Wild East Africans Who Take Their Morning Tub And Use Tooth Brushes

Noted Woman Traveller Tells of Her Experiences Amongst Natives of Dark Continent.

Swahili, Zulu, Nyanja and Pokomo are languages lying a long way outside the radius of the everyday person's educational curriculum. Miss Alice Werner, author and traveller, Fellow of Newnham, and lecturer, who delivers lectures, illustrated, on "The Language Families of Africa," is perhaps unique in that she possesses a knowledge of all four.

Fascination of Africa

Cambridge was discovered with a grey mist through which myriads of students' eye-glassed faces gleamed white but friendly (Cambridge is companionable), when I passed through it on my way to Newnham Collegewards to see Miss Werner; and troops of returning girl graduates (no longer "sweet" as in Tennysonian days, but alert and thoughtful) passed me in the yellow hansom cabs of Cambridge with their sedan-chair suggestiveness.

When I asked Miss Werner what had first attracted her to the study of African languages, she said that since she was a child the Dark Continent had a curious fascination for her. "My interest was increased when my brother, who the year after came across the Stanley expedition, went out to the Congo in 1886. Some years later I was sent out by Blantyre Ladies' Committee of the Church of Scotland Board of Missions, and stayed out there for three years. When I came back I worked hard at the African languages, for the pure love of them. The idea of teaching came to me when a lady wrote to me that she had been searching everywhere for someone to teach her Zulu, and that she had been recommended to me. My class in King's College commenced in 1901, and was recognized by the University of London in 1910. My pupils have included all kinds of people—University men going out there to take up government posts, missionaries, and even a traveller for Singer's sewing machines who wanted to become eloquent in the language of the East Africans, in order to persuade them of the virtues of his sewing machines."

"But you have been out to Africa again recently?"

"Yes. I got a travelling scholarship of £150 in 1911, and I spent the next two years in research work among the coast tribes of British East Africa. I had all kinds of experiences out there but not a single disagreeable one. I was a guest in a native's house, and was most hospitably treated. Everything was primitive, but delightfully clean. All the members of the household had a bath every morning—not a European bath, of course. They stand bolt upright and pour the water over them. They are diligent users of the tooth-brush also. Looking out of the window in the early morning one sees them going about brushing their teeth in the open air. I found the food very good indeed, and tea is drunk a good deal. The kindness shown by the family I visited, to their servants impressed me very much. A bedridden old retainer who lived in a house in the village had expressed a fervent desire to see the stranger and the mistress at considerable inconvenience to herself took me there."

A good deal of Miss Werner's time was spent among the Gallas, an interesting tribe living some little distance from the coast. The headman of the tribe had invited her there. Their huts are all built in a row facing East, so that when they wake they behold the rising sun. The principal furniture is a bed made of odoriferous herb, over which a cow or calf skin is spread.

Penalties of Chieftainship

"The Gallas have some curious customs," said Miss Werner. "The chiefs are elected by the people, and are fixed on a long time beforehand, chiefly for their courage, strength and eloquence, by the Elders (the Elders are those who have passed through some mysterious initiation ceremony to which no women are admitted). Not everyone covets the honour, for the chief is debarred from many things permitted to the ordinary man. He must never do any work, nor must he kill anything, nor bathe in a river. But to compensate for this life of negation he is invested with magical powers and can kill a snake simply by looking at it."

At the ceremony of initiation a sacred song is sung which is known to none but those taking part in it. Abaree, the head man, recited it to me. "I, not knowing the restrictions regarding it, asked some other member of the tribe to verify one or two of the verses. They were amazed and could not understand how I had heard about it. Abaree came to me afterwards and begged me not to tell them who had given me the information. 'Say you read it in a book,' he begged me."

An Echo From Eden

One of the religious stories universally known by these tribes, bears a curious analogy to the story of the Garden of Eden.

They say that a bird was sent out by Wak (God) to tell the people they would never die and that if they felt themselves getting weak and old they were not to be frightened, for they would slip out of their skins and still be alive and happy. But the bird came across the snake, which was just going to devour a dead animal, and, feeling rather hungry, he said to the snake: "If you will give me some of that I will tell you the news of God." "I don't want to hear it," said the rebellious snake. "But the news concerns you deeply," said the bird and the snake consenting, God's message, which had been entrusted to the bird for man's ears alone, was given to the snake, and man, not knowing better, has kept up the habit of dying, while the bad bird whose African name signifies "The Sheep of God," goes about screeching most piteously, as if in deep misery, like the bird of Æschylus,

As piteous as the ceaseless tale,
Wherewith the brown melodious bird
Doth ever "Itus, Itus" wail
Deep-bowed in sorrow all its little lifetime's day.

The Mother-in-Law's Name ....

Like many civilized occultists the Gallas will not eat eggs. They also have many superstitions regarding names. For instance aman will not mention the name of his mother-in-law, or of any woman who happens to have the same name. He may speak to her so long as he does not address her by name. The Galla who milks a cow would not drink the milk unless he has first handed it to someone else. When I asked Abaloni, a handsome Galla, to allow me to photograph him, he protested. "You have no right to photograph me," he said. "I have given you milk, and you have given me no present." I gave him an old mirror and a tumbler, and he was quite pleased, and allowed me to photograph him.

The Wasani, a tribe who live not far from the Gallas, have some curious customs of their own. One is that before the marriage ceremony a young man must get a certain amount of honey beer for his father-in-law. Often when a young men is asked when he is getting married he will reply that he is waiting "until the flowers come out."

Miss Werner corresponds with many of her African friends in their own language. They send all the news of the neighborhood. Her last letter contains the news that fifty people are in prison for not paying their hut tax of three rupees and that a man had been dragged by the leg out of his hut by a leopard, but his friends had saved him in time.

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NEWS FROM OLD LAND

ENGLAND SCOTLAND IRELAND

THROUGH BEING TRAPPED in a railway oil-tank car, two men, named Jack Lowe, of Queen's street, Eccles, near Manchester, and William Heir, also of Eccles, were overcome by gas recently. Lowe entered the tank, and Heir, when his companion did not return, descended and found him lying unconscious. He attempted to pass Lowe through the inlet at the top, but finding himself being overcome by gas he shouted for help. His cries were heard, and after desperate efforts by members of the Eccles fire brigade, both men were rescued, but not before several of those who entered the tank were also overcome and had to be pulled out.

DOG-TAX DAYS are dogs' black days, for in the first fortnight of the year, when the payment for a new license fell due, many callous owners contrived to lose their pets. Animals were turned out on the streets by scores to starve, to be captured by the police or to be befriended by some humane person or an institution like the Animals' Hospital in Kinnerton street, London, S. W. At the present time nearly sixty dogs are taken every day by the hospital; for some new homes are found; and for those that are old, blind, or diseased, there is a speedy and painless release.

OVERJOYED AT SEEING his mother downstairs for the first time after an illness, a little boy at Newport, Mon., ran to kiss her and in doing so slipped and met with an accident which caused his death. His name was John Basham, aged 5 years. His grandmother at the inquest said that on New Year's Day he ran to his mother and put his arms around her neck to kiss her, but slipped and struck the handle of a saucepan on the fire. The saucepan was overturned and the little boy was scalded on the shoulders and chest. His injuries were fatal.

THE ANNUAL REPORT of the local Chamber of Commerce refers to recent developments at Southampton. The tonnage dealt with, both in the docks and at the town quay, shows an increase over any previous normal year, the period of the South African River trade continues to expand, and further large steamers are being constructed for this route. The tourist traffic during the winter months is meeting with the appreciation of the travelling public.

A TUNNEL SCHEME for the construction of a tramway under the Mersey from the centre of Liverpool to the Cheshire side of the river was brought before the Liverpool City Council recently. The tunnel would be two and a half miles in length and the cost of the undertaking about $15,000,000. A roadway would also be provided for other traffic. The author of the scheme is Mr. C. W. Mallins, the general manager of the corporation tramways.

FOR MANY YEARS PAST a tramway service has been maintained along the sea front at Hastings, worked on the stud system. The tramway has now been condemned by the board of trade, and the town council has been informed that the order to stop the service must take effect forthwith. Recently the Tramway Company sought powers to install the overhead system, but their parliamentary bill was thrown out.

TOPSY-TURVEY DAY at some of the Matlock hydros was celebrated last week. At tea-time the duties of the servants were taken up by visitors, who were allotted their various tasks. The visitor arriving after tea had his luggage handled with neatness and dispatch by another guest in the guise of a hall porter, and was registered and placed at table by an amateur matron.

KNOCKED DOWN by a toboggan, Mr. Henry Cole, of Murray Ville, Derby, was rendered unconscious. He was conveyed to Chesterfield Hospital, where death supervened. Mr. Cole, who was employed in the Midland Railway telegraph superintendent's office, was returning from a funeral, and had remarked just before the accident, "I wonder whose turn it will be next to go."

MYSTERY SURROUNDS the death of Andrew McElroy, aged 56, a working man who was found dead in his cottage at Blochairn, near Glasgow, early the other morning. When walking near the cottage Constable William Coultts was approached by the man's wife, who exclaimed, "This is terrible," and led him into the house. McElroy was lying dead on the kitchen floor with severe wounds about his head. Mrs. McElroy told the constable that about 9:30 the previous night four men whom she did not know carried her husband into the house, placed him on the kitchen floor, and hurriedly left. She then discovered the wounds about his head. She was unable to rouse him, and he died shortly before she called for assistance.

A RECORD YEAR at the Sheriff's Court for what are termed "regular" marriages closed a few days ago. The total was 1,900, 250 more than the previous year. The popularity of this form of marriage is attributed to its cheapness, lack of formality, and the saving of time. The couple appear before the sheriff and swear that they have been residents in Scotland for 21 days. Thereafter the ceremony is concluded by the customary declaration at the district registry. So frequent were the appearances of bridal pairs recently that the business of the ordinary courts was interrupted repeatedly.

THERE IS A BOOM in weddings at the Scotch fishing centres. At Peterhead fifty fisher marriages have been celebrated since the English herring season ended a week or two ago, and 20 more were to take place before the end of the month. Altogether it is computed that during the last fortnight in December 300 weddings took place in the fishing towns and villages on the northeast coast of Scotland. The highly remunerative season is partly responsible for this boom, as both men and women have returned from Yarmouth and Lowestoft with well-filled purses.

FIRE WAS DISCOVERED to have broken out the other morning in a joiner's shop, built of wood, with corrugated iron roof, situated opposite the Victoria Hotel, Portknockie. The fire brigade was called, but the flames had too firm a hold, and the building was gutted. Among the ruins were found the charred remains of a man. The legs were burned off, but the remains were identified as those of Alexander Macrae, an unmarried man of 62, who belonged to Buckie, and who owned the premises.

THREE MONTHS' HARD labor, was the sentence imposed on a laborer the other day by a Berwick magistrate, for setting his dog on a policeman. While Constable Cruickshanks was going his rounds at half-past four o'clock in the morning at Tweedmouth, Frederick Laidlaw, laborer, struck him a violent blow on the head with a stick, knocking him down. Then Laidlaw set his dog on the policeman. Fortunately a workman kept the dog at bay.

AS A LITTLE BOY, three and a half years of age, son of William Prentice, hatter and hosier, Benvue street, Ruchill Park, Glasgow, was travelling with his mother on the railway to Clarkston, he fell from the carriage on to the six-foot way. According to his mother's story he had just touched the handle when the door flew open. He was removed to an infirmary suffering from concussion of the brain.

THE DUNDEE POLICE have made several arrests as the outcome of what has been a reign of terror in the outlying districts of the city. For some time past repeated attacks have been made on unaccompanied ladies and their purses and handbags stolen. In one case a lady was rather roughly handled in her attempt to beat off the three men who tried to snatch her bag.

LOCKJAW FROM A WOUND in the hand caused the death of a young girl, Alice Brady in Dublin, recently. Pat Traynor, a free laborer, was returned for trial on bail, charged with causing her death with a revolver shot. Evidence was given that the accused when arrested stated, "We were attacked, and I fired two shots. I did not intend to hit any one." A doctor stated that the germ of tetanus was exclusively confined to the upper surface of the earth, and he was of the opinion that the bullet must have come in contact with the ground before striking the deceased's hand.

THE BLACK SCAB has appeared among potatoes in County Down, in the Kilkeel district. The affected areas have been put in quarantine, and the movement of all potatoes or tops from the townlands scheduled has been forbidden. Ireland has enjoyed great immunity from this scourge, which is the worst of all potato diseases. At this time the outbreak is particularly disastrous, as with the fine crop of potatoes and a clean bill of health, it was hoped that some special arrangements could be secured for doing a good spring trade with the United States of America.

WHILE A "WAKE" was being held at Doish Ballybofey, curtains took fire from the candles in the room where the corpse reposed and the flames reaching straw that hung from a loft overhead, the house was burnt to the ground The corpse was removed to a neighboring house when the danger became apparent.

THERE BEING NO CRIMINAL CASES for trial at Limerick City Quarter sessions recently, Judge Law-Smith was presented with white gloves by the High Sheriff, Dr. C. McDonnell, J.P. His honor congratulated the high sheriff and the citizens on the continued peaceful state of the borough.

FOUND WANDERING without a coat on the quayside, at Belfast, Thomas Kennedy said he had come from Glasgow in the boat with his little daughter and had lost her. He was charged recently with being drunk and it was stated that no trace of the child could be discovered.

THE CLOGHER VALLEY RAILWAY train ran into and killed a donkey wandering on the rails at Gola, near Brookeborough the other night. The animal was thrown several yards ahead of the train, which pulled up just in time to avoid derailment.

WHEN HELEN'S SIGNAL CROSSED

BY "OLIVE."

It was their first quarrel. Mrs. Newlywed had cried into three lace handkerchiefs, and was weeping silently, huddled up in a small heap in the big morris chair. Her eyes were red and pitifully swollen with tears. No sound disturbed the stillness of the house, save the ticking of the coo-coo clock on the mantel or the ghost of a sob that persisted in wrenching itself from the lips of Mrs. Newlywed.

As for Mr. Newlywed—well, he had smoked four cigars, and had tried vainly to concentrate his attention to the paper, though Mrs. Newlywed noticed, when she peeped from the depths of her lace handkerchief, that the paper was upside down.

The fact he was not reading, was no doubt due to the reason that Mr. Newlywed, commonly known as Billy, was so near the point of laughing out, that he used the paper as a shield, but the manner in which he puffed at his cigar, plainly showed that he was worked up. He hated tears, like all men do, and felt strangely helpless and awkward especially under these circumstances. Inwardly he called himself a brute. But what could he do? In order to relieve the tension, he produced another cigar.

Mrs. Newlywed sat up, and, woman-like fixed her hair. Mr. Newlywed turned another page, and was seized with a violent spell of coughing. He glanced at his wife and something akin to pity flitted over his face. "You're a horrid, mean, old husband, she said brokenly. "You said before we were married that you never would quarrel." By way of consolation Billy volunteered to go for a fresh supply of handkerchiefs, even proffered his, but was refused icily.

"Now, Helen," commenced the man of the house, dropping his paper, "There is no use in making a fuss over a trifle." Mrs. Billy sought another dry spot in the fourth handkerchief. "There you go again, just like a man and blame it all on me." And at this Mr. Newlywed again sought the protection of his paper.

And this is how it all came about. Mr. Newlywed had unexpectedly brought a traveller home for tea, and as usual with young married couples, the course prepared was a small one. On this particular evening, Mrs. Newlywed had planned a surprise which consisted of tomato soup. By careful calculation Mr. Billy managed to serve the three people. It was almost a sample, so small was the quantity, but the absurd part of it was that Mr. Newlywed had the audacity to beg the visitor to have some more.

Mrs. Newlywed looked imploringly at her husband, and in desperation nudged him with her foot, but to her great joy the young man blushed, and stammered, "No, thank you." Mrs. Billy was relieved, but the next moment her relief gave place to amazement, for Mr. Newlywed, in the most cordial and hospitable manner said: "Do have some more." Again the lady of the house found it necessary to use the toe of her slipper, which she did with a vengeance. The remainder of the meal was passed in silence. The visitor became reticent, and barely answered when spoken to. He appeared to feel ill at ease, and avoided his hostess.

After making the excuse that he must catch a train, the traveller departed. Mrs. Newlywed cornered her husband in the hall. "Why on earth, Billy," she asked, "did you press him to have a second serving, when I kept nudging you under the table that there was no more?"

Mr. Newlywed gazed blankly at his pretty little wife. "Why Helen, you never told me," he replied, in some consternation.

"Now Billy you know I kicked your foot repeatedly," and Mrs. Newlywed puckered her brow to show her disapproval.

Then the truth dawned on Mr. Billy. He laughed, and laughed, till the little house echoed with his hearty voice, and managed to stammer out, "I understand now, you kicked the wrong party." Then he beat a hasty retreat, for Mrs. Newlywed's blue eyes snapped, and two bright spots appeared on her cheeks. "Billy you're a wretch," was all she said, for words failed her, and she flung herself down in the big chair.

To Billy the humor of the situation appealed strongly. He remembered how the young man had appeared disconcerted, and the reason of his unceremonious leave-taking was apparent. But Mrs. Newlywed did not see it in the same light.

In vain Mr. Newlywed pleaded, and begged. He even shouldered the blame, and made rash promises. However Mr. Billy has an adorable way of sympathising, and about half an hour later, the little coo-coo clock on the mantel saw Mr. Newlywed sitting in the same morris chair and Mrs. Newlywed's tears had all vanished, while Billy was whispering sweet nothings into somebody's pink ear. But what the coo-coo clock heard, it refused to tell.

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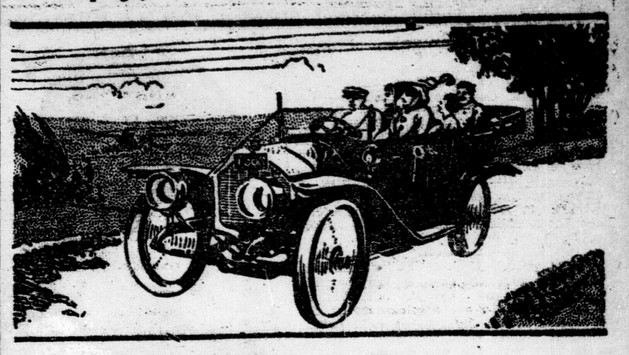

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