In 1854, a war broke out between Ibadan and Efon.\(^1\) Until that time Ogunyomi was a happy child at home, living in peace with her father, mother, and two brothers, in the town of Efon. When the war began, all the able-bodied men were compelled to join the army, and amongst them was Ogunyomi’s father. He was never heard of again, and most probably had fallen in battle. His town was destroyed, the men and youths were killed; and the women and children, after wandering about in despair and misery, were taken prisoners, and sold for slaves. A few, stronger than the rest, contrived to escape into the bush, and amongst them were Ogunyomi and her mother. Fear drove them farther and farther. Their only food was roots and leaves. When they had threaded their way for two or three days, through the dark and pathless thicket, they began to hope that they were safe from their enemies. But they were afraid to speak above a whisper, lest they should be heard and overtaken. Exhausted with hunger and fatigue, they at last lay down to rest, under the shelter of a great tree. At once two men sprang upon them, one seized the mother, and the other the child. Their tears and entreaties were useless, they were torn from each other, and hurried off in different directions. The little girl, who was only seven years old, was taken to Ibadan, and put up for sale in the market. A Christian man, who himself had once been a slave, touched by her sorrowful face, took her in his arms, and tried to comfort her.\(^2\) Hearing that she was soon to be taken down to the coast and stowed away in a slave ship, he longed to purchase her and set her free; but it was beyond his power. He therefore went to the mission-house, told her sad story to Mr. and Mrs. Hinderer, and entreated them to redeem her.\(^3\) They gladly gave him

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\(^2\) The identity of this man is unclear, although he was an early convert in Ibadan.

\(^3\) The German David Hinderer joined the CMS Yoruba Mission in 1848, making his first visit to Ibadan in 1851. He returned to England after three months. With his new wife, Anna, he went to Abeokuta in 1853, but after
money for her ransom, and in a few minutes the kind-hearted man brought the little girl to her new home. The poor child had never before seen a white face, and she screamed with terror when she found herself in the presence of the missionaries. The other children in the compound gathered round her, and told her how happy they were, and that all who lived in the mission-house were safe from slavery. She soon learned, herself, to love her “white mother,” and was constantly found at her side. When strangers came to the house, she clung closely to her, fearing lest they should carry her away. But her great delight was to sit on the floor near to Mrs. Hinderer, and puzzle over the alphabet, or the still greater mysteries of needle and thread. Singing was a pleasure to her, and she quickly learned simple prayers and easy texts. She was a child of a happy disposition, and often her hearty laugh rang through the compound. But a change came over her. Her laugh was heard no more, and her countenance was sad and troubled. Mrs. Hinderer asked, “What is the matter, Ogunyomi? Is any one unkind to you?” “Oh, no,” she said quickly. “Then what makes you sad?” She burst into tears, and sobbed out, “Iya mi, iya mi!” – “My mother, my mother!” Mrs. Hinderer tried to comfort her, and promised to have a diligent search made for her mother. But, in a large town of more than a hundred thousand people, this was no easy task, especially as slaves usually received a new name; besides which, it was not known whether the poor woman was in Ibadan, or had been carried away to some other place. Meanwhile she said to Ogunyomi, “You have learned to pray to God, He loves to receive the prayers of little children. Pray to Him, if it be His will, to restore your mother to you.” From that time forward, to all her prayers she added the simple petition, “O God, give me back my mother.” Ogunyomi gradually became happier, but there was still an expression of sorrow upon her face, stamped there by her longing for her lost mother. When she had lived about six months in the mission-house, she went one morning, as usual, with the other little girls, to draw water from the neighbouring brook. The children were laughing and playing together, when a woman passed by, and, being attracted by the unusual sight of their white clothes, she stood still for a moment, and watched them as they played. One voice appeared to be familiar to her. She raised the basket from her head, placed it on the ground, and listened attentively. Yes, it was her child’s voice! Trembling in every limb, she cried out “Ogunyomi!” Ogunyomi turned round, stared for a long time at the woman, and the, with the cry “My mother, my mother!” threw herself into her arms. The other children ran to the house, exclaiming, “Ogunyomi has found her mother!” It was difficult to believe the joyful news. The poor woman was at first afraid of the white people; but when she heard from Ogunyomi how kind and good they were, and that they had rescued her from slavery, she was at a loss for words wherewith to express her joy and gratitude. She threw herself on the ground and sobbed aloud. When he mind was somewhat more composed, she listened with interest to the story of her child, and then explained that she herself had been sold for a slave in Ibadan, but that happily she had been bought by a kind master. She was obliged to hurry away, but she was comforted by the thought of Ogunyomi’s happiness, and rejoiced in the prospect of being able to see her, whenever she might have permission from her master. Ogunyomi’s heart that night overflowed with gratitude to God, who had so graciously heard and answered her prayers. For many weeks all went on well. The mother often came to see her child. Then her visits ceased, without any explanation. Mr. and Mrs. Hinderer were troubled for the child, and, after much enquiry, they discovered that the mother was seriously ill, and that all hope of her recovery was gone. For Ogunyomi’s sake they paid the poor woman’s ransom, and removed her to the mission-house. For ten months she was nursed and cared for by these new friends, and then, to the joy of all, especially of her own child, she recovered. When her health was
sufficiently re-established, she was employed as cook for the children, and found much happiness in the altered circumstances of her life.…. On June 20th [1867]…. In the midst of all this noise and confusion, these dark and evil doings, our dear Lucy Fagbeade, Ogunyomi’s mother, fell asleep in Jesus. She was a very sincere woman, who extremely disliked much talking and noise about things in religion. On the third day before her death, some of the Christians gathered round her, and asked what she saw. Poor Lucy was vexed, and spoke roughly, “I see nothing,” and again, “I shall see when I have done with earth, and not till then.” Afterwards, when alone with me, she said, “Oh, Iya, I have no faith in what people say they can see, all my hope is in the blood of Jesus to wash me clean; I can only go behind Jesus, and beg Him to beg God for me,” and she covered her face with her hands, as if she would hide herself then and there…. Eleven years ago we redeemed her from slavery, when she was apparently sick unto death, that her child might nurse her, and soothe her dying hours; and God has spared her eleven years, and redeemed her soul by the precious blood of Christ, and has now taken her to dwell with Him forever.