

# STRANGE PEOPLE OF UKWEREWE ISLAND THEY DRESS IN GOATSKINS, AND USE COWBELLS TO KEEP OFF THE DEVIL

THEY DRESS IN GOATSKINS

ON UKEREWEE ISLAND

A GRAVE IN UGANDA

A LADY OF THE SESSE ARCHPELAGO

BY FRANK G. CARPENTIER.

WAY out here in the heart of East Africa, 100 miles below the equator, on the biggest island in Victoria Nyanza, I find an American acting as boss. He is the only white man on the island, and he has surrounded him something like 25,000 natives. He came out to Africa expecting to make a fortune in gold mining and ivory, but the mines did not pay and the elephants were scarce, and so he settled down out here in the wilds. His business is that of a woodcutter, and he has a concession to furnish fuel for the lake steamers. Ukerewe is densely wooded, and this man has a big gang of blacks cutting down trees and carrying the wood to the shore. His home is a double hut away off by itself, and not far from the little wooden pier at which our steamer is lying. It is made of cane and thatch and has only two rooms, with a passage through the center. There are several other huts at the back which are occupied by his servants. The village in which his men live are not far away. This man's name is Henry Seifert. He is about 30 years of age and is well-dressed and good looking. He is very intelligent, but he seems to like his life out here among the savage people. He tells me he is paid so much for every hundred cubic feet of wood he cuts, and that his job is a profitable one. He says that he has had but little trouble with the natives, and as I went about with him over the island I could see that they bowed down to him everywhere.

is about 25,000. The people are blacks, who go almost naked. They wear nothing but goatskins or bits of bark cloth, which are tied over their shoulders and around the waist. Some have a beak-shaped apron, and others wear aprons of whole skins which fall to the knees. The men sometimes pull such aprons around behind them when they sit so that they serve as cushions.

Mr. Seifert calls these natives the Ukerewe. As we went about together among them we were everywhere well treated. The people seemed quiet and allowed me to go into their huts and make photographs. They have pronounced negro features, with thick lips and flat noses. Their hair is woolly where it is left to grow, but in most cases a part of the head is shaved close. Some of the men cut off all the wool excepting a lock on the crown, which they tie up in banana fibers so that it stands like a horn, straight up on the head. Others shave the head in spots. Only a few of the people have jewelry. They are too poor to buy the costly brass and iron wire which are so much worn on the mainland. I saw one woman who had on an ivory bracelet, and a man who wore an anklet composed of a section of ivory tusk hollowed out. Others had bits of bone and glass beads tied to their hair. Nearly all were smeared with grease, and some had hair that had so covered it with oil that the smell was pronounced.

### Wakerewe Villages.

The villages are composed of rude huts made of cane and poles and covered with grass. They have doors at the front so low that one has to stoop to go in. Over some of the doors are iron bells, which are hung there so that an evil spirit coming in will bump his head against the bell and warn the owners and perhaps be scared away. The people are superstitious. They believe in devils of all kinds and witch doctors. They have little idols before which they pray and a part of their religion is a worship of snakes. There are many poisonous reptiles here, but the natives will not kill them nor drive them out of their huts; and they are said to consider death by the bite of a snake a sure passport to heaven.

The island is fringed with banana plantations and dense forests cover its hills. There are many villages along the shores, and I am told that the population all told

along the shores and go from there back into the country. They are sometimes trapped in pitfalls and then harpooned by the natives. Mr. Seifert tells me that there is a herd of eleven elephants in this part of the island, but that the German government has made it a penalty to shoot them and they are not molested.

During our stay here the steamer has taken on a dozen cords or so of Ukerewe wood. This was brought on board by a gang of black natives who carried it on their heads from the place where they were chopping the trees. The distance is, I judge, at least a mile from the landing. Both men and women are engaged in the work, and their wages were about 4 or 5 cents a day. They are all under this American, who is just one foreigner among 25,000 blacks, and notwithstanding this, bosses them all.

I wish I could show you some of these islands about which I have been writing for the last few months. Kavirondo Gulf is separated from the lake by a fringe of islands, and it was at these we stopped on our way out from Port Moresby. In going to the islands we went some time in the Sesse Archipelago as we sailed southward into the lukuluu East Africa. The largest group of islands in Lake Victoria is the Sesse, which belong to Great Britain, and these are the Ukerewe. The islands also British, which lie at the north of the lake, making a series of big stepping stones almost across Napoleon Gulf.

The Ukerewe islands are beautiful. At a distance they might be taken for some of the Thousand Islands of the St. Lawrence. Some of them are covered with palm trees, and others are well wooded. Ukerewe Island, which is the chief of the group, is shaped like an octopus. It has a center about 2000 feet high, and from this great central tentacles branch out into the sea. It is not unlike the Island of Celebes in

shape. This island is fertile, and it has a large population. Its people live in thatched huts, each of which ends in a steeply bound around with grass. The shores are covered with banana plantations, and the houses shine like silver out of the green. The Ukerewe natives are much like the Basogas, who live on the mainland about the source of the Nile, not far away. They dress in bark cloth, and the women often wear only rings of banana leaves, which are tied to a cord about the waist. The men buy their wives with cattle, and every man has many wives as he can afford. When a man dies his wives become the property of his sons. The only exception is the real mother, who is never given to her own son, but often to an uncle or the father's brother.

The women are little more than the servants of their husbands, as is the case with all the natives of the island, and if there is anything of that kind in the family, the girls using the ground.

The Sesse Islands are off the shore of Uganda, the largest of them being only three miles from the mainland. They are governed by the King of Uganda, and have a representation in the lukuluu East Africa. The king of Mengo. The principal chief gets \$1000 a year from the British government.

These islands are the largest and best in the lake. There are 62 of them, of which 42 are inhabited. In the past they have had a large population, but within two or three years has been under the control of Dr. Koch, the famous German diptheria specialist, who came out here to study the sleeping sickness.

At present the Sesse group has some good-sized settlements. The natives are farmers, and they raise bananas,

corn, potatoes and tobacco. Coffee grows wild, and it is said to be good.

The Sesse Islanders are much like the Baganda. Both sexes dress in bark cloth, and the women wrap bark blankets around their bodies under the arms, leaving the shoulders and upper breast bare. Only the babies are allowed to go naked. These people are good fishermen, and they have well made canoes. They manufacture them from trees of soft wood, cutting the logs into boards and then trying the boards together with leather straps and caulking them. Some such boats will hold 100 men. In olden times, it is said that certain kings of the Sesse group had as many as 400 canoes.

Speaking of the missionaries, the Sesse Islanders are to a large extent now Christians. In the past their country was a seat of heathenism, and the home of the famed goddess, Mukasa, who ruled all Victoria Nyanza. This goddess had a temple on the island of Bubembe. Her priests were supposed to own the island, and the descendant of one of them named Gugu is now its proprietor. Gugu has 3500 acres of land, and is rich in bananas.

The Kings of Uganda formerly sent sacrifices to Mukasa. They contributed flocks of sheep and goats, and that in such numbers that when the royal sacrifices were made the blood ran in streams from the gates of the temple down into the lake. Mukasa, the grandfather of the present king of Uganda, once sent 100 slaves, 100 women, 100 cows and 100 goats at one time to this goddess.

### They Eat Dead Men.

It is on the Sesse Islands that the Secret Society of the Bachelis, who have the custom of eating dead human beings, is believed to have its head, and at present all who die there are watched by German traders during my stay at Mengo. A similar custom exists in Uganda, and also along the upper shores of Lake Tanganyika. I met a German trader during my stay at Mengo who had just returned after a long march from Tanganyika. During

this trip he went from Ujiji, at the center of the lake, along the eastern shore to the top and spent some time with the natives. He tells me that the people of the different villages there are closely related, and that when a man dies his family at once sends word to the relatives of the neighboring villages to come and take possession of the body. They do so and then prepare a feast of which the dead departed is the piece de resistance. The body is cut up and roasted over the fire or boiled with bananas in an earthen pot. No one of the village to which the man belonged is allowed to join in the horrible feast, and the family of the dead are not allowed to be present. Such bodies are taken away in the daytime, soon after death, and the procession carrying them is one of four men, who use a sack for the purpose.

These people are called the Manyema and until recently they have accompanied the burial of their chiefs with human sacrifices, ten living women being buried in each grave. The legs of the women were broken at the knees and their arms at the elbows and they were then laid flat in the grave with the dead body of the chief on top of them. After this ten live men whose arms and legs were broken in the same way were placed over the top of the chief, and the grave was then filled up. My authority for this last statement is J. F. Cunningham, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society of London, who for some years was one of the chief British employes in this part of Africa.

My German friend told me that the officials about Lake Tanganyika have been trying to stop the practice of eating the dead, but that the natives are superstitious in regard to it, and that it still goes on.

### The Island of the Dead.

It was shortly after leaving the Sesse Islands that our ship coasted the shores of the Island of the Dead, which lies almost opposite the main island of Bukoba. It is a little rocky mass, covering but a few acres, which rises out of the lake almost straight upward. At the top of the island there are caves which the natives from the mainland use as their burial vaults. They bring the bodies of their dead and lay them away in the caves to rest.

Further back in the country the Bachelis, as these people are called, have their graves in the form of a mound of earth, and they bury their chiefs in an odd way. As to the ordinary people, when they pass away,

they are wrapped in bark cloth and are placed in deep graves, after which a tree is planted over each to mark his resting place. The chiefs are buried, sitting or standing, in holes in the ground. The body is so placed that the head still remains above the surface, the man being buried up to the neck as it were. Sometimes an earthenware pot is placed over the head to protect it, but usually there is no covering of any kind. Sentries are set in the grave night and day for a period of two months. The brother of the dead man comes to the grave once every day to see that the water is properly kept, and that the head does not suffer from the attacks of birds, wild beasts, or even of the domestic animals belonging to the village. At the end of the watching the head is buried and a new chief is elected.

The Graves of the Buvimas. I saw graves everywhere during my travels in Uganda. The people bury the dead in their gardens, and a common place of burial is at the corner or in front of the hut. Sometimes a house is built for the mourning, outside of the family of the deceased. The mourning usually lasts a month and at the end of that time all disperse and go to their homes.

Graves of this kind are usually in the banana bushes and they are often covered with dried grass or banana fibers. The corpse is washed with banana pulp prepared from the stem of the plant and is wrapped up in bark cloth.

The Buvimas Islanders bury their dead in much the same way, and they also erect shelters over them. These are baby huts in which the spirits are supposed to live; they are renewed from time to time when they are repaired. The graves are often marked by planting trees over them.

The Buvimas, among whom I traveled about the lower part of Lake Victoria, bury their dead in cattle hides. The body is wrapped up in the skin of an animal, just killed, and the grave is dug in the wall of a cowshed or yard. The poor men, who have no cattle, and women and boys are often buried in leaves in the same locality. At the same time the meat of the animal is eaten, and the bones are eaten at the wake; and the funeral, if that of a big man, ends in all growling drunk, ever having been known to pass through straws from their gourd stems.

Ukerewe Island, Lake Victoria.

## Facts and Figures About National Conventions

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poised, he has seen not only the tilted but the foot and the dove of peace on most ends of the earth rise and uncover before him. This convention is master of a supreme opportunity; can name the next President of the United States and make sure of his election and peaceful inauguration. It can speed the Nation in a career of grandeur eclipsing all past achievements, and bring only to listen above the din and look beyond the dust of an hour to behold the Republican party advancing to victory with its greatest marshal at its head, and James A. Garfield, in the convention of 1880 at Chicago, in nominating John Sherman, used this language, after eloquently reciting the achievements of the Republican party: "I am about to present a name for your consideration—the name of a man who was the comrade and associate and friend of nearly all those noble dead whose faces look down upon us from these walls tonight; a man who began his career of public service 25 years ago; whose first duty was courageously done in the days of peril on the plains of Kansas, when the first red drops of that bloody shower began to fall, which finally swelled into the deluge of war. He has trodden the perilous heights of public duty, and against all the shafts of malice has borne his breast unharmed. He has stood in the blaze of that fierce light, and beaten against the throne, but the fiercest rays have found no flaw in his armor, no stain on his shield. I do not present him as a better Republican or a better man than thousands of others we honor, but I present him for your deliberate consideration. I nominate John Sherman of Ohio."

that the military rule shall ever be subservient to the civil power. The slightest word of a soldier was proved by the acts of a statesman. With him as our chief, the bloody banner of the Republics will fall from their palmed grasp. The people have breathless on your deliberate. Take heed! Make no mistake! I nominate one who can carry every Southern State, who can carry Pennsylvania, the Independent, Connecticut, New Jersey and New York—the soldier statesman, with a record as stainless as his sword, Winfield Scott Hancock, of Pennsylvania. He addressed the convention before the then Boy Orator of the Platte. Speaking of the Republicans he concluded: "We care not upon what lines the battle is fought. If the soldier is a statesman is good, but we cannot have it till some one helps us, we reply that, instead of having a gold standard because England has, we shall restore bimetallicism and then let the Independent, Connecticut, New Jersey and New York—the soldier statesman, with a record as stainless as his sword, Winfield Scott Hancock, of Pennsylvania. He addressed the convention before the then Boy Orator of the Platte. Speaking of the Republicans he concluded: "We care not upon what lines the battle is fought. If the soldier is a statesman is good, but we cannot have it till some one helps us, we reply that, instead of having a gold standard because England has, we shall restore bimetallicism and then let the Independent, Connecticut, New Jersey and New York—the soldier statesman, with a record as stainless as his sword, Winfield Scott Hancock, of Pennsylvania. He addressed the convention before the then Boy Orator of the Platte. 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