

# PEOPLE WHO DRESS ONLY IN BEADS

## Frank Carpenter Tells of the Wakikuyu of Whom There Are More Than a Million



NANDI WOMEN WEAR BLANKETS OF COW-HIDE, TANNED WITH THE HAIR ON



WAKIKUYU AND HUT

**BY FRANK G. CARPENTER.**

**H**AVE you ever heard of the Wakikuyu? There are more than a million of them in this part of Africa. They live on the highlands just east of here and about Mount Kenia, which is more to the north. I reached their country shortly after leaving Nairobi, the capital of British East Africa. That town is at the end of a series of highlands. It is on the western edge of a plateau and the land rises beyond it. We mounted over 3000 feet in 24 miles, and then found ourselves among the villages of these curious people. We could see their little farms everywhere. They take up patches of woodland and burn off the trees. After that they work the ground to death for a few years, and then go off to take up patches somewhere else. Some of their farms are no bigger than a bed quilt, others cover a quarter of an acre and some twice as much. The fields are not fenced, and now and then a rhino or hippo gets in and wallows, while near the woodlands the monkeys pull up the crops. The chief thing raised is Indian corn. I see the women everywhere working the fields. Half nude, they bend low, pulling the weeds and digging the ground over with hoes. In most places the men squat around on the ground and keep them up to their work. The more wives a man has the richer he is; and the more he drives his wives the better his farm. Indeed the cheapest cattle here are human cattle.

**Wear Grease, Clay and Telegraph Wire.**

The chief dress of the Wakikuyu consists of grease, clay and telegraph wire. The grease makes their brown skins shine, the red clay gives it a copper hue, and the telegraph wire loads their arms, necks and ankles. The grease is usually mutton fat and the clay is the red soil found everywhere. The more rancid the fat the better they seem to like it. The average man or woman smells high to Heaven, and one can distinguish a native's existence before he gets to him. They soak their hair with this grease, and under the tropical sun you can almost hear the stuff sizzle. They stiffen their hair with clay so that it can be put up in all sorts of shapes, making their heads a pale brick-rust color. I examined one man's head the other day. It was covered with something like 10,000 individual curls which stood out over his pate like the snakes of the Medusa. Each curl was an inch long and it had been twisted by a professional hairdresser.

**Pipestems as Ear Plugs.**

This man had three long pipe stems in each ear. Each was as big around as a lead pencil and of about the same length. It was fastened through a hole made in the rim of the ear by a kind of brass

button, and these three stems standing out on each side of his head looked almost like horns, save that they projected from the ears. He had beads in the lobes and one of the men with him had the lobe of his ear so stretched that it held a plug as big as my thumb. I bought the plug for 3 cents, and the man then took the two lobes of his ears and joined them together under his chin, and tied them with a bit of string in order that they might not catch on a branch or something else as he went through the forest.

This second man had a brass collar about his neck and coils of brass wire about each wrist and over the loops of each arm. His only clothing consisted of a strip of dirty white cotton which was fastened over one shoulder and fell to his thighs. He had pronounced negro features and where the red clay had worn off his skin was as black as my boots.

**Where Cattle Sleep With the People.**

These Wakikuyu live in small villages. Their towns look like collections of haystacks until you come close to them and when you get inside you find that they contain as many animals as men. The houses are thatched huts built about six feet apart in circles around an inclosure in which the cattle, sheep and goats are kept at night. The sheep and goats often get inside the huts, and as for the chickens, they go everywhere. Each circle of huts usually belongs to one family, a chief and his relatives thus living together. The huts have wooden walls about four feet high with conical roofs. The wood is chopped out of the trees with the native axes, the boards being about 18 inches or two feet in width. They are made by the natives, a man and his wife requiring about ten days to build a hut. The wood used is soft, and the kind is regulated by the Government which charges the natives 60 cents for enough wood to build one hut.

In addition to the huts, each family has two or three granaries for their winter supply of Indian corn. These are made with wicker walls and wicker floors, and are raised a foot or six inches off the ground. They are usually about as big around as a hoghead and six feet in height. They have thatched roofs.

**What They Eat.**

The Wakikuyu are practically vegetarians. They live on corn, beans, sweet potatoes and a kind of millet. They have a few cattle and some sheep, but they consider them too valuable to be killed, and they only eat them when the cattle are sick or become injured in some way and have to be killed. They have no chickens and eat neither fowls nor eggs. The reason for this is that chickens crow, and in the past the locality of a village could be told by the crows and thereby brought down its enemies and the slave traders upon it.

These people have many dishes like ours. They eat roasting ears off the cob, and they boil beans and corn together, making a kind of succotash. They have also a gruel made of millet and milk, and if one of the family becomes sick they sometimes give him mutton

broth. In their cooking they use clay jars, which they rest upon stones and build fires under them. They use gourds for carrying milk and water, and make bags of woven bark ranging in size from a pint to four bushels. Such bags are used for all sorts of purposes, and the larger ones serve for the transportation of their grain to the markets.

**Wives Worth Money.**

The Wakikuyu looks upon the females of his family as so much available capital. If a man has 15 or 20 wives, he is supposed to be wealthy beyond the dreams of avarice. I am told that many of the chiefs have a dozen or more, and that since the British have begun to exploit the forests, the more industrious of the native men have been rapidly increasing their families. A good girl, large and healthy, will bring as much as 50 sheep, and a man may pay down ten sheep and agree to bring in the balance from month to month as himself and his wives earn them. He goes into the woods and cuts down trees, being paid so much per stick. If a man works hard, he may make \$1.25 or \$1.50 a month, and if, in addition, he has several women to help him, his income may be doubled or trebled.

In such work the men cut the wood and the women carry it on their backs to the market. They are loaded up by their husbands, a piece of goatskin separating the rough sticks from the women's bare skin, the burden being tied on by a rope of vine which rests on the forehead. In addition to this goat skin on her back, the woman usually has an apron or skirt of skin, which is tied about the waist and reaches to the knees and sometimes below them. A good lusty girl can carry as much as 30 pounds of wood in this way, and her husband does not scruple to load



AT THE STATION OF KIKUYU

her with all she will take. I made some inquiries as to the prices of such women, and am told that a girl is supposed to be ready for sale at 12 years and that \$30 in cattle or sheep is an average price. For this sum the woman should be large, well-formed and fairly good-looking. Ugly girls and lean girls go cheap and some such are often unmarried, in which case they have to work for their parents.

**Great Railroad Thieves.**

I saw a half-dozen Nandi, including two women, at one of the stations between here and the Escarpment. The men were almost naked, save that they wore cloaks of monkey skin with the fur on and strips of cow-skin about the waist. The women had on waist cloths and blankets of cow-hide tanned with the hair on. These blankets were fastened over one shoulder, leaving the arms and half of the breasts bare. These Nandi were walking along the railroad track, and were closely watched by the station agents. I am told they are great thieves, and that the British have had trouble with them because they steal bolts and rivets which hold the rails to the ties, and even climb the tele-

graphing it with their porridge. After bleeding they close the wounds, so that the cattle grow well again. They are good hunters, and have large dogs, with which they run the game down so that it can be killed with spears. They also trap same by digging wedge-shaped pits, and covering them over with grass. They have donkeys which they use to carry the iron ore from the mines to their furnaces, where they turn it into pig metal.

These people have about the same customs of marriage as the Masai. The young girls live with the warriors until they reach a marriageable age, and marriage is always a matter of bargain and sale. The price of a good-looking girl is three goats, a cow and a good fat hen, and the bride of the tribe may bring twice as much. Among the Nandi, the woman who bears the most children is considered the most valuable. She who has twins is a mascot, and is given a cow, the milk of which goes exclusively to her. The younger women of this tribe wear small aprons of leather, ornamented with beads, and the young men go practically naked. The married men dress much like those I saw on the track.

I understand that the Nandi live about the same as the other natives about here. They have circular huts of boards roofed with thatch. Each hut has a fireplace in the center, and on each side of this a little bed consisting of a platform of mud built along the wall of the hut. The people sleep on the mud, and use round blocks of wood for pillows. The children sleep with their parents until they are 5 years of age, when they are shoved off into a smaller hut outside built especially for them. They believe in witches and medicine men, and they

has but little woods except in the hills, and lumber is high. A great deal of that used at Mombasa and Nairobi is brought in from Norway, and some comes from the United States. Leaving the Kikuyu hills there are woods all the way to the ridge known as the Escarpment and they extend for some distance down the sides of the Rift Valley. Here in the valley itself the country is mostly pasture and there is no timber of any account. In the forest region, above referred to, the woods are thin, and in many places the virgin timber has been cleared by the Wakikuyu, who burn the ground over, in order that they may use the virgin soil for garden patches. The government is now prohibiting this and is doing all that it can to save the trees remaining and to build up new wood lands. I met here at Navaisa an Australian who is one of the heads of the forestry department. He tells me that the government has established nurseries at Mombasa, Nairobi, Escarpment and Landavi. Near Mombasa they are setting out oak trees, and at Nairobi they have planted a large number of acacia and eucalypti, which they have imported from Australia. The eucalyptus grows well at Nairobi. I saw trees there which were 75 feet high, and that although they were only five years of age. This forest manager tells me he is laboring under great disadvantages in his efforts to raise new trees. He says he has to fight not only the natives, but also the monkeys, baboons and other wild animals. The woods are full of monkeys, and among them is a dog-faced baboon which grows up like a 10-year-old boy. This animal barks like a dog and acts like a devil. It watches the planting and then sneaks in at night and digs up the trees. If seeds are put in, it digs them up and bites them in two, and if the trees should sprout it pulls the sprouts out of the ground and breaks them up and throws them away. As a result the nurseries have to be watched during the day by men with guns in their hands. If the men have no guns the baboons will jump for the nearest tree and make grimaces only of the branches, only to return to their devastating work as soon as the watchmen go away. If guns are brought out the animals realize their danger and run for their lives. These monkeys also dig up the Indian corn planted by the Wakikuyu, and they are said to be far worse than crows and blackbirds combined. Navaisa, British South Africa.

**When Our English Is Japanned**  
Blunders That One Sees on the Business Signs of Tokio.

George Kennan, in New York Tribune.

**E**VERY foreigner who has explored a jirinkisha, the great street labyrinth of Tokio must have noticed the comparatively frequent occurrence of English signboards over the shops of Japanese tradesmen. One seldom runs across a French or German signboard, but in all parts of the city, even in quarters to which foreigners seldom go, and over shops that tourists never patronize, one sees among the perpendicular strings of Chinese ideographs the familiar letters of the English alphabet. Often, however, it is only of which they form a part are as unintelligible as a cipher or a cryptogram. The first time I passed a Japanese signboard bearing the words "Milk Hole," I tried in vain to guess what the owner of the shop had for sale; and it was not until I had seen other signboards inscribed "Fulish Milk," "Fulish Milk," "Fulish Milk" and "Milk Hole" that I was able to solve the puzzle. "Milk Hole" was intended for "Milk Hall." Why a tea shop for the sale of carry packages should be called a "hall" I did not know and I have never since been able to ascertain; but the Japanese invariably call such shops "Halls," "Hells," or "Halls," and the English words in English on their signboards, "Fulish," "Fulish," and "Fulish" are attempts to spell phonetically the word "fresh" as it sounds to the Oriental ear. English words containing the letter "f" give the Japanese a great deal of trouble; and in trying to reproduce them, with their imperfect knowledge of alphabetic values, they make some curious and funny combinations.

One would hardly guess that "Karare and Kufus" meant "collars and cuffs," unless one happened to see a Japanese ironing those articles in the laundry bearing the signboard. Neither would one recognize the English element in the name "Howludu Maru" painted on the bow of a Japanese junk; and yet "Howludu" is not a bad reproduction of "How do you do" as the words are often carelessly and slurringly pronounced. "How do you do" was probably the only English phrase that the owner of the boat had ever heard; and, having the courage of his ignorance, he treated it as a single word, combined it with a Japanese suffix applied to sailing vessels generally, and gave it, with pride, to his "honorabile" junk.

All of these blunders are obviously the result of inaccurate hearing or imperfect knowledge of the phonetic values of English letters; but in the literature of Japanese signboards there is another class of errors which is plainly due to looking up of English words in Japanese-English dictionaries and the putting of such words together without regard to the rules of English syntax. When, for example, a Japanese wishes to paint on a signboard the words "Shop of the Courteous Barber," he turns in his dictionary to the Japanese word for "courtesy" and finds opposite to it the whole group of nearly synonymous English words, among which is "kindness." Not having knowledge enough to discriminate between shades of meaning, he selects "kindness" almost at random, and associates it with "shop" and "barber," as follows: "Barber the Kindness Shop." Another Japanese, practicing the same trade, refers to himself as the "Cheerful Barber"; a laundryman gives notice that he is a "High Washman"; and a sartorial artist describes himself as "The Sublime Tailor." "High" and "sublime" seem inappropriate or at least hyperbolic adjectives to apply to "washmen" and tailors; but reference to a Japanese-English dictionary shows that among the definitions there given