

MARY SLESSOR
OF CALABAR

PIONEER MISSIONARY

BY

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POPULAR EDITION

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LIMITED LONDON

Twenty-ninth edition printed May 1927

XV. GROWING WEATHER

The short furlough in Scotland, broken by so much movement and excitement, had done little permanent good. She was tired when she began her work, and there came a long series of "up and down" days which handicapped her activity, yet she continued her duties with a resolution that was unquenched and unquenchable. "Things are humdrum," she wrote, "just like this growing weather of ours, rainy and cloudy, with a blink here and there. We know the brightness would scorch and destroy if it were constant; still the bursts of glory that come between the clouds are a rich provision for our frail and sensitive lives." Her conception of achievement was a little out of the common. One day she sat in court for eight hours; other two hours were spent with the clerk making out warrants; afterwards she had to find tasks to employ some labour; then she went out at dusk and attended a birth case all night, returning at dawn. Whole days were occupied with palavers, many of the people coming such long distances that she had to provide sleeping accommodation for them. Old chiefs would pay her visits and stay for hours. "It is a great tax," she remarked, "but it pays even if it tires." Sundays were her busiest days; she went far afield preaching, and had usually from six to twelve meetings in villages and by the wayside. Often on these excursions she came across natives who had made the journey to Okoyong to consult her in the old days. The situation was now reversed, for people from Okoyong came to her. One day after a ten hours' sitting in Court she went home to find about fifty natives from the hinterland of that district waiting with their usual tributes of food and a peck of troubles for her to straighten out. It was after midnight before there was quiet and sleep for her. Her heart went out to these great-limbed, straight-nosed, sons of the aboriginal forest, and she determined to cross the river and visit them. She spent three days fixing up all their domestic and social affairs, and making a few proclamations, and diligently sowing the seeds of the Gospel. When she left she had with her four boys and a girl as wild and undisciplined as mountain goats, who were added to her household to undergo the process of taming, training, and educating ere they were sent back.

In what she called her spare time she was engaged in the endless task of repairing and extending her forlorn little shanties. There was always something on hand, and she worked as hard as the children, nailing up corrugated iron, sawing boards, cementing floors, or cutting bush. Jean, the ever-willing and cheerful, was practically in charge of the house, keeping the babies, looking after their mothers, and teaching the little ones in the school. Up to this period

she had never received more than her board, and “Ma” felt it was time to acknowledge her services, and she therefore began to pay her Is. per week.

Now and again in her letters there came the ominous words, “I’m tired, tired.” On the last night of the year she was sitting up writing. “I’m tired,” she said, “and have a few things to do. My mother went home eighteen years ago on the passage of the old year, so it is rather lonely to-night with so many memories. The bairns are all asleep. But He hath not failed, and He is all-sufficient.” She was often so wearied that she could not sit up straight. She was too exhausted to take off her clothes and brush her hair until she had obtained what she called her “first rest.” Then she rose and finished her undressing. She would begin a letter and not be able to finish it. The ladies nearest her, Miss Peacock and Miss Reid at Ikotobong, redoubled their attentions. Miss Reid she said was “a bonnie lassie, tenderly kind to me.” What Miss Peacock was to her no one but herself knew. She was a keen judge of character, though generous, almost extravagant in her appreciation of those she loved, and Miss Peacock has justified her estimate and her praise. “Sterling as a Christian, splendid as a woman, whole-hearted as a missionary, capable as a teacher, she is one after my own heart,” she wrote. “She is very good and kind to me, and a tower of strength. I am proud of her and the great work she is doing.” Miss Peacock began the habit about this time of cycling down on Saturday afternoons and spending a few hours with her, and Mary looked forward to these visits with the greatest zest.

The friends at home were also ceaseless in their kindness. They scrutinised every letter she sent, and were frequently able to read between the lines and anticipate and supply her needs,—much to her surprise. “Have I been grumbling?” she would enquire. “You make me ashamed. I am better off than thousands who give their money to support me.” A carpet arrived. “And oh,” she writes, “what a difference it has made to our comfort. You have no idea of the transformation! The mud and cement were transformed at once into something as artistic as the ‘boards’ of the bungalow, and the coziness was simply beyond belief. It did not look a bit hot, and it was so soothing to the bare feet, and I need not say it was a wonder to the natives, who can’t understand a white man stepping on a cloth—and such a cloth!” On another occasion a bed was sent out to her, and she wrote: “I’ve been jumping my tired body up and down on it just to get the beautiful swing, and to feel that I am lying level. I’m tired and I’m happy and I’m half-ashamed at my own luxury.” And next morning, “What a lovely sleep I’ve had!”

The Macgregors made their first visit to Use in 1908, and on arrival found “Ma” sitting with a morsel of infant in her lap. She was dressed in a print over-

all with low neck; it was tied at the middle with a sash, and she was without stockings or shoes. On the Sunday she set out early on foot on her customary round, carrying two roasted corn-cobs as her day's rations, whilst Mr. Macgregor took the service at Ikotobong. He was tired after his one effort, but when he returned in the evening he discovered her preaching at Use Church—her tenth meeting for the day, and her tour had not been so extensive as usual. At six o'clock next morning people had already arrived with palavers. One woman wanted a husband. "Ma" looked at her with those shrewd eyes that read people through and through, and then began in Scots, "It's bad eneuch being a marriage registrar, without being a matrimonial agent forby. Eke ini'o! Mr. Macgregor, send up ony o' your laddies that's wanting wives." Then she went into Efik that made the woman wince, and pointed out that she had come to the wrong place.

She watched with interest the progress of the Creek stations, although they were out of her hands. There were now at Okpo forty members in full communion, and the contributions for the year amounted to £48:3:3. At Akani Obio, where there were forty-five members in full communion, the total contributions amounted to £93:11:4. And at Asang, where there were one hundred and fifteen members, the contributions amounted to £146:6s. At those three stations the total expenses were fully met, and there was a large surplus. Where four years ago there was no church member and no offering, there were now two hundred members, and contributions amounting in all to £287.

So the Kingdom of her Lord grew.

XVI. "THE PITY OF IT"

One experience of 1908, when she was down at Duke Town attending the Council meetings, is worth noting. Though she liked the bush better she was always interested in watching the movements there. "It is a great cheer to me," she said, "to meet all the young folks, and to be with them in their enthusiasm and optimism, and this vast hive of industry, the Hope Waddell Institution, with its swarm of young men and boys, gives me the highest hopes for the future of the Church and the nation now in their infancy. Mr. Macgregor is a perfect Principal, sane, self-restrained, and tactful, but I would not be in his place for millions." The town was a very different place from that which she first saw in 1876. It was now a flourishing seaport, with many fine streets and buildings. The swamp had been drained. There was a fully-equipped native hospital, and a

magnificent church in the centre of the town, and the Europeans enjoyed most of the conveniences and even the luxuries of civilisation.

On this occasion an invitation came from the High Commissioner to dine at Government House, and meet a certain woman writer of books. She would not hear of it. She had no clothes for such a function, and she did not wish to be lionised. The Macgregors, with whom she was staying, advised her to go; they thought it would do her good. She consented at last, but when she left in a hammock, which had been specially sent for her, there was the light of battle in her eyes. Mr. Macgregor knew that look and laughed; there was no doubt she was going to enjoy herself; she had still the heart of a school-girl, and greatly loved a prank. When she returned, her face was full of mischief. "Ay," she said, "I met your lady writer, and I made her greet four times and she gied me half a sovereign for my bairns!"

Under the title of "But yet the pity of it," the authoress gave an account of the meeting in the Morning Post, in a way which excited laughter and derision in the Calabar bush. It was in the pathetic strain:

"I am not given to admiring missionary enterprise," she wrote. "The enthusiasm which seems to so many magnificent seems to me but a meddling in other people's business; the money that is poured out, so much bread and light and air and happiness filched from the smitten children at home.

"But this missionary conquered me if she did not convert me.

"She was a woman close on sixty, with a heavily-lined face, and a skin from which the freshness and bloom had long, long ago departed; but there was fire in her old eyes still, tired though they looked; there was sweetness and firmness about her lined mouth. Heaven knows who had dressed her. She wore a skimpy tweed skirt and a cheap nun's veiling blouse, and on her iron-grey hair was perched rakishly a forlorn broken picture-hat of faded green chiffon with a knot of bright red ribbon to give the bizarre touch of colour she had learned to admire among her surroundings.

"'Yell excuse my hands,' she said, and she held them out.

"They were hardened and roughened by work, work in the past, and they were just now bleeding from work finished but now; the skin of the palms was gone, the nails were worn to the quick; that they were painful there could be no doubt, but she only apologised for their appearance."

"Ma" is thus made to tell the incident of the witness dying suddenly after attending the court at Ikotobong:

"If you put *mbiam* on a man and he swears falsely he dies. Oh, he does. I ken it. I've seen it myself. There was a man brought up before me in the court and he was charged wi' stealing some plantains. He said he had naught to do with them, so I put *mbiam* on him, an' still he said he had naught to do wi' them, so I sent him down to Calabar. An' see now. As he was going he

stopped the policeman an' laid himself down, because he was sick. An' he died. He died there. I put *nbiam* on him, an' he knew he had stolen them and died.'

"There was pity in her face for the man she had killed with his own lie, but only pity, no regret."

So well was she succeeding with her mystification that she went on to talk of the hard lot of women and "the puir bairns," and then comes the conclusion:

"My time's been wasted. The puir bairns. They'd be better dead!

"Her scarred hands fumbled with her dress, her tired eyes looked out into the blazing tropical sunshine, her lips quivered as she summed up her life's work. 'Failed, failed,' she cried. All she had hoped, all that she had prayed for, nothing for herself had she ever sought except the power to help these children, and she felt that she had not helped them. They would be better dead. . . .

"But the Commissioner did not think she had failed. Is the victory always to the strong?

" 'She has influence and weight,' he said; 'she can go where no white man dare go. She can sway the people when we cannot sway them. Because of her they are not so hard on the twins and their mothers as they used to be. No, she has not failed.'"

And so with a reference to Thermopylae, and the Coliseum and Smithfield, the lady litterateur places her in the ranks of the immortal martyrs of the world.

XVII. THE SETTLEMENT BEGUN

This was one of the waiting periods in Mary Slessor's life, which tried her patience and affected her spirits. The mist had fallen upon her path, and the direction was dim and uncertain. She had received what she thought was a call from a distant region up-country, but if she settled far away, what would become of her home for women and girls? She had no clear leading, and she wished the way to be made so plain that there could be no possibility of mistake. Friends were sending her money, and the Government were urging her to start the Settlement, and promising to take all the products that were grown. "The District Commissioner was here to-day," she wrote. "He wonders how he can help me, has had orders from the Governor to assist me in any way, but the Pillar does not move. I have building material lying here, and have a £m note from a friend at home for any material I want, but there is no leading towards anything yet. . . . I am longing for an outlet, but I can't move without guidance." She would not hurry—the matter was not in her hands. God, she was assured, was "softly, softly," working towards a natural solution, and as she was only His instrument, she could afford to wait His time.

One night the mist on the path lifted a little, and next day she walked over the land at Use, and there and then fixed the site for the undertaking. There was ample room for all the cultivations that would be required, and plenty of material for building and fencing, and good surface water. Already she had three cottages built, including the one she occupied, and these would make a beginning. She at once set about obtaining legal possession, and with the permission and help of the Government she secured the land in the name of the girls. The Council agreed with her that it was most advisable to develop industries which the people had not yet undertaken, such as basket-making, the weaving of coconut fibre, and cane and bamboo work. When asked if she would agree to remain at Use for one year to establish the Settlement and put it in working order with the assistance of one or two agents, she would not commit herself. She rather shrank from the idea of a large institution; it ought, in her view, to begin in a simple and natural way by bringing in a few people, instructing them, and then getting them to teach others. And there were other regions calling to her. When reminded that a large sum of money was on hand for the project, she said it was not all intended for this special purpose; much of it was for extension; and she pointed to the needs of the region up the Cross River, stating that she was willing to have the funds used for providing agents there.

Nothing more definite was decided, and meanwhile she went on quietly with the beginnings of things. She planted fruit trees sent up by the Government,—mangoes, guavas, pawpaws, bananas, plantains, avocado pears, as well as pineapples, and other produce, and began to think of rubber and cocoa. She also started to accumulate stock, though the leopards were a constant menace. She had even a cow, which she bought from a man to prevent him going to prison for debt—and often wished she had not, for it caused infinite trouble, and the natives went in terror of it. Although it had a pail attached to it by a rope, it was often lost, and the whole town were out at nights searching for it. It would run away with the whole household hanging on, and so little respect did it pay to dignitaries, that on one occasion it ran off with the Mother of the Mission and the Principal of the Hope Waddell Institute, who had been pressed into the humble service of leading it home. “Ma Slessor’s coo” became quite famous in the Mission.

It was characteristic of her that she did not want her name to be put to anything, and she thought the Settlement should be called after Mrs. Anderson or Mrs. Goldie, who did so much for women and girls.

XVIII. A SCOTTISH GUEST

During the year 1909 she continued to fight a battle with ill-health. She was compelled to give up much of her outdoor work, for an oppressive sense of heart-weakness made her afraid to cross deep streams and climb the hills. Sometimes she used her cycle, but only when she could obtain one of the girls or lads to run alongside and assist her up the ascents. Boils, an old enemy, tortured her again; she was covered with them from head to foot, and was one mass of pain. "Only sleeping draughts," she said, "keep me from going off my head." As the months went on she became feeble almost to fainting point, and had given up hope of betterment. A note of sadness crept into her letters. "I cannot write," she told a friend at home, "but there is no change in the heart's affection, except that it grows stronger and perhaps a little more wistful as the days go by and life gets more uncertain." She was anxious to recover sufficiently before March, to do honour to two deputies who had been appointed by the home Church to visit the Mission, and who were expected then, and if possible to return to Scotland with them. But she scarcely anticipated holding out so long. Jean, unfortunately, was not with her. It had been discovered that she had long been suffering in silence from an internal complaint, and the medical men now advised an operation. "Ma" was opposed to this, and left her for a time at Duke Town for a change and treatment, which did her much good.

It was sheer will-power that gained her a little strength to face the ordeal of the official visit. She determined to make no change whatever in the course of her daily life, and she was afraid the deputies might not find things to their liking and be disappointed. They were the Rev. James Adamson, M.A., B.Sc., of Bonnington, Leith, and the Rev. John Lindsay, M.A., Bathgate, who was accompanied by Mrs. Lindsay. They entered the Creek one market day, when it was crowded with canoes, and the landing-beachone for the missionaries had just been constructed at Okopedi—was swarming with people, amongst whom the arrival of the strangers caused the greatest excitement. On bicycles the party proceeded uphill to Use. Mr. Adamson went on ahead, and at a spot where a few rough steps were cut in the steep bank he saw a boy standing. He called out, "Ma Slessor?" The boy signed to him to come—it was a short cut to the house. Clambering up the bank and making his way through the bush, Mr. Adamson came upon a little native hut. Miss Slessor advanced to meet him. "Come awa in, laddie, oot o' the heat," was her greeting. When the Lindsays arrived it was also her chief concern to get them into the shade. Mr. Adamson was her guest, whilst the Lindsays went on to Ikotobong. His room—an erection built out from the house—had mud walls and a mat roof, and was furnished with a camp-bed, a box for dressing-table and another for a washstand, and for company he had abundance of spiders and beetles and lizards. He proved a de-

lightful guest. "He is a dear laddie," wrote Mary; "all the bairns are in love with him, and so am I!"

While he was with her a woman came to the yard with twins. She had been driven out of her house and town, and had come several miles to "Ma" for shelter. Her husband and her father were with her—which denoted some advance—and the three were crouched on the ground, a picture of misery. The twins were lying in a basket and had not been touched. Mr. Adamson helped "Ma" to attend to them, and she felt as proud of him as of a son when she saw him sitting down beside the weeping mother and gently trying to comfort her. She gave the parents some food and a hut to sleep in, and made the man promise to stay until the morning. Neither would, however, look at the twins, and they were given over to the girls.

A service was held at which Mr. Lindsay was also present, and about a hundred people attended. "Take our compliments to the people of your country," the latter said to the deputies, "and tell them that our need is great, and that we are in darkness and waiting for the light." What astonished the natives was to see the white visitors standing up courteously when spoken to by black men.

From the meeting the party cycled to the little wattleand-thatch Court House at Ikotobong, Miss Slessor being pushed by Dan up the hills. She took her seat at the table in the simplest possible attire. Before her was a tin of toffee, her only refreshment, with the exception of a cup of tea, during a long sitting. The jury, composed of the older and more responsible men in the various villages, occupied a raised platform behind. In front was a bamboo railing, which formed the dock; at the side another railing marked the witness-box. Several cases were heard, the witnesses giving their evidence with volubility and abundant gesture, and the judge, jury, and clerk retiring to a little shed at the back to discuss the verdicts. One was that of a man who, under the influence of trade gin, had hacked his wife with a machete, because she had insulted his dignity by accidentally stumbling against him. Such a case always aroused "Ma's" ire, and she wished a severe punishment awarded. The jury were very unwilling. The headman started by laying down as a fundamental principle that men had a perfect right to do whatever they liked with their wives; otherwise they would become unmanageable. But in deference to the white woman's peculiar views they would go the length of admitting that perhaps the husband had gone a little too far in the use of his instrument. He had not done anything to merit a severe sentence, but in view of the prejudices of the "Court," they would send him to prison for a short term.

Suddenly the "toot" of the Government motor-car was heard, and in a moment jury, witnesses, prisoners, and policemen rushed out of the building to

catch a glimpse of the “new steamer” that ran on the road. Then back they drifted, and the proceedings went on.

Mr. Adamson appreciated the service which Miss Slessor was accomplishing by her work in the Court. She told him she did not care for it; “the moral atmosphere of a native court is so bad,” she declared, “that I would never go near one were it not that I want the people to get justice.” But he saw the exceptional opportunity she possessed of dispensing gospel as well as law. “As a rule,” he says, “her decision is accompanied by some sound words of Christian counsel.” He left Use with a profound admiration both for herself and Miss Peacock. “Words,” he wrote in the Record, “cannot describe the value of the work that is being done by these heroic women.”

There was no improvement in her health as the months went on, and another severe illness caused by blood-poisoning shattered her nerves. The Wilkies spared no labour or love to heal and strengthen her. “Once more,” she wrote, “I believe I owe my life to them.”

She felt that the time had come to relinquish her court work, and accordingly in November she sent in her resignation. The Commissioner of the Eastern Province wrote in reply,

DEAR MISS SLESSOR—I have been informed of your decision to resign the Vice-Presidency of the Ikotobong Native Court by the District Commissioner, Ikot Ekpene, which I note with great regret, and take this opportunity of thanking you for the assistance you have in the past given the Government, and of expressing my deep appreciation of the services you have rendered to the country during the period you have held the office which you have now relinquished.—Believe me, Yours very sincerely,

W. FOSBERY.

She slipped out of the work very quietly, and was glad to be free of a tie which hindered her from moving onward on her King’s more pressing business.

XIX. A MOTOR CAR ROMANCE

The Government motor car, which now ran up and down the road into the interior, was the cause of several changes in the household of Use. In charge of it at first was a white chauffeur, who, curiously enough, was a member of Wellington Street Church in Glasgow, which now supported Miss Slessor, and with him was a native assistant, a young well-educated Anglican, who came from Lagos. When the car made its appearance Dan was so fascinated with it that he could scarcely keep off the road, and he now struck up an acquaintance with the native driver, which brought him many a rapturous hour. “Ma,” who did not

then know the lad, was in terror for the safety of his body and his morals, and so despatched him as a pupil to the Institute at Duke Town to be under the care of Mr. Macgregor. But David, the driver, had done more than capture Dan; he had captured the heart of one of the girls—Mary. Annie was already happily married, and she and her husband were preparing to join the Church; but Mary was not disposed to follow her example, although she had two suitors, one in Okoyong, and one in Ibibio. “Why can’t I stay at home with you?” she said to “Ma.” “I don’t want to go anywhere.” But the Lagos lad succeeded where others had failed, and “Ma,” giving her consent, they were married before the District Commissioner in Court. David went back to his work, and his wife to the Mission House, for “Ma” would not allow him to take her home until the Church ceremony had been performed. Mr. Cruickshank appeared one day before he was expected, and before the wedding-gown was quite ready, but a note was sent to David, and he cycled down in his black suit. Miss Annie M’Minn, then at Ikotobong, came and dressed the bride, the children put on white frocks, and there was a quaint and picturesque wedding.

There was also, of course, a breakfast. It was given in the verandah of the hut. David was early on the scene arranging tables and forms, and Miss Peacock and Miss McMinn laid and decorated them, a conspicuous object being a bunch of heather from Scotland. Jean and the bride cooked the breakfast. By 11 o’clock the company had assembled. At the head sat an aged Mohammedan in white robes and turban, a friend of David’s family. A number of his co-religionists had come to the district, and some even attended “Ma’s” services. This particular man greatly admired her. “Only God can make you such a mother and helper to everybody,” he had said at his first interview, and on leaving he had taken her hand and bent over and kissed it, and with tears in his eyes invoked a blessing upon her. Few expressions of respect from white men had touched her more, though she was half-afraid her feeling was scarcely orthodox. Then came the bride and bridegroom and “Ma’s” clerk. At the next table sat another of David’s friends—an interpreter—and a lad from the bride’s house, headman on the road Department; David’s next-door neighbours, a man and his wife; and eight headmen over the road labourers. Outside were the school children, who were fed by Jean with Calabar chop, sweets, and biscuits.

After the breakfast the Mohammedan came indoors to Miss Slessor and made a speech. “I knew David’s mother before he was born,” he said, “and I praise God he was led here for a wife.” David came forward. “Mother,” he said, “you won’t let us go without prayer?” and down he knelt, and she committed the couple to God. A pie and cake, which the Ikotobong ladies had baked, were presented, along with a motor cap, silk handkerchief, ribbon, and scissors. One

of “Ma’s” presents was a sewing-machine. Then she walked down to see them off, supported in her weakness by the Mohammedan. When the pair arrived at their home, the latter stood on the doorstep praying for them as they entered on their new life. It was only a bamboo shanty run up by the Government, but it was a home, and not, like all others, a room in a compound, and family worship was conducted in it in English. Good news came from it as time went on. The bride was sometimes seen driving in the motor car. “She was here this morning,” writes the house-mother, “full of importance as she passed to market. She had biscuits for the children, a new water-jar and a bunch of fine bananas for me, and the whole house were round her full of questions and fun, and you would think she had become a heroine, just because she was married two months ago. She is very happy and proud of her husband.” “Ma” watched over her with jealous care, and when in due time a baby arrived, she was as delighted as if it had been of her own blood.

XX. STRUCK DOWN

The hot, dry season was always a trial to Miss Slessor; it shrivelled her up, and reduced her energy, and she panted for the cooling rains. This year it affected her more than ever. The harmattan was like an Edinburgh “haar,” though it was not cold except between midnight and daybreak; the air was thick with fine sand dust, and often she could not see three yards away. She longed for a “wee blink of home,” and a home Sabbath. “But though the tears are coming at the thought, you are not to think for one moment that I would take the offer if it were given me! A thousand times no! I feel too grateful to God for His wonderful condescension in letting me have the privilege of ministering to those around me here.”

How the interest of the spiritual aspects of her work submerged the afflictions of her body was seen when the first baptismal service and communion at Use took place. With her dread of the spectacular she did not make the event known, but the little native church was crowded, men and women squatting on the floor, and the mothers with babies on the verandah. Mr. Cruickshank conducted the service. Mary took a “creepie” stool—her mother’s footstool of old—and sat down by the young communicants to help them and show them what to do. “David,” she wrote, “had bought a bottle of wine for his wedding, but of course it was never opened, and he said to me, ‘Keep it, Ma, it may be useful yet.’ So it was drawn for our first communion well-watered. The glass sugar-dish on a tea-plate was the baptismal font, but it was all transfigured and glorified by the Light which never shone on hill or lake or even on human face,

and some of us saw the King in His beauty—and not far off. Bear with me in my joy; this sounds small in comparison with home events, but it is only a very short time since this place was dark and degraded and drunken and besotted.”

The glow and exaltation of the service lingered with her for weeks, and her letters are full of sprightliness and wit. She told of a visit from Lady Egerton—”a true woman”—and of the Christmas gift from their Excellencies—a case of milk; and of the present of a new cycle sent from England from “her old chief” Mr. Partridge, to replace the old one which he thought must be worn out by this time. The wonders of aviation were engrossing the world then, and she merrily imagined a descent upon her some afternoon of her friends from Scotland, and discussed the capabilities of her tea-caddy.

Well on into the next year she was busy with regular station work, teaching, training, preaching, building up the congregation, and acting as Mother to her people and to many more. Then in the midst of her strenuous activity she was suddenly and swiftly struck down by what she termed “one of the funniest illnesses” she ever had. The children were alarmed, and sent word to David. He informed the white officers, and they rushed in a motor car down to Use and removed her to Itu, where she was nursed back to life by Mrs. Robertson. “I shall never forget the kindness and the tenderness and the skill which have encompassed me, and I shall ever remember Dr. Robertson and his devoted wife, and ask God to remember them for their goodness. Dr. Robertson brought me out of the valley of the shadow, and when I was convalescent he lifted me up in his strong arms and took me to see the church and garden and anywhere I wished, just as he might have done to his own mother.” Her friends in Calabar also did everything they could for her, the Hon. Mr. Bedwell, the Provincial Commissioner, sending up ice and English chicken and other delicacies in a special launch.

The little daughter of the missionaries was a source of great delight to her who loved all children. She was very winsome girl, and had won the hearts of the natives who regarded her with not a little awe. She was the only white child they had seen, and were not sure whether she was not a spirit. “Ma” and she had good times together playing and make-believing. “Maimie and I,” she wrote “have been having the dolls out for a drive, and we hay(just given them their bread and milk and put them to bed!”

When she was convalescent the Macgregors insisted on her coming down to Duke Town for a change, and the Government placed the fast and comfortable Maple Leaf at their disposal. She protested, saying she could not put herself on a brother and sister whose lives were so strenuous, but they would take no refusal. They turned their dining-room into a bedroom for her convenience, and

her she talked and read the newspapers and the latest new books and her Bible, and wrote long letters to her friends "I am doing nothing but eating," she told her children "and am growing fat and shedding my buttons all over the place." But underneath all her gaiety and high spirit; she felt profoundly grateful for the wonderful goodness and mercy God had made to pass before her, and the perfect peace He had given her. "Here I am," she said, "being spoiled anew in an atmosphere not merely of tender love but of literary and cultured Christian grace and winsomeness, and it has been as perfect a fortnight as ever I spent." She had literally to run away from the kind attentions of the Government officials and doctors, and a swift Government launch again conveyed her up-river. Jean, who had long since returned, had bravely held the fort for the five Sabbaths she had been absent, and David and his wife had been there to protect her, and the work, therefore, had been kept going.

After each breakdown she seemed to feel that she must make up for lost time, and she planned an advance towards Ikot Ekpene, being anxious to secure that point and the intervening area for her church. On her bicycle she made a series of pioneer trips into the bush, here and there selecting sites for schools, interviewing chiefs about twin-mothers, and generally preparing the way for further operations. About twelve miles distant, or half-way to Ikot Ekpene, where there was a camp, she met some forty chiefs and arranged for ground for a school and the beginning of the work, and for a hut for herself at the back of the native prison, where, she thought, she would have some influence over the warders. As she was never able to establish this station, its history may be rounded off here. Early in the year 1911 she brought the matter before the Calabar Council, which agreed to build a house at Ibiacu out of the extension fund, and later she went in a hammock to complete the arrangement, accompanied by Miss Welsh, who, as "Ma" phrased it, "fitted into bush life like a glove," and who occupied and developed the station. This young missionary lives alone, looks after the children, has a clever pen and clever hands, and is following very much on the lines of the great "Ma." To the chagrin of the latter, Ikot Ekpene was taken over by the Primitive Methodist Mission before she could secure it, but she consoled herself with the thought that it did not matter who did the Master's work, so long as it was done. . . .

Then her path, which had been so long hidden, cleared, and she saw it stretching out plain and straight before her.