

WHITE QUEEN OF THE CANNIBALS

The Story of Mary Slessor of Calabar

by

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Moody Colportage #6

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CHAPTER SIX

A BRAVE NURSE

It was strangely quiet in the village of Chief Okurike. The chief was sick. All the magic of the witch doctors could not make him better. If he died, many of his wives, slaves and soldiers would be killed to go with him into the spirit-world.

A woman from a neighboring village came to the house of Chief Okurike's wives.

"You are sad because Chief Okurike is dying," said the woman. "I know someone who can help him. Far away through the jungle at Ekenge lives the white Ma. With her magic she can make devils go out of your chief. My son's child was dying. The white Ma saved her. She is well today. The white Ma has done many wonderful things by the power of her juju. Let your chief send for her. Then he will not die."

The wives talked it over.

"We must tell the chief," said the head wife. "He must send for the white Ma. If he dies, many of us must die too. We do not want to die."

They told the chief about the strange white Ma at Ekenge.

"Let her be sent for," said the chief. "Send swift runners to ask her to come."

All day long the men hurried through the jungle along the narrow paths. They went through many villages but they did not stop. At last after eight hours, they came to the village of Ekenge.

"We are the men of Chief Okurike," said the men to Chief Edem. "Chief Okurike is very sick. We want the white Ma who lives in your village to come and heal him."

"She will say for herself what she will do," said Chief Edem. He sent a man to tell Mary some men from Chief Okurike wanted to see her. Mary came at once to see what was wanted.

"Ma," said the men, "Chief Okurike sent us. He is very sick. Come and bring your magic medicines and make him well."

"What kind of sickness does your chief have?" asked Mary. "Maybe I can send the medicine with you."

They shook their heads. They did not know what the sickness was.

"I must help," said Mary to herself. "If the chief dies, then according to their heathen way the tribe will kill all his wives and slaves so he will have company on the long trip to the spirit-world. I must go and teach them about the Good Shepherd who is with us even in the valley of the shadow of death. If the chief should die and the tribe think that it is because of witchcraft it will be even worse. Many people will be killed because the tribe will think they used witchcraft to kill the chief."

"I will go with you," said Mary.

"There are warriors out in the jungle and you will be killed. You must not go," said Chief Edem.

"It is a long journey," said Ma Eme. "There are deep rivers to cross. It is raining very hard. You will never get there."

"If Chief Okurike dies, there will be fighting and killing. You will be in great danger," said Chief Edem. "Don't go."

Mary knew that if anything happened to her, Chief Edem would go to war against the tribe of Chief Okurike, because she was his guest, and a chief must protect his guest. Mary prayed to GOD about it. Then she said to Chief Edem, "I am sure that GOD wants me to go. It will be a chance to tell these people about JESUS who heals the soul-sickness. GOD will take care of me."

"Well, Ma, I do not like it, but you may go if you wish. I will send women with you to look after you. I will send men to protect you."

Early the next morning they started on the journey. It was raining hard. After they had left Ekenge, it began to pour. The jungle was flooded and steaming hot. It was hard to go, but Mary and the guard pushed on. Soon Mary's clothes were soaked through. They became so heavy she could hardly walk. Her boots became water soaked. She took them off and threw them in the bush. Soon her stockings wore out and she walked through the jungle mud barefooted. She knew she was doing GOD's work, and even fearful rainstorms were not going to stop her.

After three hours the weather began to clear, but now Mary's head began to ache from fever. As Mary and the guard passed through the jungle villages, the people looked at Mary with surprise.

But nothing would stop Mary. She pushed on, and after walking through the jungle for eight hours, she stumbled into the village of the sick chief.

Some of the people were crying. They expected to be killed when the chief died. Others were laughing and shouting. They were going to have "fun" when the chief died. They were going to kill people and have a wild party.

Mary was tired and sick, but she went at once to the chief's house. He was stretched out on a dirty bed. His face was gray with sickness. He was moaning and groaning. He was very near death.

Mary examined the chief to see what his sickness was. She opened her little medicine chest and took out some medicine. She gave the chief a dose. It made the chief a little better.

"I don't have enough of this medicine with me," said Mary. She knew that away on the other side of the river another missionary was working. She knew he had some of the medicine. She went to the men of the village.

"You must go across the river to Ikorofiong for more medicine," said Mary.

"No, no, we cannot go," said the men of the village. "Our enemies are on the other side of the river. They will kill us if we go there."

"But I must have the medicine," said Mary.

"There is a man from that village down the river a little ways. He is living in his canoe on the river. Maybe he will go," said one of the men.

Some of the men ran down to the river. They found the man. They promised him many things. At last he said he would go. The next day he brought the medicine to Mary.

For days Mary nursed Chief Okurike. She taught one of his wives how to help her. She also told the chief and his family about JESUS. Whenever she could leave the chief for a short time she would talk to the tribe about the Saviour and how He would change their lives if they believed in Him.

Day after day Mary prayed for Chief Okurike. At last prayer won out. Chief Okurike got well. The people were very happy.

"Ma Mary," they said, "we want to learn book." They meant that they wanted to learn about the Bible.

"I am glad you do," said Mary, "but then you must do what the Book says."

"We will," said the people. "We will make peace with Calabar. We will not kill the traders who come to our land or the other white people."

"Then I will always be your worker and I will send you a teacher as soon as I can, who will teach you of the Saviour who died for you to pay for your sins."

Mary went back to Ekenge. Here she found that Chief Edem was very sick. He had some very bad boils on his back. Mary put medicine on the boils. Every day she came to his house and took care of him.

One day when she came in she saw feathers and eggs lying around the room. This was witch doctor "medicine." On the Chief's neck and around his arms and legs were witch charms.

"Oh, Chief Edem," said Mary, "how could you do this? Surely you know that doing witchcraft is a sin against GOD. I do not see how you could go back to it after you had learned to know about JESUS."

"Ma, you don't know all about these things. Someone is the cause of this sickness. You don't know all the badness of the black man's heart. Look, here are the proofs that someone is working witchcraft against me. The only one who can fight that is the witch doctor. He is the only one who can make me well. See, here are the things that were taken from my back."

Chief Edem pointed to a collection of shot, egg shells, seed and other things which the witch doctor said had come from his back. He believed the witch doctor. He believed that someone using witchcraft had sent them into his back.

Mary knew what would happen. Everybody whom the chief thought might have done the witchcraft would have to take poison. The people thought that if the person who took the poison died, he was guilty, but if he was not guilty he would live. The tribe would also use other tortures like pouring boiling oil on people to get them to confess.

"That is all wrong," said Mary. "The sickness is because you have not eaten good things or taken care of yourself and kept as clean as you should have. Don't believe the bad witch doctor." (GOD said something about that in Exodus 22:18).

Chief Edem would not listen. He had everyone he thought might have the witchcraft made a prisoner. The witch doctor took the chief and his wives and chief men and prisoners to a nearby farm. Mary was not allowed to come to this farm.

Mary knew of Someone who could help her. She prayed to GOD again and again to keep these people from doing the bad things they planned. Days went by. Mary prayed that Chief Edem might get well. GOD heard Mary's prayers. He did what she asked. He made Chief Edem well again.

When Chief Edem was well again he decided not to kill the prisoners, the people he thought might have done witchcraft against him. He let them go free. Then the chief and his wives and the chief men came back to the village.

The tribe had a big party to celebrate. They were happy the chief was well. It was the wildest party Mary had ever seen.

The people stuffed themselves with food until they became sick. They got drunk. They had wild dances. They did many wicked things.

Mary had often prayed that GOD would turn the heathen people from their wicked ways, but here they were carrying on worse than ever. The only answer to her prayers that she could see was that the prisoners who were going to be killed had been set free.

"Am I doing anything for my Saviour?" Mary asked herself. "Am I having any success in winning people for JESUS?"

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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