her dear friends, but it would also hinder the work in Calabar.

Several months went by. The mail came. Mary opened the newspaper. There she read the headlines: Russia declares war! France declares war! England declares war! Mary fainted. The trouble and excitement were too much for her. For two weeks more she carried on her work but it was too much for her. She became weaker and weaker. On Sunday, January 10, 1915, she held her usual church service. After the church meeting she fainted. Dr. Robertson arrived from the Slessor Hospital at Itu. He was able to bring her to, but on January 12 she found it almost impossible to talk. Her last words were a prayer in the African language called Efik.

"O Abasi, sana mi yok," said Mary. "O God, release me!"

Janie, the first twin Mary had saved, was now a beautiful black woman. She and other children Mary had saved and adopted were watching beside Mary's bed through the night. A rooster crowed.

...as opposed to the usual ugly black women.

"Day must be dawning," said one of the girls.

Day was dawning for Mary, God's eternal day. She slipped away from the earth to be with her Saviour in Heaven.

"Our Mother is dead, and we shall be slaves now that our Mother is dead," cried the natives. The news that the white Ma was dead spread rapidly. Natives came from all over the country to see the woman they loved.

Mary's body was taken to Itu where services were held. Then it was taken to Duke Town. Here another service was held. Then the coffin was carried to the beautiful cemetery on Mission Hill. From this place could be seen a large part of the city where Mary had begun her faithful missionary work in Africa. Around her grave the grateful natives gathered and wept for her who had wept and prayed over them.

"Do not cry, do not cry," said old Ma Fuller, Mary's native friend through the years. "Praise God for His blessings. Ma was a great blessing."

First the Africans called her "the white Ma who lives alone." Then they called her "the Ma who loves babies." But lastly they called her "eka kpukpru owo," "everybody's Mother."

THE END

I will let one of my favorite patriots have the final word about this book:

"[A]ll churches, whether Jewish, Christian or Muslim, are simply human inventions. They use fear to enslave us. They are a monopoly for power and profit...I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish church, by the Roman church, by the Greek church, by the Turkish church, by the Protestant church, nor by any church that I know of. My own mind is my own church."

- Thomas Paine