

son North, Talcott Williams and Rabbi Stephen S. Wise.

The entire expenses of the committee are met privately by certain of its members, so that every cent received is used directly for relief.

A typhus epidemic is raging in the Turkish army, claiming a thousand lives a day, according to a dispatch from Syria through Port Said, which has just reached the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, No. 70 Fifth Avenue.

The dispatch comes from sources which several times have transmitted authentic news from Turkey which official channels have not carried until much later. It says:

"Two epidemics are stalking throughout Syria—cholera and typhus fever. The type of cholera is mild but the typhus is a sudden, fatal kind which spreads so rapidly that many houses swiftly are depopulated by it. Its havoc among the troops is indescribable, as many as a thousand dying in a day. It is not confined to any one region, but extends from Aleppo (on the northern border of the Arabian desert) to the Arish (a river on the Egyptian border). The doctors have not attempted to combat it, as there are no drugs nor remedies in the country."

Inasmuch as it is known that all the drugs in the country were taken into the service of the army months ago the dispatch denotes an equal, if not greater, degree of mortality than 1,000 deaths a day among the civilian population, which probably has been without remedies for a longer time than the troops.

Further cable dispatches just received by the committee report practical starvation conditions throughout Syria. Bread in Beirut sells at thirty-five cents a pound, and prices of other foodstuffs are equally prohibitive. The dispatches report that almost all the wheat, barley, millet, figs and pomegranates produced during the summer have been confiscated for military use, and that no flour whatever is to be had.

Upon receipt of the first cable the committee at once increased its orders for drugs and medical supplies to be carried on America's 1916 Christmas ship, the navy collier Caesar, which leaves New York for Beirut early in December. It already had arranged to include some such medical supplies in the Christmas cargo of foodstuffs and new clothing, but the plight of the typhus-harried civilian victims of the war makes imperative the speedy sending of more adequate material with which to fight the epidemics. The cargo is being assembled at the Bush Terminal, Brooklyn.

The gifts of America carried on the Christmas ship for the relief of Syria, Armenia and Palestine will be distributed to civilians by co-operating commissions of the American Red Cross and the Red Crescent under the supervision of United States consular agents.

#### "MARY SLESSOR, OF CALABAR."

By Egbert W. Smith.

We have here the most fascinating and amazing of missionary biographies.

Blaiddie's "Personal Life of David Livingstone" is a classic. John G. Paton's "Autobiography" is another. To my mind the life record of Mary Slessor is more remarkable than that of her two great fellow-countrymen.

David, John, Mary—how fragrant their very names are of Scripture-loving ancestry and of parental faith and hope! We are reminded of Henry M. Stanley's question, "Why do Scotch missionaries surpass those of all other nationalities?" and of his answer, "Because they are trained in

homes that surpass all others in the inculcation of duty—its source, its meaning, its unyielding imperative." Among "the three mightiest" of even Scotland's missionary worthies—nay, among the most heroic figures of this or any Christian century—we place Mary Mitchell Slessor.

Like David Livingstone, she was in her youth a factory operative, educating herself, as he did, by laying a book on the loom and snatching moments for study from sleep and recreation. When one evening a friend lent her Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus," so fascinated was she with it that, forgetting all else, she read on till the factory bells called her to work in the morning.

Like Paton, she mastered the slum toughs of her home city in unconscious preparation for subduing savages over seas. So Christ-like was her love and sympathy for others, so frank, fearless, indomitable her spirit, that over opponents the most vicious and reckless she won an extraordinary personal ascendancy.

Open-air mission work in Dundee was dangerous, but she and a few others attempted it. They were opposed by roughs and pelted with mud. There was one gang that was resolved to break up the mission with which she had come to be identified. One night they closed in about her on the street. The leader carried a leaden weight at the end of a piece of cord and swung it threateningly round her head. She stood her ground. Nearer and nearer the missile came. It shaved her brow. She never winced. The weight crashed to the ground. "She's game," boys," he exclaimed. To show their appreciation of her spirit they went in a body to the meeting. There her bright eyes, her sympathy and her firmness shaped them into order and attention.

On a wall of one of her bush houses in West Africa there used to hang a photograph of a man and his wife and family. The man was the lad who had swung the lead. On attaining a good position he had sent her the photograph in grateful remembrance of what had been the turning point in his life.

Another lad, a bully, used to stand outside the hall with a whip in hand driving the young fellows into "Mary Slessor's meeting," but refusing to go in himself. One day the girl weaver faced him. "If we changed places what would happen?" she asked, and he replied, "I would get this whip across my back." She turned her back. "I'll bear it for you if you'll go in," she said. "Would you really bear that for me?" "Yes, and far more—go on, I mean it." He threw down the whip and followed her and gave himself the same day to Christ.

There was never a time when Mary Slessor was not interested in foreign missions, and especially in the Calabar mission, near the Niger Delta of her own Scotch Presbyterian Church, a mission among what might be called the slum dwellers of Africa, the most treacherous, depraved and dangerous tribes of the Dark Continent. In 1876, at the age of twenty-eight, she joined that mission, and for the next thirty-nine years, till her death on the field in January, 1915, she was incomparably the greatest single missionary influence in all Nigeria.

Ferocious cannibal tribes, sworn to kill any white stranger coming among them, she would enter and live among all alone, regardless of peril and extremest physical hardship, gaining such command over them, such power to quell their savage passions and rescue the victims of their cruelty, as seems well-nigh incredible. Among their many hideous superstitions, for example, was the belief that twins were born of the evil one and would

bring on the tribe the deadliest bad luck unless their backs were immediately broken, their bodies taken out through a hole in the wall and crushed into earthen jars, and the mother cast out as an abhorred thing into the bush to starve or be devoured by leopards.

These superstition-ridden children of the bush Mary Slessor loved. She loved them with that great pitying, yearning, self-sacrificing love that only the Spirit of Christ can beget in a human heart. "Love," she was wont to say, "overcomes all." It was this love, coupled with an utter fearlessness, an indomitable will, a penetrating insight into human nature, and a singular gift of persuasive, humorous and often biting speech, that explains in part her amazing personal influence. Explains, I say, in part. For back of all, energizing, exalting all, was such a sense of God's immediate presence that from her, as from her Master, there went forth at times a power to overawe and subdue that appears miraculous. Her fame went far and wide even into regions unexplored by white men and many thought of her as something more than human.

That so original, masterful, daring a personality, exercising such imperious power over savage peoples, should be embodied in a little, slender, shy, soft-voiced woman, lends a unique interest to this biography.

Yet never was anyone more touchingly, winningly human than Mary Slessor. In her rich and complex nature were apparent contradictions that evil-minded people might regard as not only human but feminine. On some errand of mercy, for example, she would often walk alone for miles in the dead of night through a leopard-infested African forest, yet on furlough in England she was abjectly afraid to cross a field with a cow in it. She could overawe and turn back armed savages on the war path, drunk with liquor and blood-lust, but was sometimes utterly disconcerted while addressing a home audience of women at seeing a male creature enter the room.

So warm-hearted was she, with such a gift of original witty speech and radiant humor, that she was a favorite with young and old, savage and civilized. British officials in Nigeria vied with African chiefs and fellow-missionaries in affectionate and grateful recognition of her unique ability and achievements. For "meritorious service" she received from King George V. the silver cross of the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in England.

Yet self-abnegation could not go further than it did in her case. "What specially distinguished her," says one who knew her well, "was her humility and the width and depth of her love." She was never able to see that she had done anything out of the common. "It isn't Mary Slessor doing anything, but something outside of her altogether uses her as her small ability allows." She rarely said "my plan," or "my scheme," but "what God wants me to do."

Christ was the supreme thought and passion of her life. "The time of the singing of birds," she used to say, "is where Christ is." To one who had lovingly followed her career and wrote her that a starry crown was awaiting her in the Glory land, she replied: "What would I do with starry crowns but to cast them at his feet?"

A visiting missionary who was present one evening at family worship tells how she gather the bairns about her—for she had always a large household of rescued twins and others dependent upon her—and in a simple and beautiful way read the story of the Good Shepherd and the sheep that

followed. Then, as an illustration, she took the story of Peter's denial of our Lord and showed that Peter sinned because he followed "afar off." "Eh, bairns," she said, "it's the wee lassie that sits beside her mother at mealtimes that gets all the nice bit-tocks. The one who sits far away and sulks disna ken what she misses. Even the pussy gets more than she does. Keep close to Jesus, the Good Shepherd, all the way."

Amid the loneliness that forms the inevitable lot of the pioneer missionary working in the heart of heathenism far ahead of the organized mission, a loneliness peculiarly trying to one of Miss Slessor's warmly affectionate disposition, she was saved from depression by her sense of humor. She laughed and dared the devil. Her extraordinary mental balance and patience under trying conditions, her masterly handling of difficult peoples and situations, was due in no small measure to this precious gift. Of one who had just come out she wrote: "She is very serious, and will take life and work more in the sense of tasks than of a glad free life. We want one to laugh, to hitch onto the yoke, and joke over all that we don't like."

But heroic and fruitful as was Miss Slessor's life, there runs through it the undercurrent of tragedy, the tragedy of unseized opportunities and unfulfilled hopes. As one reads, he can fancy that he is "standing by a forest at night listening to the sound that the wind brings of a strange conflict between a few brave spirits and legions of wild and evil forces, with incessant cries for help."

To risk her life and toil terribly for years with such divine blessing that savage tribes consent at last to welcome missionaries and build schools and churches for them, only to have these unspeakable hopes and opportunities in large measure blasted by the apathy of the Church at home and its unwillingness to provide the funds for the needed workers—this was the tragedy of Mary Slessor's life. And just this is the tragedy that pervades and darkens the lives of our Southern Presbyterian missionaries.

To Mary Slessor's Scotch Presbyterian Church had been assigned by the other denominations the Calabar region with its needy millions, just as to our own beloved Church have been assigned definite regions with equal needs and even greater opportunities than those of Calabar.

"Surely," cried Mary Slessor, "there is something very wrong with our Church in Scotland. Where are the men? Are there no heroes in the making among us? No hearts beating high with the enthusiasm of the gospel? We have really no workers to meet all this opened country, and our Church, to be honest, should stand back and give it to some one else. But oh! I cannot think of that. Not that, Lord! How can our Church look at Christ, who has given us the privilege of making Calabar history, and say to him, 'Take it back. Give it to another?'"

Again and again she wrote home, as every Southern Presbyterian missionary is continually doing, "Oh, if only the Church knew. If only it would back us up."

She literally tolled herself to death in the heroic effort to do in her own person the work of the needed reinforcements her home Church was too apathetic to send. Over how many more of our own faithful missionaries, falling exhausted on the field, must be written these tragic words that sum up the marvelous life of Mary Slessor: "Over the vast, sun-smitten land she wept, as her Master wept over the great city of old, and she did what she could—no woman could have done more—to redeem its people and