

PEOPLE WHO DRESS IN GRASS

FRANK G. CARPENTER WRITES OF THE BAZIBAS WHO DWELL ON THE SHORES OF VICTORIA NYANZA



THIS GIRL SOLD HER BAZIBA DRESS FOR 16 CENTS

THE GIRL'S HAVE FRINGES OF GRASS ABOUT THEIR WAISTS

BY FRANK G. CARPENTER.
BUKOKA, German East Africa.—I have just made a big bargain in clothes. I purchased the wardrobe of a girl 18, and have it packed away in my trunk. The sale was made in the midst of a crowd, and the price for the whole was equal to just 16 cents of our money. The coinage was in cowry shells, about as big as my thumb nail, and I had to pay 500 of these for the costume. The dress had all the swish of a silk petticoat; and it rustled, as the young lady walked along with me to the town of Bukoka, when my silver money was changed into shells.

Among the Bazibas.
This maiden was a Baziba, and a very good-looking type of the people who inhabit this part of German East Africa. I took her out of the crowd in which she stood, and, before she delivered the goods, had a photograph made. She stood just about four feet in height, and was as straight as an arrow. Her dress began above her neck. The dress was made of the long fibers of the raphia palm, and it looked for all the world like so much timothy hay tied on by a string. There were so many strands of the fiber that they hid all of her person below the waist and they swayed this way and that as she walked.

I was in company with Archdeacon Walker, the famous Uganda missionary, and it was through him, as an interpreter, that she made the trade. When I pointed to her dress and held up the silver coin her eyes brightened, and when the archdeacon told her that I was willing to pay cash she gladly assented. She borrowed a piece of red calico about the size of a dinner napkin, which one of her sisters was wearing as a shawl, and losing this fiber skirt a little at the waist she slipped in the napkin and wrapped it around her person. It was long enough to fall to the middle of her thighs, and she fastened it over the left hip with a thorn. She then took off her skirt of long fringe and handed it to six or eight of them on together to the village to change our money to shells. On the way there, the archdeacon talked with the girl. He told me she was treating with excitement and delight at her bargain, and ventured she had never made as much as 4 cents a day in her life, and probably not over 1. Here she was selling her old skirt for 100 shells, equal to six or eight days of hard work. When I gave her the shells she trotted off laughing and then thanked us again and again for my great generosity. In the whole transaction she displayed not the slightest timidity, and at the close, although almost nude, was not ashamed.

Clothing of Grass.
These Bazibas are all clad in grass clothing. The men have grass or fiber cloaks which they wear around their shoulders. Some have skirts of grass fastened to a ring at the top through which the neck goes, and the unmarried girls have little fringes of grass or raphia fiber, not over eight inches long, which they wear around their waists. Outside this the girl may have a bracelet or two and some anklets of wire, but otherwise she is bare.

The matter of nudity, however, is entirely governed by custom. On the other side of Lake Victoria, among the Kavirondo, I saw thousands who go naked from one year's end to the other, and who in their manners are just as decent and quite as modest as our people at home. In Uganda, whence I came here, the women are clad from their chests to their feet in robes of black cloth and it is impolite for a man to lift up his gown above the middle of the calf. Nevertheless, the Baganda are said to be much less virtuous than the waker Kavirondo, and I venture they will not rank higher in that respect than these grass-clad Bazibas.

Death for Infidelity.
Indeed, of all the inhabitants around Lake Victoria these people are about the most rigid in regard to such matters, and offenses against the marriage tie are punished severely. The Baziba man and woman who attempt to live together without being married take their lives in their hands. They are liable to be tied hand and foot and thrown into the lake; and if they dwell far off in the country they are carried to the nearest swamp and buried alive under the flags. Marriages take place on about the same conditions as in other parts of Africa, the girls being sold by their parents. Just now the usual price for a bride is 10,000 cowry shells, or a little over three dollars. This is for a fat, good-looking maiden of 13 or so. The price from there on falls according to age, and a full-grown woman or widow often brings less than \$1.50.

now am. It lies in German East Africa just below Uganda on the western shore of Lake Victoria. It is bounded on the east by the lake, and it includes a part of the Kagera River, which many believe to be the source of the Nile. That river rises in the highlands not far from Lake Tanganyika, and flows in a winding way through German East Africa, emptying into Lake Victoria almost on the boundary between the two countries. Commissioner Tompkins of Entebbe tells me that the river is quite wide at its mouth, and that it can be navigated for about 70 miles, passed this river on my way to Bukoka.

We left Entebbe, the British capital of Uganda, at 4 A. M. and were all day long steaming on the western shore of Lake Victoria. Our first course was through the Sesse Islands, about the largest archipelago in the lake. They are beautifully wooded on the shores, with grass lands higher up. They were formerly well populated, but they are now almost deserted, on account of the sleeping sickness, and the white fly, the tsetse fly, which infests their shores.

Bukoka.
Bukoka is the northernmost station in German East Africa. It is beautifully situated, lying on a moon-shaped bay backed by low hills. At the south are grassy-green bluffs ending in palisades of granite, which rise straight up from the water to a height of 200 feet. Right under these bluffs is the landing place, and it was a little outside them that the steamship Winiwred came to anchor. We were carried to shore in native canoes of wonderful workmanship. Each boat was about 30 feet long, three feet wide and two feet deep. It had a keel made of the trunk of a tree and the sides were of bent boards about a fourth of an inch thick and one foot in width, rounded almost the full length of the boat. The boards were fastened together with a keel of fiber or bark and the whole was made watertight. There are also larger boats, some even 50 feet long, which are used for navigating the lake. They are made the same way.

Some stepped out on the shore under the bluffs and walked perhaps a three-quarter of a mile through the banana groves about the bay to the opposite end of the harbor. Here is the headquarters of the German government, consisting of a fort, a barracks, and the home of the commander. The fort is made of brick, plastered on the outside, and roofed. Native soldiers guarded the gates, but we were able to enter the fort. The enclosure which contains the barracks and other buildings.

A Call Upon the Commandant.
The soldiers at the gates were not especially friendly, and it seemed to me that the officers within did not want to meet strangers. Archdeacon Walker was with me, and through his knowledge of the native language we were able to talk to the guards and make our way. The first soldiers we met told us that the commandant was asleep and that we could not see him until he had finished his afternoon nap. We then started away, but were called back by another soldier, who told us that his highness had just awakened and would probably be out presently. This man did not ask us into the house, so we stood there and waited until the Governor might appear. In the course of 15 minutes he did so, and after that we were very well treated. The name of the Governor is Baron Captain von Stuman. He is a short, fat, little man with blonde hair. He was dressed in white duck, but nevertheless looked exceedingly warm. He took us into the house and we chatted together for some time about his country and people. He told me that the trade about Lake Victoria is rapidly growing, and that a large part of the goatskins and hides, which form one of the principal exports, goes to the United States. He says there is an increasing demand for American cotton goods and advises our country to push them. He also gave the opinion that Germany in East Africa was beginning to prosper and that it would eventually be a well-paying colony.

Shortly after this we left the Governor's office and strolled into the town of Bukoka to look at the stores and the market. These are right near the fort, the village proper being some distance away. The chief business street consists of a dozen or more little booths, each occupied by a Hindoo merchant, who sits or stands in it, surrounded by his goods. The black, grass-clad customers remain outside the store and make their purchases by means of cowry shells. The chief things sold are colored and uncolored cottons, the favorite as I have said, being American sheetings. Another popular article of merchandise is wire, of copper, iron and brass. This is used by the natives as jewelry, and it is almost as valuable as gold and silver are in our country. The wire is brought here in great kegs, and coils of it are hung up in front of the stores. It is of all the heights of my wrist, the size of a human hair to the diameter of one's little finger. The thicker wire is hammered out into armlets, anklets and collars, and the finer is woven and plaited into similar ornaments. Some of the wire jewelry is heavy, and a very common anklet worn by the women looks as though it might have been torn from our wren wire-fences and twisted together.



BAZIBA MEN THE MAN WITH THE PIPE IS DRESSED IN GRASS CLAD THE OTHER IN RIBBON OF THE RAPHIA PALM

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Shells Used as Money.
The cowry shell is the chief currency of this part of Africa, and I understand it is in common throughout the regions about the Lake Tanganyika and the Congo Valley. The shells are brought here from the coast of India and are exchanged for rupees at the rate of 100 to the rupee. A rupee is worth about 33 cents, and as the shells are put up in strings of 100 each, a string of shells is worth just about 3 cents of our money. Among my recent purchases are two spears at 1500 shells each, a carved milk bowl at 2000 shells, and a native chopping knife which cost 100 shells. These shells are very small, but, when used by the thousand they are clumsy to handle. Indeed, 20,000 of them weigh 70 pounds, and that is all that one man can carry. When I go through the country I shall have to have at least 15 porters to carry every hundred dollars I take with me. Seven dollars' worth is a good load for a man, and 10 cents' worth would weigh about as much as 18 of our silver dollars. This makes commerce difficult, and the Germans are trying to introduce a new coinage based on the Indian rupee. The chief trouble is to make the coin small enough. The present issue includes coins known as hollars, of which 100 go to a rupee, so that one heller is worth one-third of a cent of our money.

In a Baziba Village.
Leaving the market, I visited the village near the fort and then went across the country to see other towns in the interior. The houses are very much like those of the Baganda. At a distance they look like haystacks or straw tents. They are made of poles fastened together at the top, making a framework

of the shape of a cone. This is lined with reeds, which run from the bottom to the top and are fastened together by hands of reeds, which go round and round inside the hut from floor to roof. The outside is thatched, and the thatch comes clear to the ground. The roof is upheld by many poles, which are so arranged that they divide the interior into rooms. One of the huts which I entered had two apartments about three feet wide and six feet long, which were used for sleeping. In the center of the hut was a fire, upon which, in an earthen pot, some food was steaming away. There was neither stove nor chimney, and the smoke filled the hut. It had already turned the walls and roof a deep brown color, so that the whole looked gloomy. I understand that the fire is kept up day and night, as the weather is often damp, and also as new fires are hard to kindle. In many parts of this country matches are comparatively unknown, and fire is gotten by twisting one stick in a hole made in a block of wood until the friction brings a light.

In the Homes of the Chiefs.
In my trip over the country nearly I stopped at a large native town made up of the homes of the chiefs and their retainers. These are occupied by native rulers, who live some distance away, but who are required by the Germans to spend a part of each year at Bukoka. They might be called the court residences of these men, for they come here to have conferences with the Germans as to how to govern their subjects, to pay their taxes and to see that the right amount of government work is supplied by their people.

The town is made up of inclosures surrounded by high fences of upright poles and tightly sewed together by vines. Inside each fence is the establishment of an African nabob and his numerous wives. In going through the village I would not have been able to see the interior of any of these inclosures, for the gates were closed. They are made of poles, mud and elephant grass, and one man may have a large number, including separate apartments for each of his wives. There were not many women about, but such as I saw were clad in grass strings reaching from their waists to their feet and a few had on grass caps of similar strings. The men were mostly young. They were straight, well developed and fine looking, but nearly every one of them was more or less drunk. A feast was evidently going on, and each man had a long calabash filled with banana beer which he was sucking at through two straws made for the purpose. In front of one of the huts a dozen musicians were dancing to music made upon several great drums by men drummers. I was anxious to buy one of these

I WAS ANXIOUS TO BUY ONE OF THESE DRUMS

drums, and I tried to purchase one from a chief. The instrument I picked out

reached above my waist as it stood upon the ground. It was as big around as the

When Matilda Tried to Evade Hiram

"M San Francisco Argonaut.
TILDA," said Elizabeth, glancing over her spectacles from the Daily Chronicle, "Hiram's come."
Matilda, bending over her hemstitching, turned in her chair to get a better light. Her hair, plentiful and prematurely white, hid from her sister the delicate pink that spread across her cheek.
"How do you know?"
"It's in the paper. He arrived yesterday. He's at the Fairmont."
"At the Fairmont," repeated Matilda, with a slight exclamatory comment in her voice.
"Of course," replied Elizabeth. "Hiram's gone up in the world, just as you and I've gone down."
The elder sister turned her paper vigorously, dismissing the subject with the sharp rattle of the sheet. The younger sat quiet, hemstitching at her handkerchief, until the color had retired from her cheeks. Then she rose, went to the window by which Elizabeth was sitting, and opened it. The high fog of morning still hung in the air, but the sun had broken through the trailing veil of night, and shone with a thin warmth on the window-sill. Outside, it shone into the garden, where a tangle of old-fashioned flowers was bordered by narrow paths and bounded by a hedge of wild mallows. The warm, moist air was full of fragrance, and the smell of lavender came strongly in the window.

"Elizabeth," said Matilda, gently, "I don't think it matters which way we've come, as long as we've come here."
"I'll answer," said Matilda.
"At the Fairmont," repeated Matilda, with a slight exclamatory comment in her voice.
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Elizabeth shook her head, pulled down her spectacles, and rose. There were times when she could make nothing of Matilda. She was one of those times. She laid aside the Chronicle and went out without a word. Matilda knew she had gone to the kitchen to calm her feelings by getting lunch.
At table, Elizabeth announced that she was going to wash the Angora. Matilda knew from this that her sister's feelings were still in need of calming. She replied that she herself was going out.
"What's your business?" asked Elizabeth, which came as a consequence of the meal was over, she changed her dress and put on her bonnet. The black strings contrasted with her white hair and gave an effect of restraint which she noted approvingly in the glass.
As she went out the door and through the garden, her heart was beating high, and she rejoiced that Elizabeth was too busy with the reluctant Angora to ask where she was going.

At the theater she found that she would have to sit either in the very front or very rear. She chose the front. For she knew she was changed beyond recognition, and she wanted to see him well.
When he came on she gave such a start, letting her program rattle to the floor, that her neighbors glanced at her concernedly. He was not the black-haired, red-checked youth she had remembered. His cheeks were colorless, his hair was gray, and he had grown old. He, too, had grown old. She plucked up her program and brought herself under control as he began to sing. The first note pierced into her soul. The others followed fitfully in, filling her with such a rapture of delight and woe as bore her quite outside herself.
The round of clapping testified the audience's perception of the baritone's rotundity of tone. But it was not that that gripped her. It was the identity of quality with that she used to hear years ago in New Hampshire, when he took her to prayer-meeting and sang of the same hymnbook by her side. She was thankful that the enthusiasm of her neighbors permitted her to wipe unseen the moisture from beneath her eyes.
As song succeeded song, one emotion succeeded another in her breast. But at the end, as she came away through the storm of applause, her feeling was one of yearning pity. For he was old. Yes, he was old, was in September.
When she reached home, Elizabeth was in the sitting-room, guarding the unhappy but very white Angora. She was glad of the respite, for she realized, all at once, how hard it would be to make Elizabeth understand. She prolonged the changes in her toilet, and hastened to the front door, on the ring of its bell, thankful also for this postponement.
She opened the door for Hiram Bingham. After a minute, during which he stood holding his hat, he asked: "Matilda, aren't you going to ask me in?"
"Of course, Hiram. Come right in. Elizabeth is in the sitting-room."
As he sat on the small chair, talking with her sister, Matilda observed how

large, almost boyish, he appeared. He was older, yes, but there was something about him indubitably boyish. Perhaps it was the same old, finely-shaped head with its firm lift from the shoulders. Suddenly he turned to her.
"Do you know, I came very near not finding you? I telephoned twice this morning."
Matilda said nothing, feeling Elizabeth's eyes.
"The first time didn't matter, because the party told me I had the wrong number. But the second time—"
Matilda managed to emit a faint interrogatory note.
"I got a housemaid who said the Misses Patten were at Coronado."
"Extraordinary!"
"Yes, wasn't it? I must have got another wrong number and the housemaid misunderstood the name. Of course, I supposed you had, and gave you up."
"Then how—?" interrupted Elizabeth.
"But Matilda cut her short."
"I'm so glad you found out you had the wrong number. How have you really been all these years?"
"Well, and you?"
"And neither of you has married."
"You haven't either, have you?"
"No."
In the pause that followed, Elizabeth looked from one to the other through her spectacles. Then she spoke, firm and ineluctable.
"Hiram, I want to know how you found out we were here."
"I saw your address in the telephone book."
"No; I mean how you found out we were not at Coronado."
"I saw Matilda at the theater," Elizabeth stated.
"Matilda," she trumpeted, "at the theater!"
"Oh," snored Elizabeth, "that's nothing uncommon."
Matilda rose and put up the shades.
"It's getting dark," she said. "Hiram, you will stay to dinner."
"I am very happy."
His answer was mechanical. He was looking at Elizabeth.
"Miss Patten, may I ask what you meant by its not being uncommon for Matilda to be at the theater?"
"She goes there regular. Leastwise to the opera. She goes to every operatic manna."
Hiram Bingham turned and looked at "Matilda," he said at last, "set your things, and we'll take a little walk."
Matilda.

"Yes," encouraged Elizabeth, "while I set out the dinner."
Matilda hesitated, standing and looking from one to the other.
"Hiram," she said, "how did you know I was at the theater?"
"I saw you."
"And you knew me?"
"Don't you look like it? Did you suppose I've ever forgot how you used to look when you came to school across the meadow in your bonnet?"
Matilda flushed and glanced at her sister.
"That," she said, going from the room, "was a sunbonnet."
Hiram gazed after her into the darkness of the hall. Then he turned abruptly.
"Miss Patten, do you go with Matilda to opera?"
"Land no!"
"Why does she go?"
"I don't know as she's ever given a reasonable excuse. It's a terrible extravagance."
"How long has she been doing it?"
"Ever since we came to California. If years or more to the other."
"And to think she wouldn't marry me, 20 years ago, because I was set on going to the stage!"
"Do you think it was just California?"
"I don't know; California ain't changed me."
"And to think," he went on, "that I wouldn't give up the stage to marry her! Age changes folks some, too, I guess."
"Age! Now, Hiram, don't you pretend, as Matilda does, to be old. You both are!"
"Hiram," said Matilda in the hall, "I'm ready."
When he had joined her and the front door had closed behind them, Elizabeth adjusted her spectacles and looked out into the garden.
"Land of Goshen!" she exclaimed, "spite of its being September, and the fog a-rolling in, if Matilda ain't gone and put on her Easter hat!"

top as a flour barrel, narrowing to the size of a nail keg at the bottom. It had been hollowed out of a log, and the top and bottom were covered with goat skin, which was laced on with cords of gut. It had evidently been used many years, and its sound was most resonant. I offered the chief 10,000 shells for it, but he politely refused, saying that himself and his ancestors had had that drum a long time, and that he did not know whether he could get another as good. He told me that if he owned another he would give me this! But that, alas, he had only one. Bukoba, German East Africa.