

A Voyager Out: The Life of Mary Kingsley

Katherine Frank



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Mary Kingsley began her life as a typically conventional Victorian woman. She would end up travelling to some of the most inhospitable regions of Africa and became one of the most celebrated travellers of the day. At the age of 31, she sailed on a cargo ship along the coast from Sierra Leone to Angola and then traveled inland from Guinea to Nigeria, studying African customs and beliefs. On her second journey, she ventured into remote parts of Gabon and the French Congo--the first European to do so. She encountered cannibals and crocodiles, studied the religious customs of the reclusive Fang tribe, climbed Mount Cameroon and explored the Ogowe River, trading cloth for ivory and rubber to fund her trip. She returned only once to Africa, during the Boer War, when she worked as a nurse and journalist. Tragically, she died of typhoid in 1900, only 38 years old.



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