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Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen  
Weber Freiligrath Frey  
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel  
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas  
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach  
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil  
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London  
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer  
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup  
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Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt  
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Chamberlain Langbein Schiller Iffland Sokrates  
Brentano Claudius Schilling Kralik Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Raabe Gibbon Tschchow  
Gerstäcker Vulpus  
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim  
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke  
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist  
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Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke  
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# **White Queen of the Cannibals: the Story of Mary Slessor**

A. J. Bueltmann

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**WHITE QUEEN  
OF THE  
CANNIBALS**

*The Story of Mary Slessor of Calabar*

by A.J. BUELTMANN



## *Contents*

1. A Drunkard's Home
2. A Brave Girl
3. In Africa
4. On Her Own
5. Into the Jungle
6. A Brave Nurse
7. Witchcraft
8. The Poison Test
9. Victories for Mary
10. A Disappointment
11. Clouds and Sunshine
12. Among the Cannibals
13. Blessings Unnumbered
14. Journey's End



#1#

*A Drunkard's Home*

"On the west coast of Africa is the country of Nigeria. The chief city is Calabar," said Mother Slessor. "It is a dark country because the light of the Gospel is not shining brightly there. Black people live there. Many of these are cannibals who eat other people."

"They're bad people, aren't they, Mother?" asked little Susan.

"Yes, they are bad, because no one has told them about Jesus, the Saviour from sin, or showed them what is right and what is wrong."

"Don't they have any missionaries out there, Mother?" asked blue-eyed Mary.

"Yes, there are a few and they are doing wonderful things for Jesus, but there are still thousands and thousands of people who have never heard a missionary. They need many, many more missionaries."

"When I get to be a big man, I'm going to be a missionary," said Robert, "and preach to the black people of Calabar and Nigeria."

"I want to be a missionary; too," cried Mary, tossing her red hair about.

"Girls can't be preachers," said Robert.

"I want to preach to the black people," said Mary, the tears racing down her cheeks.

"When I'm a missionary," said Robert, "I'll take you into the pulpit with me."

This made Mary happy and she was much happier when Mother Slessor said,

"Perhaps you can be a teacher and teach the little black children of Calabar. Now, children, I want to be sure you know your memory verse for Sunday school tomorrow. Let's all say it together." And Mother Slessor and her six children joined in saying:

Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

As they finished reciting the memory verse they heard a hoarse voice singing:

Gin a body-hic, meet a body-hic,  
Coming-hic, through the rye-hic.

"It's your father, children. Off to bed with you quickly now. Oh, I do hope Robert has brought some money home with him so that we can buy some food for tomorrow."

"Where'sh the shteps? Somebody alwaysh moving the shteps," said the father, Robert Slessor, as he staggered drunkenly to the door.

Mother Slessor took hold of him and led him to a chair.

"Hello, dear," he said thickly. "Howsh my, besht gurl? There ish no shoemaker's got a prettier wife-hic-than I have. Yesh shir, we drank a li'l toash to you, my dear."

"Oh, Robert," said Mother Slessor to her husband, "I do hope you brought home some of your paycheck. We need it badly for food. We don't have any money in the house. All the food we have is what I kept back from the children's supper so you could eat."

"Shure, I brought money home," said Father Slessor. "All I did wash buy my friendsh a few drinksh."

Mother Slessor's face brightened. At least they would be able to buy food. Her husband reached his hand into one pocket and brought it out empty. Then into another pocket and again brought it out empty. Finally trying several other pockets, he held out his hand with a small coin in it.

"Shee, there ya' are, I brought money home. There'sh a thrippence for ye."

"Oh, Robert!" said Mother Slessor in dismay as the tears filled her eyes. "Oh, Robert!"

Then because she was used to these things, Mother Slessor heaved a sigh and said quietly, "Come and eat supper, Robert."

The father staggered over to the table where Mrs. Slessor had placed the plate of food which the children had saved out of their own small helpings, that he might have something to eat.

"Who wants shupper?" said Father Slessor, and he threw the precious food into the fire. He staggered to his bed and fell into drunken sleep. With a deep sigh Mother Slessor put out the light and she, too, retired for the night. Early the next morning she was up, preparing breakfast. Carefully she scraped every bit of oatmeal out of the container and boiled it for breakfast.

"Come, children, it's time to get up. Sunday school this morning," called

Mrs. Slessor. Up jumped the six little Slessors. The older ones helped the smaller ones get dressed. When they had eaten the little oatmeal that

Mrs. Slessor had for breakfast, they lined up for inspection.

"John," declared Mrs. Slessor, "you did not wash behind your ears. Go with

Mary and let her scrub the dirt away. Now I'll put a bit of perfume on your

hankies, and here's a peppermint for each of you. There, off we go to

Sunday school and church."

Father Slessor snored in his drunken sleep, while the family went off to hear God's Word and to sing His praises. When they returned, Father Slessor was awake. He was sitting on the side of the bed and holding his head. He had "morning after" sickness.

"Come, Robert," said Mrs. Slessor, "and sit up to the table. Good Elder McDougal has given us a bit of meat and some bread, so we can eat this day."

Father Slessor groaned, but sat up to the table and ate dinner with his family. It wasn't much of a dinner. It would have been even less were it not for the kindness and charity of friends, because Father Slessor had spent all their money for drink.

After dinner the children did the dishes and ran out to play. When they were alone, Father Slessor hung his head and said,

"Oh, my dear, what can I say? I am so ashamed. I did so want to bring my wages home that we might have food for the children. And well—before I knew it, my wages were spent."

"Robert," said Mrs. Slessor, "you have said again and again that 'tis your friends who lead you astray. Would it not be well to move away to some other town where you can find new friends who will not drink and who will not tempt you to drink?"

"Aye, my dear, that no doubt would be the best. But where shall we go?"

"I have heard that there is plenty of work in Dundee, with the mills and all. Let's sell our things here and move to Dundee."

"Aye, let us do that. 'Tis certain it won't be worse than here for you and the children."

"Very well, then. I shall tell the children and we shall move before the week is out."

When Mother Slessor went outside to call the children, she found Mary seated on the steps with her stick dolls about her.

"Well, Mary dear, what are you doing?"

"I am the teacher and these are the black children of Calabar. I am teaching them about Jesus. I am telling them that He saved them from their sins."

Mother Slessor hugged her little teacher and told her about the move they planned to make. Then the other children were called and told, too. There was much excitement, especially when the fur-

niture was sold and the Slessors with their remaining possessions took the train to Dundee.

It did not take long to find a place and get settled. Mother Slessor at once looked for a church they might attend. She found the Wishart Church, named for the famous preacher, George Wishart, who in 1544 had preached near the place where the church was built. Shortly afterward he was killed for preaching about Jesus.

But Father Slessor did not do better in the new home. He could not overcome the drink habit, and probably did not try very hard to overcome it. In the meantime a new baby came to the Slessor home. They called the baby Janie. How happy her brothers and sisters were to welcome Janie! Mother Slessor was not altogether happy because she knew there was another mouth to feed. Father Slessor promised to give up drinking, but that did not mean anything, because he never kept those promises.

The money they got from selling their furniture in Aberdeen slowly melted away. Sickness came to the Slessor home. Robert Junior, who was going to be a missionary to Calabar, became sick and died. Two other of the children also died, and only Mary, Susan, John, and Janie were left. But even that did not make Father Slessor give up his drinking. The Slessors had less and less money to buy food. At last Mrs. Slessor went to work in one of the factories. Mary had to take care of the home. But the wages Mrs. Slessor received were very small. Somehow they had to find ways of getting more money. When she was eleven years old Mary went to work in the factory, too. Would she ever get a chance to be a missionary or must she give up that dream?

"Mary, Mary," called Mrs. Slessor, "it's five o'clock. Time to get up and go to work."

"Ho, hum," said Mary, "I'm still tired, but I'll get right up. I don't want to be late!"

At six o'clock in the morning Mary was at work. She had to tend to the shuttles on the weaving machines. The weaving sheds where Mary worked were damp and dark. All morning long she heard the whirring of the belts and the clacking of the looms. In the afternoon

she went to school. By the time she was fourteen years old she was an expert weaver. She now began to work full time.

The hours were long. Twelve hours every day for six days a week the fourteen-year-old girl worked in the factory. And the pay was very small. But it was a joy when she received her pay on Saturday night. Mary hurried home.

"Mother, Mother," she called happily as she hurried into the house, "here is the money I earned this week."

"Oh, Mary, that is so good of you," said Mother Slessor. She wiped tears from her eyes with the end of her apron. She felt sad that Mary had to work in a factory. She thought of her own childhood in a happy home where there was always plenty to eat and plenty of money to buy things that were needed. She quickly hid Mary's wages in the same place where she hid her own wages, so that her husband would not find the money and spend it for drink.

Mary did not lose courage by the long hours in the factory. She remembered that David Livingstone, the great missionary, had worked in a weaving factory, too.

"If I want to be a missionary, I must study," said Mary. "When can I find time?" Again Mary remembered something David Livingstone did when he was a boy. He would take books to work and read them when the weaving shuttles were working right and did not have to have someone attend to them. Mary did the same thing. She read many books from the Sunday school library. She read books like Milton's *Paradise Lost*. But most of all she read the Bible.

Conditions at home grew worse. Mary's drunken father became meaner and meaner. Saturday nights were the worst. Mary and her mother would sit waiting, after the younger children had been put to bed, for the father to stumble home. One night he was so mean to Mary, she had to run out of the house to get away from him. The whole family was unhappy because of Mr. Slessor's sinful habit. Finally, one morning he did not waken from the drunken sleep. In the night his soul fled to face the Judge in Heaven. The death of the father was really a great blessing to the family, for he had brought them only sorrow and trouble.

Now the family felt free. The load they had borne was lifted. Mary at once began to take a more active part in church work.

"If I want to be a missionary, I better have some practice. I know what I can do, I'll ask the Sunday school superintendent for a class to teach." She did, and was given a class of girls. She enjoyed teaching the girls very much. She called them her "lovable lassies."

But Mary was not satisfied. She wanted to get more practice.

On her way home from the factory Mary passed through the slums of the city. Mary herself did not live in a fine house; in fact, it was a very poor one. But in the slums the children lived in small, dark apartments. The streets on which they played were narrow and dirty. The children here did not know about the Saviour. They grew up rough and tough, cursing, swearing, stealing, and doing many mean things. Mary's heart ached for these children of the slums. She wanted to teach them that Jesus could make them happy. She talked with many people about it.

At last her church opened a mission in the worst part of the slums. Mary went to the superintendent.

"I want to teach a class in our mission," said Mary. "I am sure you can use me better there than you can here."

"But Mary," said the superintendent, "you are doing a fine job here in the church; why do you want to go to the mission?"

"There are many who will gladly teach a class here at the church, but not so many who are willing to teach at the mission. I am willing. I will teach there if you will give me a class. Please do."

"But Mary, those children are tough and mean. You couldn't handle them. You could not make them behave. You are hardly more than a child yourself."

"Oh, please let me try," said Mary, "I do so want to tell those boys and girls about my Saviour. Please let me try. Then if I don't make good, you can get someone else in my place."

"Very well," said the superintendent, "I will give you a class, but I warn you those children are tough and mean and hard to handle."

#2#

*A Brave Girl*

"Quit pestering us to come to church. If you don't let us alone, we'll hurt you," shouted Duncan, the leader of a group of tough boys in the slums.

Mary prayed God to make her brave and then said, "I will not stop trying to get you to come to church. I will not stop trying to tell you about Jesus, the Saviour. Do whatever you like."

These boys had often tried to interrupt and break up the services, but Mary went out into the streets and tried to persuade and coax the young people to come and hear the Word of God.

"All right then," said Duncan. "Here goes." He took a piece of lead from his pocket and tied it to a long string. He began to swing it around his head. Each time he whirled the lead, it came closer to Mary's face. Mary did not move. The gang watched. They held their breath as it came closer and closer to her blue eyes. Mary did not blink. Finally, it grazed her forehead. Still Mary did not move. Duncan dropped the piece of lead to the ground.

"We can't scare her, boys," he said. "She's game."

"There is Someone who is far braver than I am. He's the One who makes me brave. Won't you come to the services and hear about Him?" asked Mary.

"All right, Spunky, I will," said Duncan. "And the rest of the fellows will, too. Come on, boys, we're going to the church tonight and no funny business."

This was not the only time that Mary had to face the tough boys and girls of the slums. But she had a Friend who was closer to her than even her dear mother. He made her strong and brave and true. Mary loved her Saviour, and was ready to do whatever He might want her to do.

Her class grew larger all the time. She visited the members in their slum homes. She fitted herself into the family. If the baby needed tending, she tended to it. If someone was sick, she helped to nurse the sick person. Always she told the family about Christ and His power to save. The people of the slums came to love this home missionary and many of them were won to Christ through her work.

The years went by. Did Mary still remember she wanted to be a missionary in Calabar? Yes, she remembered, but now she had all she could do to support her family. Since Robert, the would-be missionary, had died, Mother Slessor hoped that her youngest son John would be a missionary. But God had other plans. John became sick. He was sent to New Zealand for his health, but died when he arrived in that country. Was there to be no missionary from the Slessor family?

Whenever missionaries came to the Wishart Church or to Dundee, Mother Slessor, Mary, Susan and Janie would go to hear them. At home they would read the stories of missionaries and their work. They read missionary magazines. They read about the missionaries in China, Africa, Japan, India, and even Calabar.

One day William Anderson, a missionary to the West Coast of Africa, came to the little church. He told of the great need for missionaries in Africa. He told of the bad things which the people did who did not know Jesus.

Sitting in church, listening to the missionary, Mary saw in her mind a picture of Africa. It was not a beautiful picture. She saw captured Negroes being taken to other lands as slaves. She saw alligators and crocodiles swimming in the muddy waters, ever ready to eat black children who would come too close to the river. She saw cannibal chiefs at their terrible feasts and fearful battles with spears and arrows. She saw villages where trembling prisoners dipped their hands in boiling oil to test their guilt; where wives were killed to go with their dead chief into the spiritland. But these things did not frighten the Scottish girl who was afraid to cross a field if a cow was in it. She longed to go to Africa.

"Why don't I become a missionary?" Mary asked herself as she worked the looms in the factory. "Can I leave my home? Does

Mother still need my help? Susan and Janie are working now. They could get along without me. But will I be brave enough? There are tropical jungles, and black men who eat people. There are wild animals, sicknesses, and death. God can make me brave to face all of these things."

Mary prayed, "O God, if it is Your will, let me go as a missionary to Calabar. Let me be a teacher to teach these black people the story of salvation. You have commanded us, Your disciples, to carry the Gospel to the farthest parts of the earth. Use me, O Lord, to help carry it to Calabar. Hear me, for the sake of Jesus, my Saviour."

It was 1874. The news flashed around the world: "Livingstone is dead." The great missionary had died on his knees in Africa. Everywhere people were talking of this great man who had given his life to tell the people of Africa about the Saviour. Mary made up her mind! She must go to Calabar! But what would her mother say? And if her mother agreed, would her church send her out to that field? Mary went to her mother.

"I want to offer myself as a missionary," said Mary Slessor to her mother. "Are you willing?"

"My child, I'll willingly let you go. You'll make a fine missionary, and I'm sure God will be with you."

"Thank you, Mother," said twenty-six-year-old Mary. "I know God will be with me and will make me strong and brave to serve Him."

Mother Slessor was very happy. There was going to be a missionary in the family after all. But there were some people who did not agree with Mother Slessor. They shook their heads in doubt. Others thought Mary was very foolish to risk her life in that way.

"You're doing real well at the factory," said one of them. "And you're doing missionary work right down there at the mission. Why rush away to those people way off in Africa? Seems to me missionary work ought to begin at home."

"Yes," said Mary, "it should begin there, but not end there. There are some who cannot go to Africa. They can do the work at home. If God lets me, I want to take His Word to those people who have never heard of Him or His love."

The next year, 1875, Mary offered herself to the Foreign Mission Board of her church. She asked to be sent to Calabar. Then she waited. Waiting is hard sometimes. Mary had to wait until the Board had a meeting. Then when the meeting was over, she had to wait for the secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions to write her a letter. Early in 1876 the letter came. How excited Mary was! Her hands shook as she tried to open the letter. Had they accepted her offer or refused it?

"Mary dear," said her mother, "you are so nervous, you had better let me open that letter."

"I'll manage, Mother," said Mary. She finally got it open, and she read:

Dear Miss Slessor, I take great pleasure in informing you that the Board of Foreign Missions accepts your offer to serve as a missionary, and you have been appointed teacher to Calabar. You will continue your studies for the teaching profession at Dundee. May God richly bless you in His service.

"Oh, Mother, I'm accepted! They're going to send me to Calabar!"

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow," said Mother Slessor. "That is wonderful news indeed. To Calabar! Oh, I'm so happy I could shout for joy!"

In March another letter came. This letter told her that she was to spend three months at a teachers' college in Edinburgh. All Mary's friends in Dundee gathered at the train as she got ready to leave for Edinburgh.

"Come, Mary," said Duncan, the tough boy from the slums, who was now a grown man and a faithful worker at the mission, "give us a speech."

"I can't make a speech," said Mary, "but I'll just ask you this: Pray for me."

While Mary was at the school in Edinburgh, some of the other girls she met there tried to talk her out of being a missionary. They did not want her to go off to Africa where there were wild animals and man-eating heathen, and all kinds of terrible sicknesses.

"Don't you know that Calabar is the white man's grave?" asked one of her school friends.

"Yes," answered Mary. "But it is also a post of honor. Since few volunteer for that section, I wish to go because my Master needs me there."

At last the time had come for Mary to leave for Africa. For fourteen long years she had worked at the looms in the weaving factory. As she worked, she had dreamed of Calabar. Now her dream was going to come true. Mary went to the city of Liverpool. There she went on board the ship, the "S. S. Ethiopia." As she got on board she looked around. Everywhere were barrels of whiskey.

"Hundreds of barrels of whiskey, but only one missionary," said Mary sadly.

The boat whistle blew. The engines chugged. The "S. S. Ethiopia" was on its way. It was August 5, 1876. Mary saw the shoreline of Scotland become dimmer and dimmer. She looked forward to seeing the coast of Africa and the land of Calabar.

"At last I am on my way to Calabar," said Mary Slessor as the "S. S. Ethiopia," sailed southward. "How Mother would like to be with me!

How often she prayed that God would send more missionaries to Calabar. I

didn't think then that I would really be one of them."

It did not take Mary long to make friends on board the ship. Among the friends she made were Mr. and Mrs. Thomson.

"So you are going to Calabar," said Mr. Thomson. "Aren't you afraid of that wild country?"

"Oh, no," said Mary, "because God is with me. He will take care of me. Jesus said, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,' and I am trusting in His promise."