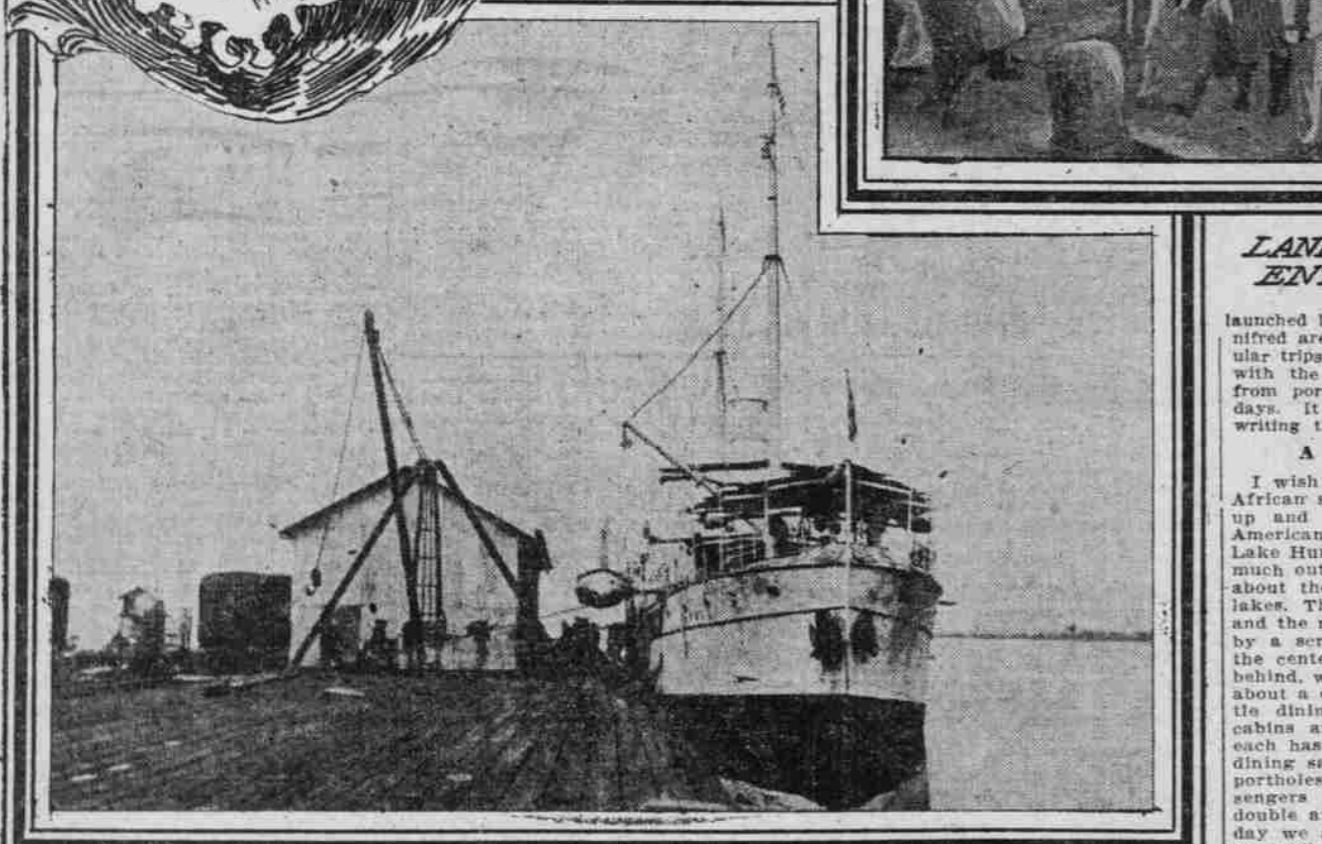
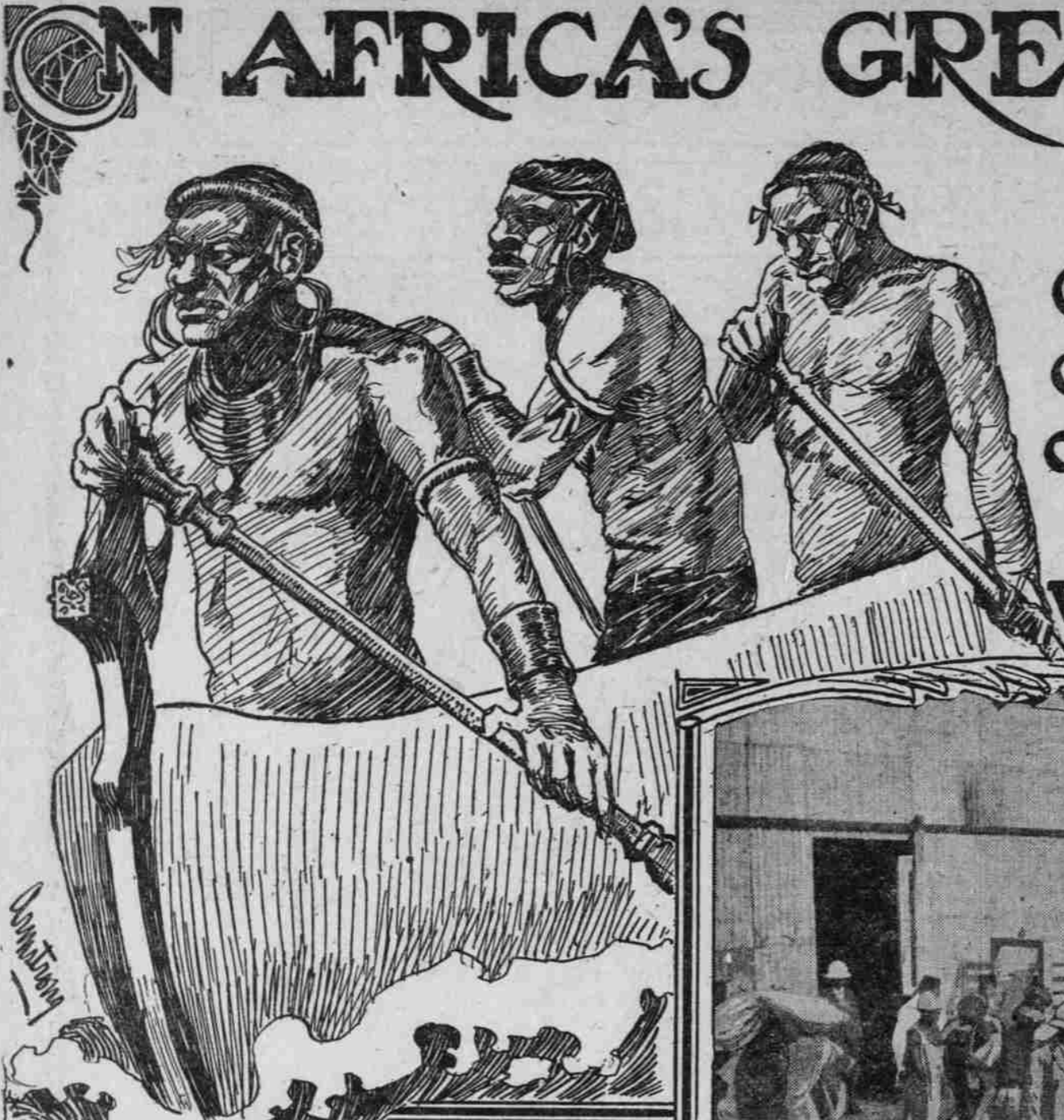


# AFRICA'S GREATEST LAKE

## Queer features of life & travel on the largest body of fresh water in the world



THE 'SYBILL' AT THE WHARF AT PORT FLORENCE.

BY MIANK G. CARPENTER.

GET out your straw hats and pith helmets, pack up your white clothing and thin underwear, and fly with me to the heart of the black continent for a trip over the largest fresh water lake of the world. We are on the little steamship Sybill far out in Victoria Nyanza, with the mainland nowhere in sight. The blue waters of the lake extend out on all sides of us as far as our eyes can reach, and there are only islands in view. Some of the islands are high and rocky. Others are bordered with swamps and beds of papyrus, filled with strange birds and with huge black hippopotami, whose bobbing heads may be frequently seen as they swim about near the shore.

### In Kavirondo Gulf.

How delightful it is! We are right on the equator, but the air is as cool as Ohio in June or as our great lakes in mid-summer, save that the invigorating ozone of those regions is absent. Where we took ship at Port Florence the natives were going stark naked, and our boat was loaded by a gang of blacks clad only in breechcloths, and that out of respect to the passengers. The Uganda railway brought us right down to the lake, and naked porters carried our luggage on board. We remember how the blacks sang as they worked, and how beautifully we could see every play of their muscles as they carried the freight to the ship.

We were all afternoon coasting the Gulf of Kavirondo before we entered the lake proper, and our way was in and out of volcanic hills for a distance of 46 miles. The gulf is over 100 miles long and 10 miles wide, and it is lined with great hills all the way. Some of the peaks kiss the sky, some are rounded and some cone-shaped, but all are volcanic. This is especially so at the south. At the north the country is lower and its hills are spotted with straw villages. The gulf has many islands. It narrows as it goes inland, and it is also narrow at the entrance, where there are islands of various shapes forming a great chain which seems to shut out the lake. Our first night was spent in the front of Lusungu Island, which is about six hours from Port Florence, it being unsafe to travel in many parts of these little-known waters by night.

### Victoria Nyanza.

But before I go farther, let me tell you something about this mighty African lake. Sitting at home, in far-off America, with the snow in the air and all the surroundings of modern civilization about you, it is hard to realize just where and just what it is. The flat maps give one but little idea of the actual conditions. Lake Victoria lies in the heart of east-central Africa. Among the lines of the equator, on which we now are, it is 700 miles, or about as far as from New York to Toledo, to the Indian Ocean.

Going westward along the same line it is over twice as far to the Atlantic. It is only a few miles to the north of us that the Nile flows out on its way down to the Mediterranean Sea, and by its windings the distance is almost four thousand miles. It is over 200 miles in a straight line southeast to the Cape of Good Hope and just 54 miles by the Uganda Railway to Mombasa, where I entered this part of Africa. I am only a few hundred miles from the headwaters of the Congo and from the southern shores of Lake Victoria I could reach Lake Tanganyika by a march of less than 200 miles, and midway on that lake get into a branch of the Congo and float down to the sea.

### Bigger Than Lake Superior.

I have traveled over most of the great lakes of the world. I know those of our own country well and likewise those of Europe and South America. I have crossed Lake Titicaca, which lies two and one-half miles above the sea on the top of the Andes, and have seen the Dead Sea, which is a quarter of a mile below the level of the ocean, on the edge of the Holy Land. Omitting the Caspian Sea, Victoria Nyanza is the biggest lake of the world. It is the largest body of fresh water on earth, ranking Lake Superior by about 1000 square miles. If you could pick it up and spread it over the United States it would cover the whole of South Carolina, or dropping it into New England it would drown the states of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island and Connecticut. It is three-fourths the size of either Kentucky, Virginia or Ohio and is more than half as large as all of our great lakes combined. It is three times as big as Lake Erie, and if one could put Lake Erie and Lake Huron into one body they would cover about the same surface. This lake is twice as big as Tanganyika, although it is only half as long, and it has three times the area of Lake Chad, which lies away off to the northwest, above the French Congo, on the southern edge of the Sahara. Lake Victoria is almost quadrilateral in shape, Tanganyika is a long, narrow trough between high hills. Nyasa is long and narrow, and so are Lake Rudolf and Albert Nyanza at the north.

Victoria Nyanza is more like our own Lake Superior than any of the other great bodies of fresh water. It lies in the highlands, and might be said to be on the roof of the African continent as Superior is on the eastern roof of the North American continent. Lake Victoria is, however, more than six times as high up in the air as Lake Superior and more than seven times as high as Huron or Michigan. It is about 600 feet above the sea, and is within 500 feet of the altitude of the Great Salt Lake.

As to the depth of the lake, its bottom has not been carefully surveyed, but there are places which measure over 600 feet. This is about three times the depth of Lake Erie, but not nearly so deep as

Lakes Superior, Huron and Michigan. This lake has a mighty volume of water, and its surface rises 40 or 50 inches during some years. The volume is so great that a dam might be placed at the source of the Nile and give water for irrigation for vast territories along the course of that river, which are now unproductive. As to this matter, however, I will write in another column.

### In Black Africa.

Until within the past few years this region was one of the blackest parts of the African continent. Slavery was common everywhere and cannibalism rife. No one knew there was a lake here at all until 1858, when Speke discovered the southern shore; and we had no idea of its extent until our own Henry M. Stanley went around the lake in 1875. As it is now, about the only inhabitants are these queer tribes of African natives, who in certain regions are still warring with one another. I have described the naked Kavirondo and some of their queer customs. North of Victoria Nyanza are natives who are as different from them as the Americans are different from the Japanese or Chinese. On the south are other tribes with other strange customs, and the whole lake is surrounded by a dozen or more different peoples, each different from all the others in appearance and in their various grades of civilization.

### Navigating Lake Victoria in 1908.

No European boat had ever been seen on this lake until Stanley came, and he would take several years to go around it. Before that the boats were such as the natives used by the natives. They consist of boards sewed together with fiber of the raffia palm, and can only be kept from sinking by industrious bailing. I saw many of them at Port Florence, and they were used more or less all around the lake. The average boat is 25 or more feet long, three feet wide and two feet deep. It is made without nails or any iron whatsoever and is seldom fitted with sails. It is easily capsized in a storm, at which time the boatmen often jump outside and hold on to the rim of the boat to keep from sinking until the storm is over.

Stanley made a big rowboat, which he called the Lady Alice. He started at Speke Gulf, and by using a sail gradually made his way around, covering many of the points at which I shall call farther on in these journeys. At present there are four little steamers, belonging to the British, on Lake Victoria. One of these is the Sir William Mackinnon, which was brought up from the ocean in pieces before the Uganda Railway was built and here put together. It is still in commission and is used by the British officials as a sort of dispatch boat.

The next two steamers are the Sybill and the Winifred, each of about 200 tons, and the other is the Sir Clement Hill, which has 800 tons and which was

### LANDING ON VICTORIA LAKE, AT ENTEBBE, UGANDA.

launched last year. The Sybill and Winifred are sister ships. They make regular trips around the lake, in connection with the Uganda Railway, the voyage from port to port requiring about ten days. It is upon the Sybill that I am writing this letter.

### A Mid-African Steamer.

I wish I could show you this little African steamer, if it could be taken up and transported to one of our American rivers or dropped down upon Lake Huron or Erie. It would not seem much out of place, for the ship is just about the same as some used on our lakes. The differences lie in the people and the management. The Sybill moves by a screw. It has a smokestack in the center and two masts before and behind, with a lifeboat on deck. It has about a dozen cabins, with a dark little dining saloon in the rear. The cabins are lighted by electricity and each has an electric fan. Back of the dining saloon is a ledge up under the portholes where the second-class passengers sleep. The top deck has a double awning of canvas, and at mid-day we are advised to keep our hats on while sitting under it. The sun's rays are strong in this latitude, and one must protect his head even when indoors if the roof is not thick.

As to first-class passengers we have only about a half dozen on the Sybill, and they and the English officers are the only Europeans. The natives are half-naked, who get wages of about 10 cents a day, and the steward and cooks are Hindus who are paid a little more. The passengers are two British officials on their way to serve in interior Uganda, a German surgeon who is bound for Mwanza in the Kaiser's territories on the south of the lake, a Congo trader who has about a carload of beads and brass wire with him to buy ivory and rubber, and a missionary who is going to Kampala, and who will get off at Entebbe. In addition to these are myself and son, who will leave the boat at Entebbe for Uganda.

We have also on board a half dozen native soldiers, and one of these is always guarding the mail. The bags were carried under guard onto the boat at Port Florence and a soldier with a rifle in his hand stands beside them day and night throughout the voyage.

### A Coming Tourist Center.

The prospect is that Lake Victoria will some day be as well known to the globe-trotter as the Great Lakes of America. The expense of coming here is too high for the ordinary traveler, but the man who can pay the bill can live on these boats almost as comfortably as at home. I mean as far as eating and drinking are concerned, and as respects the climate. There is much to be desired in the matter of freedom from cockroaches, rats and other insects. I have never seen so many and such wild animals of the roach kind before. My cabin has some as large as mice, and it seems to me that they come out in the daytime and look at one while they sharpen their teeth in order to trouble him the better at night. The roaches run through the dining-rooms, and when I put my foot on one, as I do whenever it is possible, it leaves a great spot as large as my hand on the floor.

Another infernal insect is the Jigger. I don't know where I got mine, whether on shore or ship, but my native boy has extracted the eggs of three of these pests from under my toes during the voyage. The Jigger is a little insect which bores a hole in one's flesh, choosing the foot, and usually places under the toenails. It lays its eggs there in the form of a little sack about as big as a pearl shirt button, and this sack must be cut out at once. If not, and the eggs hatch, they turn into worms, which eat about through the flesh and often cause the loss of the toe. The insect is supposed to have originally come from South America, but it has already traveled over this half of Africa, and it is especially bad about Lake Victoria.

As to mosquitoes, we have none here on the lake and practically no flies except the common house fly. The shores are infested with the tsetse fly, whose bite

causes the sleeping sickness; but this fly is only in the swamps and cannot stand the light of the sun. There are plenty of mosquitoes of all kinds on land, and there are swarms of midges in many parts of the lake. I saw such a swarm this morning. It looked like a waterspout rising from the surface. I thought it was one, and was surprised when the captain told me that it was composed of myriads of these midges, which are born in the water and fly up at one time into the air. They sweep over the lake in great numbers, raining down upon the boats as though they were so much black pepper. They come in such quantities that the men sweep them up with brooms and throw them overboard. They even get into the cabins and cover the dining tables. This is so when the ports are covered with netting, and when every open space is apparently protected. These flies are perfectly harmless, and they do not live more than a day.

### What One Eats on Lake Victoria.

As to other matters, as I have said, the accommodations on the boat are good. We have four or five meals a day, and the Hindus cook well. The morning for instance, I was awakened by my black boy at 7, who brought me a cup of tea and a cracker. At 8:30 the breakfast bell rang and I went into the saloon for a substantial meal of an orange,

some fried herring, bacon and eggs, with marmalade and toast at the end. The coffee served was grown about the lake and was poorly made, but the tea, which I next ordered, was good. At 1 o'clock we had a soup of pea soup, boiled tongue, roast mutton and chicken curry with rice, ending up with a dessert of California canned apricots and native fruits. We shall have dinner at 8 o'clock tonight, and our table will be lighted by electricity. The meal will be about the same as the lunch, and we shall probably drink with it a glass or so of ginger ale, while our English friends will wash their throats with whiskey and sody or wine or beer, as they order. The cost of such meals is \$1.55 a day, with extra charges for drinks. I have before me the wine list and give a few of the prices. A full peg of whiskey and soda costs 5 annas, or about 25 cents, while a half peg costs 15 cents. Brandy may be had at the same prices. The word "pegs" for drinks is used here on all bills of fare. This is common throughout India, and it arises from an old saying that every drink of intoxicating liquor one takes is a peg in his coffin. If you want a man to take a drink with you you ask him to come and have a peg, and there are certain hours of the day which are known as "peg times" or simply "pegs."

As for me, I am drinking the water of the lake. Our missionary on board tells me that it is perfectly safe, and I know it tastes as sweet as the waters of Lake Erie. As I write we are coming near land. During a great part of today we have been out of sight of anything but islands. Victoria Nyanza is 225 miles wide and

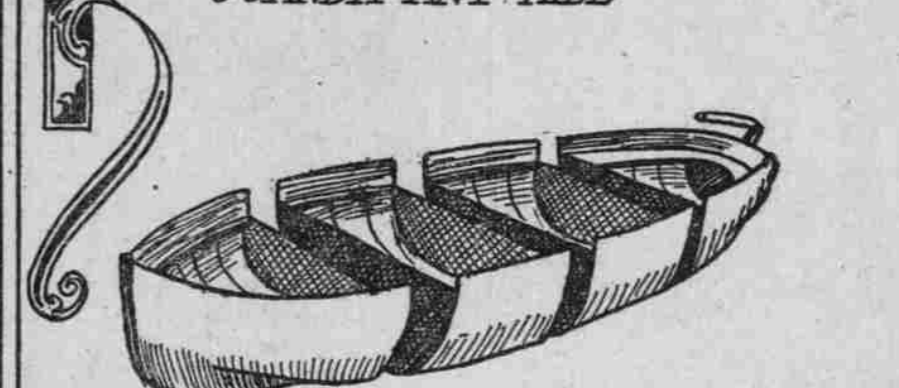
275 miles long, and there are places where one can travel for a hundred miles or so and not see land. Here in the north the shores are bordered with beautiful islands, some of which are wooded. Others have grassy hills along the shores, with high lands behind them. Some regions make one think of the Thousand Islands of the St. Lawrence, and many of the islets would not be out of place if they were off the shores of Ireland or in the English channel. These places have a settled look, and at a distance the country appears just like ours, save that it lacks houses and barns and has thatched villages instead.

### The Shores of Uganda.

We are now nearing the shores of Uganda. The scenes from the ship are more like those of a settled civilized territory than the heart of the black continent. The landscape reminds me of that along our great lakes. Much of the ground is cleared, and there are clumps of dark green woods here and there. In one place there is what seems to be a series of fields where the wheat or corn has just been harvested, the shocks standing out among the yellow stubble. These shocks dot the country as regularly as though they were so many shocks of grain, and as we passed them I had a discussion with a fellow-traveler as to whether they might be wheat or corn. I bet upon the wheat and my friend bet upon corn. We left the question to the captain, who brought out his glass and showed us that what we thought were shocks of grain were really mounds of yellow clay, the homes of white ants.



UGANDA ANTI-HILL



BOAT IN WHICH STANLEY NAVIGATED LAKE VICTORIA. IT WAS IN SECTIONS

## GRADUAL DECAY OF FRANCE

Economic Reasons, Seclusion of the Aristocracy, and Decline of Once Universal French Tongue.

IT IS now admitted on all hands that the relative decrease of the French population is calculated to change very sensibly what used to be known as the balance of power. Positive decrease there is none as yet, seeing that the births are still in excess of the deaths, but the difference between the two is becoming insignificant, and the population manifests a uniform tendency to decrease.

For example, in the year 1906 the number of persons born was greater than the total of those who died by 24,651. But in Germany the balance to the good was no less than 200,000. In Austria and Great Britain the gain was 500,000, and in Russia it amounted to 2,000,000. France's increase is thus seen to be very slender as compared with that of her neighbors, and to make matters worse, it is likely to become smaller still. It is difficult to avoid the cheerless conclusion, if we bear in mind that the average annual excess of births over deaths during the past ten years has amounted to 55,654. Consequently, last year the rate of increase was less than that average by over 100 per cent. Under these circumstances, the unemotional statistician, appealing to inexorable economic and other laws, foretells for the near future an excess of deaths over births, and the beginning of the end of a nation which has played a prominent part in the history of the world.

There would, perhaps, be some grounds for hope if the death-rate were abnormally great and left a margin, part of which might be dint of precautionary measures be reclaimed. But, unhappily, such is not the fact. If it were, the number of new-born children who swelled the columns of mortality would be abnormally great. Russia is a striking example. There the number of infants who die during the first couple of years is appalling, but by the time the births show a falling-off, sanitary science will be in a position to keep down the percentage of infant death. But latter-day France has no such source to draw upon. Infant mortality on the other side of the Channel is already reduced to a minimum, and is relatively less than in other countries.

Neither can French patriots set down the low birth-rate as a result of the small number of marriages, and entertain a reasonable hope of seeing that defect gradually remedied. The marriages are not abnormally few, and they have been increasing of late. Last year the number of matrimonial unions was uncommonly great; in fact, they not only exceeded the average, but were not surpassed by the totals recorded during any one year since

1871. Still, from this quarter there might perhaps be some room for improvement, when we reflect that most of the couples are described as no longer young, and their marriages as marriages of reason. That state of things is capable of betterment, but how, and by whom? Three is the average number of children to a marriage in France. The fourth child is what the nation wants, and is likely to want in vain, because the cause of its absence is economic, and among individuals egotism is stronger than patriotism.

French people are heavily taxed, not only by the state, but also by the city or town, and the taxes are so distributed that they fall heaviest on large families. Children are thus forcedly included in the category of luxuries which only the well-to-do are willing or able to pay for. The house-tax, for instance, makes no allowance for a numerous progeny, so that the father of a large family who needs a more spacious dwelling is taxed more heavily than his neighbor who has but one or two children to lodge. The incidence of many other indirect taxes tends in the same direction, and compels people who are wont to count up in advance the cost of living with the accuracy of a bookkeeper, leaving nothing for the indulgence of expensive luxury. The results are visible to all. The historian may recount the story of France's decay without a word of regret, but patriotic Frenchmen are drawn largely to their country's cause, remember the vast sums expended by the state in improving the breed and keeping up the various industries, and might ask themselves whether perpetuation of the race of men that gave St. Bernard, Montaigne, Moliere and Victor Hugo to the world is not worth similar solicitude and equal sacrifices. The money that goes to the encouragement of horse-breeding, cattle-breeding and pisciculture is drawn largely from the pockets of those courageous individuals who are not afraid of a large family. For they are the carry-overs of the financial fabric of the Third Republic, which has forgotten the inner meaning of the words: "Are ye not of more value than many sparrows?"

The budget in France is enormous, and, unlike the population, it is not stagnant. For 1908 the estimates are not far removed from four milliards of francs, or say \$160,000,000. And the chances that expenditure will be cut down in the near future are as slender as the chances that the birth rate will go up. The reason is that in the latter case the taxpayers refuse to provide for children, and in the former case they are eager to make ample provision for them-

selves, when they are old and unable to work. Old age pensions, relief for maimed workmen and similar measures of assistance for the living will swallow up vast sums, which it will tax the industry of finance ministers to mobilize. It is worth noting that a commission was appointed, under the Waldeck-Rousseau Cabinet, to investigate the whole subject of the decrease of the population, and to concert measures by which it might be stayed. All aspects of the subject were studied closely, and voluminous materials gathered together which enabled the members of the commission to make a number of practical suggestions, with a view to mitigate the evil. What will strike outsiders as amazing is the circumstance that the labors of this commission have not been read by the people's representatives, because the republic was unable to afford the money necessary for printing them. No funds to print materials of this importance can be found in a land which has a budget of nearly four thousand million francs.

After this it is not surprising to learn that the cultural influence of France, who 100 years ago occupied the first place among nations, is rapidly diminishing. Take the French tongue as an illustration. Formerly one-third of the civilized peoples of the world expressed their thoughts in the language of Voltaire and Rousseau. Today only 20,000,000 look upon French as their native tongue, and of these a considerable percentage are Belgians, Swiss, Canadians, Creoles, English and even German, which is spoken by 115,000,000. Leaves France far behind.

It must be gall and wormwood to patriotic Frenchmen to reflect that part of the overflow population of Germany, as well as of Italy and Spain, finds a refuge in France, occupying there the places that ought of right to belong to the offspring of French parents. The seaboard of the Mediterranean is slowly becoming defranchised. Already Algeria is more Italian-Spanish than French. Linguistic from Nimes to Perpignan, is invaded by Spaniards from Catalonia. Italians have found a home in the country between Marseilles and Vintimille, while the winter resorts of the Cote d'Azur are the haunts of flaxen-haired Teutons. The French must console themselves as best they may with the old-age pensions and man Nimes it is not surprising to learn that the cultural influence of France, who 100 years ago occupied the first place among nations, is rapidly diminishing. Take the French tongue as an illustration. Formerly one-third of the civilized peoples of the world expressed their thoughts in the language of Voltaire and Rousseau. Today only 20,000,000 look upon French as their native tongue, and of these a considerable percentage are Belgians, Swiss, Canadians, Creoles, English and even German, which is spoken by 115,000,000. Leaves France far behind.

The paper caps used on milk bottles are made in the rate of 200,000 a day, and one operates five machines.