

AMONG THE MASAI

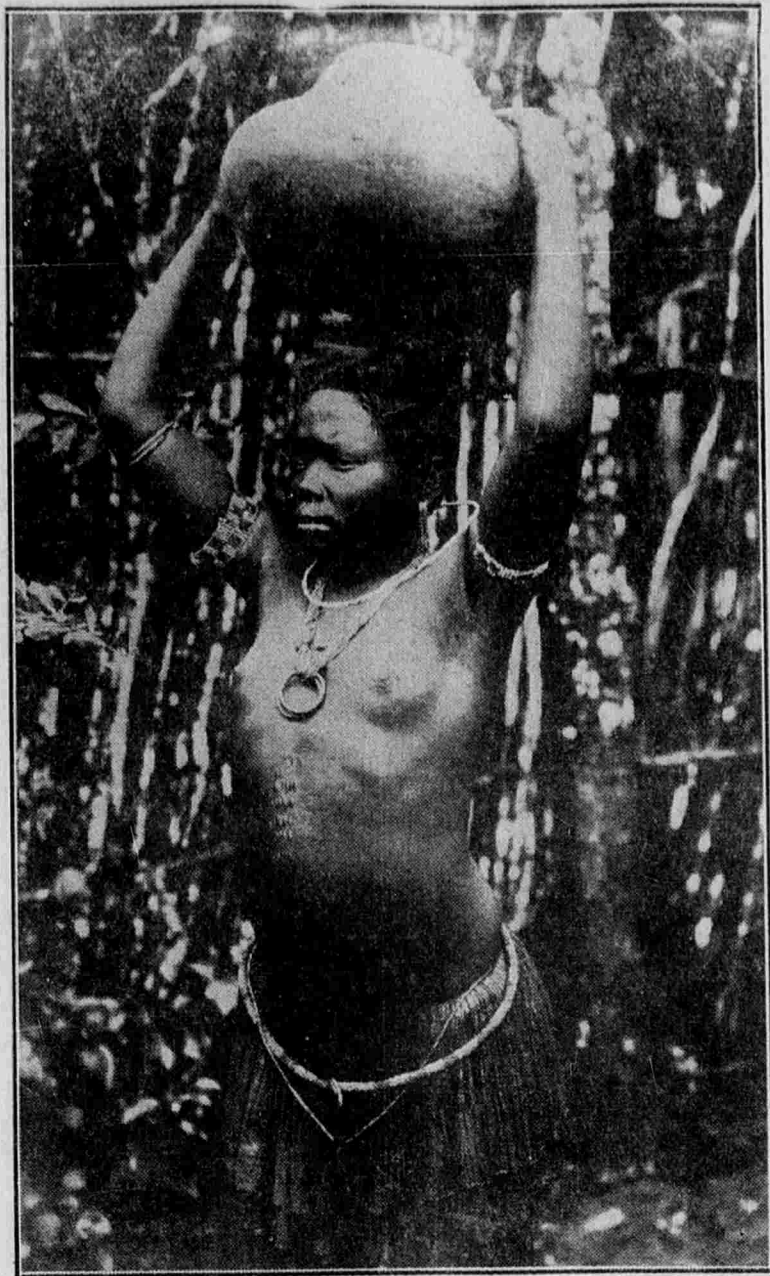
A Queer People of the Great Rift Valley in the Heart of British East Africa. @ @

A Nation of Stock Raisers and Warriors—Odd Customs of Marriage—The Maidens Loaf and the Old Women Do the Work—They Drink Blood—How the British Are Evolving a Civilization in the Heart of Black Africa—American Cottons and Quaker Missionaries.

NAIVASHA, British East Africa, Feb. 3.—In the heart of the East African highlands, as far south of the Mediterranean sea as New York is distant from Denver, and as far west of the Indian ocean as Pittsburgh is west of the Atlantic, I am writing this letter for my American readers. I am in the Great Rift valley, a mighty trough, which runs almost north and south through this part of the continent. It begins at the Zambesi and traces of it are still to be found in Palestine. It is supposed to be formed by the earth half folding up after a mighty volcanic eruption, which left the craters of Kilimanjaro, Kenya and Elgon, mounting the clouds at altitudes of from 14,000 to 20,000 feet.

This great valley narrows and widens, it rises and falls, and it has many great lakes. Broadly speaking, all the great lakes of East Africa are in it or in its spurs. North of here are Lakes Baringo and Rudolf, and still further north in Abyssinia is Lake Tana, the source of the Blue Nile. As I write I am looking out on Lake Naivasha, a beautiful sheet of blue water over which white cranes are flying. I can see zebras and antelopes feeding not far from the water; and with my glass can watch the ugly black head of three hippopotami bobbing up and down like giant fishing corks upon the surface. The shores here are swampy, and are lined with masses of reeds. Just back of them the ground rises into rich pastures, which are protected from sportsmen by the reservations allotted to the Uganda railway and fairly swarmed with big game.

A FUTURE STOCK COUNTRY.
The weather here is delightful. We are so near the equator that one can almost straddle it, but the altitude is such that blankets are needed at night and it is never excessively hot during the day. Naivasha is a little higher up in the air than the top of Mount Washington, and the climate of the whole Rift valley is said to be suited for



A CUSTOMER FOR OUR AMERICAN COTTONS. THE WAIST CLOTH IS OF AMERICAN SHEETING.

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

white men. This matter is being tested by settlers. Large tracts of land have been taken up in different places, and there are many English who are going into stock raising. Right near the lake the government of British East Africa has started an experimental farm, and there are large ranches in the immediate vicinity. There are no tsetse flies here, and the zebras, which one sees by the hundreds in almost any ride over the valley, are an evidence that horses will thrive. There are also many ostriches, and in time we may have ostrich farming here as they have in South Africa. The average height of the valley is something like 5,000

feet, and the grass is said to be luxuriant everywhere.

THE LAND OF THE MASAI

This is one of the strongholds of the Masai race, who have always been noted as warriors and stock raisers. I see them about Naivasha, and not a few still carry spears and shields. They have many little towns nearby, and their settlements are scattered throughout the Rift valley. They live in huts about four feet high, six feet wide and nine feet long. The huts look like great bake ovens. They are made of branches, woven together and plastered with mud. Sometimes they are smeared over with cow dung, and that material

often forms the floors. When it rains, skins are laid over the roofs to protect them. The houses are usually built in a circle about an inclosure, in which the cattle are kept at night. These sheep and goats are allowed to run in and out the houses. Some of the towns have fences of thorns around them to keep out the wild beasts.

These Masai are a fierce-looking people. The men are tall and straight, and they walk as though they owned the earth. When they have their war paint on, they use a decoration of ostrich feathers which surrounds their faces, and is supposed to carry terror to the souls of their enemies. The men are usually bare to the waist, and not infrequently have a bullock hide wrapped around them.

MASAI WOMEN.

I wish I could show you some of the Masai women. They are as vain as peacocks and are loaded with jewelry. Some of them have great rings of brass, which are called around the neck in concentric circles, while after being used until the whole extends out as far as the shoulders. They have brass wire woven about their arms from the wrists to the elbows, and from the elbows to the shoulders, and also great coils of similar wire fastened by strings to the lobes of their ears. Aside from this they wear but little. A cloth wrapped around the body and falling to their knees or below them being about their only clothing. Sometimes this cloth is fastened over the shoulders, sometimes under the arms, and sometimes about the waist, leaving the breasts bare.

These Masai are by no means pure negroes. They belong to the Bantu race, and their skins are dark brown. Their noses are often straight, and their hair not very thick. As to their hair, I can't tell you whether it is woolly or not. The women shave it close to the scalp, using razors of iron or glass, and they polish their heads with grease so that they fairly shine in the sun. I understand they pull out the hair from all parts of their bodies and that even the babies are shaved. Many of the men carry about tweezers of iron to pull the hairs from their chins, cheeks and nostrils, and they keep themselves shaved until they are old enough to be warriors. This comes along about the time they reach manhood. They then let the hair of their heads grow and plait it into pig-tails. A common way of wearing these pig-tails is down over the forehead. It is often soaked with oil and red clay in connection with a similar anointing of the rest of the body. The warriors often wear a lion's head and mane in addition to the circle of ostrich feathers about the face. His arms are a sword and club. He has a spear with a very long blade and an oval shield bearing figures which indicate his clan.

QUEER CUSTOMS OF MARRIAGE.

These people buy their wives. Girls are looked upon as merchantable commodities and are paid for in goats and cattle. After the cattle are handed over the girl goes to her husband, and she may not come back to her father's house alone thereafter, but must always have her husband with her. A Masai can have as many wives as he can pay for, and if he is rich he has a hut for each one. If not, he may keep two or three in one hut. The first wife is always considered the chief wife, and is supposed to boss the establishment, although the favorite sometimes supersedes her.

Such marriages, however, are not supposed to take place until the Masai becomes an elder—that is, until he reaches the age of about 27 or 30. This is after his warrior days are over and he is ready to settle down, as it were. The warriors and the young girls of the tribe live together up to that time in

a separate establishment apart from the rest of the people.

In order to marry, a warrior has to ask permission of the elders of the tribe. If this is given he straightway buys his wife, and if she is a fine looking girl she will cost him two cows, two bullocks, two sheep and some food stuffs. This money goes to the nearest relative of the woman he has selected, who may lower the price if he will. Divorces may be had for largeness and bad temper, on the part of the wife, and in such cases a part of the marriage fee is sometimes returned. Widows cannot marry again, and if her husband dies the woman goes back to her mother, or to her brother, or to her mother's brother.

THE OLD WOMEN DO THE WORK.

As far as I can learn these Masai girls have a soft snail. They are required to do nothing until they are married. Before that they play with the warriors, spending their time in dancing and singing and laughing about. The unmarried girl often does not do her own cooking. This condition continues for a long time after marriage and until all the babies of the family are fairly well grown. As soon as that is accomplished, however, the hard-working period begins. Almost all of the hard labor of the tribe is done by the old women. They collect the fire wood. They build the mud houses and gather the cow manure with which their walls are smeared. When the villages are moved from place to place these withered dames take the part of the donkeys and bullocks in carrying the burdens. They erect the new huts and they are, as a rule, mere havers of wood and drawers of water.

A NATION OF STOCK RAISERS.

These Masai do no farming. They are a nation of stock raisers and own herds of cattle, sheep and goats, which they drive about from pasture to pasture. The cattle are of the humped variety like the sacred cows of India, many of them being fat, sleek and fine looking. Some of the animals are branded, and not a few have red bells of iron in order that they may be traced if they stray. The herds of the cattle are watched by half-naked boys, who drive them about with sticks from place to place. Every morning and evening the cows are brought into the villages to be milked, and nearly every town of mud huts has its own house. The women do the milking. This is contrary to the custom in some parts of Africa, where it is thought the cows will go dry if any female touches them. The milk is caught in gourds which are afterward cleaned with handfuls of burnt grass. The calves are brought alongside their mothers and suckle. The milk and the cows will not let down their milk without they are present. If a calf dies it is skinned and stuffed with straw and then placed under the cow's nose for milking. The women always drink their milk fresh, but this method of cleaning the gourds gives it a smoky flavor.

THEY DRINK BLOOD.

The Masai are blood drinkers. Their country has practically no salt, and I am told that they keep in health by blood drinking. The blood of the animals they kill and sometimes bleed their cattle in the neck and then tie up the wounds so that they grow well again. Sometimes a strap is tied around an animal's throat and an arrow is shot into the jugular vein. As the blood gushes forth it is caught in gourds and drunk warm.

The people eat but few vegetables and they do no farming whatever. Their cooking is usually done in pots of burnt clay, sitting on a tripod of sticks in height. The larger pots are not placed over the fire but at the side of it, and are turned around now and then, in order that they may be evenly heated.

The most of my information about these Masai comes from Capt. Sidney Lumsford Hinde, the famous explorer and lion hunter. He is now sub-commissioner of this colony and I met him at Mombasa on my way here. Capt. Hinde was born in Canada not far from Niagara Falls. He received an excellent medical education in Germany and England, but began his life as a captain in the Belgian colonial service. During his stay there he explored the upper Nile and other rivers, and wrote a book entitled "The Fall of the Congo Arabs." About ten years or so ago he came over into British East Africa and for many years has been engaged in this country for the English. He lived with the Masai and other natives and made a study of them. When I met him he was acting as governor of British East Africa, in the absence of the chief, and his home was one of the official residences, a beautiful cottage outside Mombasa on the rocks overlooking the Indian ocean. The house is decorated with the trophies secured by Mr. Hinde and his wife during their stay in Africa. Upon the floors are the skins of lions and leopards, on the walls are the heads of giraffes, antelope, and of other big game, and there are native spears and weapons of every kind standing about. A large number of the skins are from animals shot by Mrs. Hinde. She has herself killed several lions, two end of antelopes and zebras, and one huge rhinoceros.

In my talk with Mr. Hinde, he told me much about the Masai, saying that they were now quiet and are becoming semi-civilized. They are paying the annual hut taxes of about three rupees each to the government. Three rupees means \$1 American. It seems but little until one remembers that it takes a native about a month to earn that much, when it becomes a great deal.

ABOUT MOUNT KENIA.

A great part of Mr. Hinde's work has been near Mount Kenia, a country which he says is phenomenally rich. He tells me that the Uganda railway goes through some of the poorest land in East Africa, and that the Kenia territory has great possibilities. He predicts that the railroad which is now to be built from Nairobi to the coast, under the shadow of Mount Kenia, will pay from the start, and that Kenia will eventually be covered with rich farms. Said he:

When Mr. Hinde and I first came into the province the country was in the same condition it had been for ages. We found that it contained about a million people, who lived in little villages, each containing about ten huts or so. There were no great chiefs. Each village was independent and almost constantly at war with the neighboring villages. The climate of the settlement knew nothing of those of the other settlements about. A man dared not venture more than ten miles from his home, and he had little knowledge of the country outside that radius.

There were no roads whatever excepting trails which wound this way and that over the land. The only meeting places were at the markets, which were held at certain fixed points on certain days of the week or month. It is a rule throughout Africa that the carrying of arms is forbidden on market days, and no one dares bring arms to a market or fight there. If he should engage in fighting and be killed, his relatives cannot claim blood money.

NEW ROADS MADE BY BRITISH.
"When we took possession of the Kenia province," Capt. Hinde went on, "we had to fight our way in. As soon as we had subdued the people we made them work at making roads as a penalty for their resistance. We connected all the villages by roadways and gave each town so much to take care of. As a result we now have in that province alone 400 miles of good wagon roads, each 10 feet in width. We have also made it the law that every road shall

be considered as having all the rights of a market place. This means that a native can assault another while walking upon them and that all feuds must be buried when traveling over the roads. Many of these roads connect villages which were formerly at war with each other, and the result is that they have become peaceful and that the citizens can now travel safely from one town to another. They are really changing their natures and are going through a process of travel-education. As I have already said, five years ago they never left home. Now thousands of them travel over our roads down to the sea-coast, and we have something like 1,500 natives of Kenia here at Mombasa."

EVOLVING CIVILIZATION.

These remarks of Capt. Hinde show how John Bull is gradually evolving a civilization in these African wilds. The Masai are about the most intelligent of the natives, and there are millions about here who are much further down on the scale of barbarism than they. As I shall show in other letters, some go absolutely naked, and some are still as far back in the arts of civilization as were the people of the stone and iron ages. It is only a few years since slavery was common and cannibalism was more or less carried on. Then justice was unknown and life of no account.

The British are now gradually changing all these conditions. The Masai now knows that he dares not assault his neighbor and he is gradually becoming a decent citizen. Both he and his fellows of other tribes are beginning to understand the value of labor. The Masai will not dig, but they are paid for herding stock, and some of the other tribes are doing actual work on the farms and on the railroad. They are beginning to have wants, and as these increase they will work to supply them. Many of those who formerly went naked now wear more or less clothing. Cotton goods are becoming popular, and, strange to say, the American white cotton sheeting brings the highest prices among the natives. It outsells the Indian and English goods and in some places it even passes for money. Another article from America that is in great demand here is coal oil. The natives buy it to light their huts, and the big chiefs almost universally own one or more kerosene lamps. Other foreign articles much desired are umbrellas, knives and hardware of various kinds. A system of East Indian stores is going up throughout the country to supply the natives. The Hindustani traders carry their goods everywhere, and in years to come a new people will take the places of the savages of the past.

As it is now the missionaries are doing considerable both here and in the countries about the great lakes. The most of such work is now in the hands of the English, but at Kilibe, within a few miles of Lake Naivasha, there is an industrial mission school run by American Quakers, and that same denomination has another industrial settlement in the Kavirondo country, near Lake Victoria.

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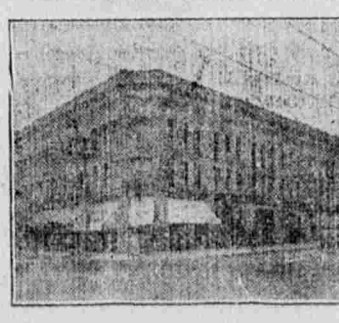
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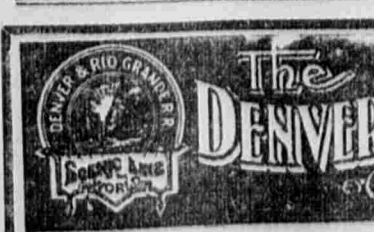
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