

MWANZA

A FUTURE GREAT TRADING CENTER ON LAKE VICTORIA AND ITS PECULIAR POPULATION

Special Correspondence of the Deseret News by Frank G. Carpenter.

MWANZA—I have left Bukoba and have come to the extreme southern end of Lake Victoria. The distance was 93 miles, and the steamer was all day coasting the shores. We made our way through a rocky coast, and are now in a harbor surrounded by great hills and mountains of granite.

The lower part of Lake Victoria is cut up by great bays. At my left is a bay which extends 20 miles inland, and at my right is Emin Pasha bay, which was discovered by Stanley and Emin after they thought they had reached the sea. This bay is situated in the place where John Hanning Speke first saw Lake Victoria and announced its existence to the world. The first man to go clear around the lake was Henry M. Stanley, who navigated it in a boat rowed by natives.

THE GERMAN TOWN OF MWANZA.

Stand with me on the steamship and take a look at this town of Mwanza. It runs around a harbor, which is of the shape of a bowl, and is well guarded by small rocky islands. The entrance is so narrow that we seem to be in a little lake shut off from the great Victoria Nyanza. A wooden pier extends from the harbor, and at this point our steamer is lying. At the beginning of the pier is the custom house, a shed walled and roofed with galvanized iron, and back of it the round white towers of the German fort in front of which tall black soldiers in kaku march up and down.

At the right of the custom house are the low buildings, which form the hospital and offices of the civil governor, while at the left, high up on a hill, is the home of the military commandant. By far the best house in the place. Between that and the shore extends a forest of oil palms, and farther back, behind the fort, running for miles out into the country, is the native village of Mwanza, with its Hindu stores and thatched huts. The village is cut up by wide streets. There are many trees, and everything looks spick and span and new.

Before I take you on shore, let us look at the scenes about the wharf, and the loading and unloading of the steamer. This will give some idea of the trade of the region, and also of what is going on away out here in the heart of East Africa. Only a few years ago this country was absolutely unknown. It was supposed to be an impenetrable wilderness; its people were in continual warfare, and the chief business was the buying and selling of slaves. Today we buy many of its products, and the richer of its natives are wearing our cottons.

See that great bale of goods which is being taken off now. That contains American, a kind of shooting which brings more and sells better than any brought in from England, Germany or India, although they all compete with it. Those hides which are coming down to the ship on the heads of that gang of natives are destined to be made into boots and shoes in our American factories, and even now many of you have Lake Victoria cowskins under your feet. We formerly got our best goat skins from the Somali coast, and they were shipped from Aden, Arabia. Then one of the Uganda officials, who

had been on duty in British Somaliland, decided that the goat skins from there might be sent to America, and so an immense trade in that product has grown up north of the lake. It has extended down here to the south, and some of our finest skins now come from this region. This is so of cattle hides, as well as of skins of goat and sheep. All are exported in quantities. The regions about the lower end of the lake are largely devoted to stock raising. The natives have big herds of cattle, sheep and goats, and the chief profit comes from the skins. Cows are now selling here for \$5 and \$6 apiece, and a sheepskin can be bought for a yard or so of American sheeting. Back in the interior the people wear cowskins and goat skins with the hair on, as clothing, and even here in Mwanza both women and men are dressed in such skins.

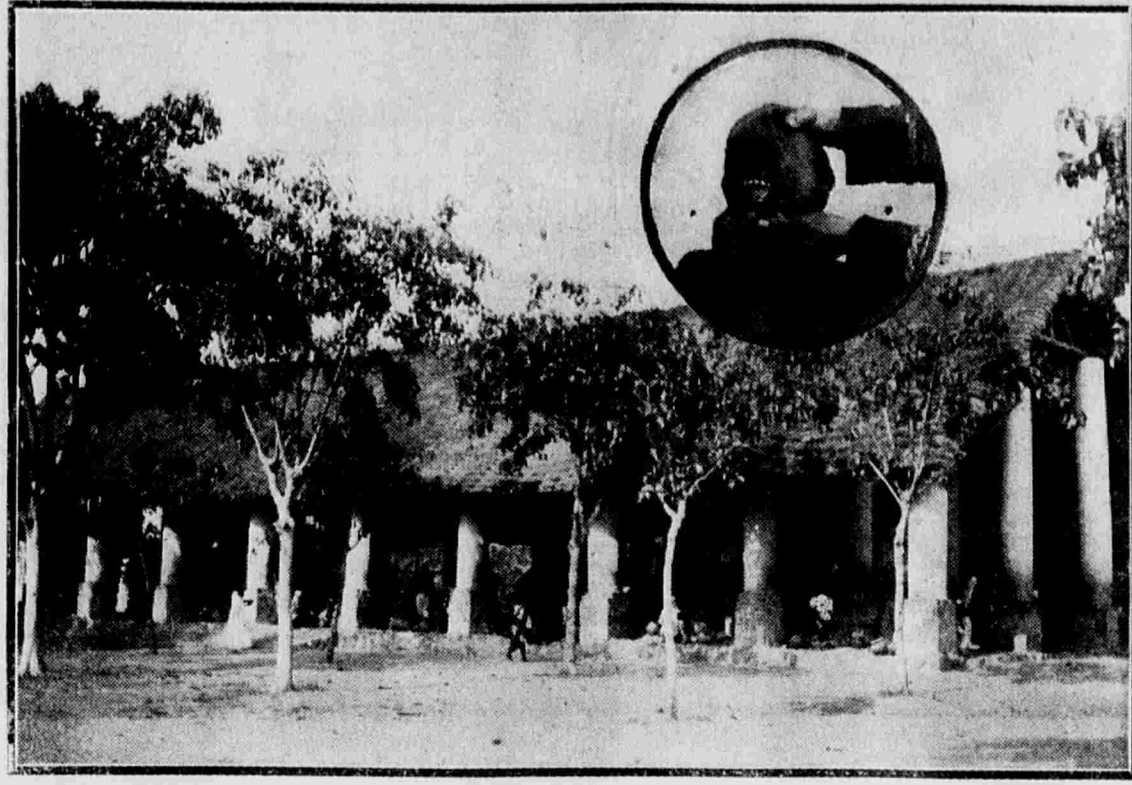
PEANUTS AND COTTON.

This country is also a land of peanuts, Indian corn and cotton. There is some question about the cotton, for this ship will carry only 11,000 pounds when it leaves here, and it was all raised within a few miles of Mwanza. The cotton is put up in 100-pound bales and was carried to this port by two men to each bale. I am told that the reasons are so uncertain, however, that there is little expectation of making the crop profitable. As to peanuts, 77,000 tons were shipped from German East Africa to Europe last year, and something like 6,000,000 pounds went out from Mwanza. As to the hides, they go chiefly to the United States via Aden or Naples, so that there is but one transshipment after they leave the coast of the Indian ocean.

I have spoken of Mwanza as a future trading center. It may be the Chicago of the German possessions. It is on a lake which is 10,000 miles bigger than Lake Michigan, and it has a rich country extending for hundreds of miles to the south, east and west of it. The goods which now come in here are over trade routes which go to Lake Tanganyika and the coast of the Indian ocean at Dar es Salaam. The trade routes are merely paths through the woods, but they are annually trodden by the bare feet of thousands of porters, each of which carries 60 pounds on his head. The distance from here to the Indian ocean is not over 500 miles as the crow flies, but this human freight train takes 70 days to make the journey, and the rates are consequently high. The Germans are now proposing to build railroads between these two points. They have begun at Dar es Salaam and are laying a trunk line toward Tanganyika. That line will be bisected at the town of Tabora by a road going north to Mwanza. This will give Tabora a similar position to that which Indianapolis now holds in regard to Chicago.

At present nearly all the freight from here is carried on British steamers across the lake to Port Florence and down over the Uganda railway to the coast at Mombasa. I understand that the Germans would like to put their own steamers on the lake, but that the British refuse to bring in over their railroad the machinery or supplies necessary to build the boats. They intend to keep the carrying trade of Lake Victoria to themselves as long as they possibly can. And so, if the

The Basukuma Negroes who Dress in Cowskins, and Pull Out Their Eyebrows and Lashes—Queer Ways of Filing the Teeth and Knocking Out the Incisors—A Nation of Stockraisers Who Send Hides To America—Our Cotton in Mid-Africa—How Trade is Carried On—the Wages of Porters—A Look at the Markets.



NATIVE MARKET AT MWANZA INSERT PICTURE SHOWS FILED TEETH OF NATIVE BOY.

Photographed for the "News" by Frank G. Carpenter.

Germans want steamers, they must bring the iron and other materials for them in pieces of not over 60 pounds each, on the heads of porters for 600 or 700 miles through their own country. This would be costly and most impossible, and the probability is that the German steamers will have to wait until the German railroads are built.

How would you like to pay \$40 a ton for shipping grain or corn a distance of 200 miles? That is the rate a young Englishman on board expects to pay to get some rice taken from Bukoba 200 miles inland. He wants the rice to feed a gang of porters who are to go with a commission which is now outlining the new boundary between Uganda and the Congo Free state. The rice is being taken on here, and it will be unloaded at Bukoba from where the porters will

carry it across country to the boundary commission. It is packed in boxes of 60 pounds each, and 1,000 men will be required to carry it. The amount needed is only 30 tons, but it will take those 1,000 men a month to make the journey. Each porter will get four rupees or \$1.33 for the work, so that the transshipment of that 30 tons of rice will cost \$1,333 in wages alone, not including the freight rate on the steamer from here to Bukoba.

During my trip around the lake, I am having a good opportunity to learn about trade matters. There are many millions of natives who might be reached by this lake, and Uncle Sam should send out his drummers to show them our goods and study their wants. I have already written of American sheeting. We are landing a dozen bales of them here. They

are sent in through Arnold, Cheney & Company of Zanzibar, who have their traders going through this part of Africa selling goods and buying hides and ivory. They get the sheeting from New York and it has to compete with goods made to imitate it in England and India, and sold at much lower prices. Of late some cheap German imitations are also coming in. The natives prefer our American goods to any other, and are ready to pay more for them. They can tell the genuine American by its smell, and upon putting their noses to the Manchester or Bombay goods they will throw them aside in disgust. Indeed, back in the interior our cottons have become a standard of value, and are used as money. A sheep, for instance, is estimated as worth a yard and a half of American, a cow is worth nine yards, and a

luxurious young girl of 15 or 14 is valued at 60 yards or more. Contracts for carrying goods are paid for in so many shells and so much American, the length in which the goods are sold being still long enough to wind about the body of a man or woman, with the accompanying folds. Such a length constitutes a dress pattern. The merchants buy the stuff in pieces of 30 yards each.

THE NATIVE MARKETS.

But let us go ashore and take a look at the markets. It is there we can see how these people do business at home. On the way we pass several German officials. They are natively dressed in white duck and each wears a white helmet. Every man of them carries a hippopotamus skin whip in his hand. These whips are as thick as one's finger, and almost as elastic as rubber. The officials use them to keep the natives in order, and the slightest cut will draw blood.

Going on to the market, which lies just beyond the fort, we find ourselves in a court, on one side of which is a building covering a quarter of an acre. It is open at the sides and has thatched roof is upheld by round white wooden pillars. Upon the floors are scores of black women and men, some dressed in cotton, others in bark cloth, and not a few in cow skins. They are sitting on the ground with their wares lying before them in almost infinitesimal piles. The poverty of the country is such that no one can spend more than a cent or so at a time, and the average purchase is the fraction of a cent. Here, for instance, is a peanut peddler. She is a black girl with plugs in her ears. The red shells nuts are spread out on a mat in bodies of ten, each pile selling for 12 cowry shells, or one-tenth of a cent. Farther over is a woman selling tobacco at one-half cent per twist. Each twist is the size of my little finger, and those packages of snuff wrapped up in leaves are not quite as large. Soap and roasted ants are sold in much the same way, and so also are some kinds of imported goods. Here, for instance, is a man selling needles and thread. No one here thinks of buying a whole paper of needles or a whole spool of thread at one time. The needles are divided up into blocks of two, three or five and stuck into green cane, while the thread is cut into short lengths and wrapped around bits of dried banana leaves and thus sold.

In the corner of the market are the butcher shops. All meat is quite cheap, but there is no cutting of the carcasses into steaks, chops and roasts, as at home. Each butcher has the dead body and entrails of one animal lying before him. They are usually spread on the bloody skin of the animal which has been killed on the spot where it is sold. The butcher chops and saws off little chunks of meat according to order, and he cuts up the entrails as his customers want them. The demand for the latter is as great as that for the meat itself.

Under a tree in the market court are men and women are selling fish fresh and dried. The latter are arranged in little piles of five, each the size of a sardine, and they bring about 1 cent a pile. Nearby flour is sold. It is made of millet and is brought to the market in closely woven baskets. Other merchants are selling the millet unground.

One of the most popular places is the beer hall. This is in the large mar-

ket house and is crowded with customers. The barkeepers are women who sit flat on the floor beside great round stone jars that are apparently filled with soapnuts, but really with banana beer, which has a foam somewhat like live lager. The beer is ladled out into gourds, and the customers take it away sucking at it through straws as they go. The liquor is strong, and we frequently pass drunken men and women.

The natives here are known as the Basukumas. They are ugly blacks, and still more so in the country, where the majority dress in cowskins with the hair on. The women wear skirts of such skins, and the men fasten them over their shoulders so that they conceal little more than the upper parts of the body.

The most of the Basukumas are of a strong negro type. They are tall and well formed, but their skins are black or very dark brown, and they have thick lips and flat noses. Their hair is woolly or kinky, and they have original ways of dressing it. Some of the women shave sections of the scalp, and a man will often have a place as big around as the bottom of a tin cup scraped off at the crown. Sometimes this bare spot is covered with scars, made by cutting and gashing, to cure the headache. Others of the men are perfectly bald, made so by the razor. They grow their heads, and they shine like patent leather dress shoes.

Many of the women divide their hair into small braids, and evidently shave clean the partings between them. Others twist the wool out into curls which stand forth like little worms all over the head. They are like angelforms, only black. Imagine a thick-lipped brunette of America who wears fish tail instead of snakes, and you have the typical Basukuma beauty. Some of the more giddy of the bells tie shells and beads at the ends of these curls, so that they almost jingle as they run. I have looked in vain for eyelashes and eyebrows. The Basukumas pull their hair with tweezers. The men also pull out their beards by the roots in the same way.

I find that many of the natives about Lake Victoria beautify themselves by filing their teeth. We have men from different parts of the lake now working at loading and unloading the steamer, and at my request, the captain brought them up on deck and allowed me to examine their jaws. He took each native and held his mouth open while I looked over his teeth. Some men had them filed sharp so that they looked just like the teeth of a saw; others had certain teeth missing, and I was told that they had been knocked out, on the belief that their absence would bring good luck or ward off the bad spirits. This is so among the Kavirondo, who live on the northeast side of the lake. They believe that if a man retains all his lower teeth he will be killed in battle, and that if his wife does not pull out the two middle front ones of the lower jaw he surely will die. For the same reason the woman makes scars in her forehead, and also gashes out a pattern over the front of her abdomen. The Masai knock out the two lower front teeth, and on the upper side of Uganda, along the Nile, there are tribes that pull out two or more of the lower incisors. This is the case with the Banyoro, who live west of Uganda. They extract the four lower front teeth. This allows the upper ones to grow long, so that they become shovel teeth in old age.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

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