

Mercy: "Run, Ma, Run"

Adapted from *Hero Tales, Volume I*, by Dave and Neta Jackson

*A native of Scotland, Mary Slessor gave her life to the Lord and was called to serve in Africa. Her desire was to reach those tribes who had never heard the Gospel of Christ.*

I sat on the porch of my bamboo and mud house rocking a small child. Several other Okoyong children played around my feet. They had been brought to me either because they were sick, or orphans, or unwanted. The mission house in the village of Ekenge had become well known as a house of safety and refuge.

Just then a boy from the village came flying down the path and into the fenced yard. "Run, Ma, run!" he yelled to me, pointing to the jungle.

Immediately I placed the child in the arms of a helper and ran after the boy. I knew what his cry meant: twins had been born in a nearby village, and if I did not get there in time, they might be killed.

The Okoyong people were deathly afraid of the "twin curse." When twins were born, they thought that one of the babies must have been fathered by the devil. Since they didn't know which one, both twins were usually left in the jungle to die, and the mother was sent away in shame.

As I ran barefoot and bareheaded through the jungle, I came upon a loud, angry group of people. At the head of the line staggered a weeping woman, her clothes torn, carrying a wooden box on her head. People were spitting on her and shouting insults.

"Iye!" Iye was a pretty slave woman who had been well liked by her mistress. I took the box and nearly cried out in horror. Two newborn babies had been stuffed in the bottom of the box under Iye's pots and pans. But one baby was still alive!

I quickly led the way back to my house. But when the group came close to the village, I stopped. If I took the "cursed" twin mother and her babies down the market road, I knew no one would ever use the road again. And it was hard to make a good road in this part of the jungle. How could I show kindness to the twins' mother *and* the village people—even though I thought they were wrong? Quickly I asked some of the village men to cut a simple path through the vines and bushes directly to my house.

When Iye was safely in my house, I sadly gave the dead twin a simple, Christian burial in my yard. The other twin, whom I named Susie, was rarely out of my arms. Curious villagers came to see the "monster" twin that I, "white Ma," had dared to rescue. But all they saw was a beautiful, happy child thriving with care and affection.

After a few days, Iye's mistress sent word that she was willing to have Iye back if she came without the child. Iye, who had been moaning about what had happened, was only too willing to leave her shame behind.

Soon baby Susie became queen of my household. Even the villagers grew to like her. But when she started to walk, Susie pulled a pot of boiling water over and burned herself badly. As the child hung between life and death, none of the villagers went to their fields or to market. And when Susie went home to heaven on a Sunday morning, the whole village mourned with me. Even Iye came and cried at her child's grave. The "cursed twin" had become a blessing to all who knew her.

*Mercy included acts of kindness toward both the innocent and the guilty.*

