

## TURKANA

### II.

THE Turkana is of Nilotic origin, and speaks a language akin to that of the Nilotic Kavirondo on the shores of Lake Victoria Nyanza, or the Anuak on the Bishan Gilo—a tributary of the Pibor. When, and how he came to occupy his present territory no one knows. He is mentioned in the account of Count Teleki's East African travels, also by Major Herbert Austin in his book, in none too complimentary terms. Physically he is a fine specimen of manhood; tall, and well-made, with a broadish, intelligent face; the nose not particularly coarse, and the lips, though thick, not abnormally so, he is a pleasant enough fellow to look at. The men are tall; I should put the average height at about five feet ten, and men standing six feet six inches are quite common. The women are proportionately tall and well developed.

The men affect but little dress. A skin cut shield shape is worn cape-wise suspended from the neck, and covers only the back. I will describe a typical Turkana warrior: You are struck by the grace of his carriage and the independence of his demeanour, as with a light, sure tread that would scarcely crackle a dried twig, he advances from out the bush to meet you. The head that bows to no man, be he black, white or yellow, is crowned with a wonderful coiffure, consisting of his own hair and the hair of his ancestors, so platted and stiffened with mud that it looks exactly like the wig of an old cavalier. The mouth of an old calabash is fitted to the crown of the head to complete this remarkable head-dress, and on state occasions, such as the celebration of a successful raiding foray or cold-blooded murder, ostrich feathers are added.

Your eyes drop from his head to the toes of his feet. They

see a flat iron (or brass) disc worn as a nose ornament; around the neck a string or line of white and coloured beads; suspended to a waist belt of similar beads hang several charms of bone or hard wood; a strip of white cow hide tied tightly round the leg below the knee, and a pair of sandals on his feet. Raise your eyes again to his face and realise the warrior is very naked and unashamed. Until he turns round you will not see the skin worn on the back, and which is his most conspicuous garment.

In his hand he carries a short-bladed spear, with wooden handle terminating in an iron spike. If the edge of the blade be not covered with a neat piece of leather, beware! On his wrist he wears a circular iron bracelet-knife, which looks like a circular saw without teeth, the spindle of which is his wrist. If he is peacefully inclined the edge of this knife is also shielded with a thin strip of hide shaped to fit tightly, but easily removed. On the finger of either hand he may wear an iron ring, to be used like a knuckle-duster when the need arises; but the back of this ring is welded out to form a formidable knife. It is not worn for the purpose of knocking down the adversary, but to kill him. Our warrior carries a narrow, oblong shield of rhinoceros or giraffe hide, and he looks every inch what he professes to be—a good fighting man.

The women—as regards dress—are well described by Major Austin as “decently clad in dressed skins.” These skins are often artistically decorated with coloured beads, and it is interesting to note here that the Turkana—male or female—is very conservative as to the pattern of beads used for ornament. Woe betide the trader who visits Turkana with the wrong pattern of these articles. He has had his trying expensive journey for nothing—no one will do business with him.

The relations between the sexes are similar to those of all pastoral tribes of East Africa, such as the Masai. Free love between the young men and girls is permissible, but once a woman marries she is expected to be faithful to her spouse. Marriage is by purchase: so many cattle, animals, etc., for the wife, but the woman's lot is easier than in most other African

tribes, and she is allowed a great deal of licence. The Turkana, being a pastoral people, cultivate but little, therefore the women have no really heavy work to do. The loads, in the long treks these nomadic people must undertake in search of grazing, are carried on pack donkeys. Camels, of which the tribe possesses many, are not loaded, but are highly prized for food purposes. A female camel gives a very large quantity of good milk, which, by the way, though highly nutritious, produces no cream.

Let us have a peep at a Turkana family under their shelter. It is quite simple as there is no attempt at privacy. As we approach the manyatta, dawn is breaking and a few dogs—the typical pariah breed—herald our approach with dismal barks and yowlings. The brutes look fat and well-fed, and for some extraordinary reason are nearly all castrated. The owner of the manyatta is soon on the scene with shield and spear in hand to investigate; with many grunts and yawns his wife opens her eyes and calls the smaller children, who lie head and tail on the skins spread upon the ground in their shelter. The bigger children sleep in a separate place. Soon the whole family is astir, and the business of the day begins. A small fire is lighted in the open, round which everyone squats to be well smoked; there is no attempt at washing or cleansing the person. By-and-by the milking commences, and, as the older members of the family set about this business, the younger folk amuse themselves by catching the nanny-goats, and surreptitiously squirt the hot milk from the animals' udders straight into their little mouths. Children caught so doing in Turkana are punished by their elders much in the same way as their more civilised brethren caught stealing the sugar in Europe. Milking finished, the family sits round the fire to partake of breakfast, which consists of milk only. While they are doing so let us look at their household belongings. There are one or two earthenware pots used to boil meat, and occasionally matama flour, when it is procurable, which is seldom; a number of wooden vessels, simply, but neatly, made by hollowing out the stout branches of trees; some of these contain fat or butter, and are fitted with tight skin lids, and tiny lugs on to which are twisted thin

strips of hide in lieu of handles. One of these wooden vessels is for making butter. Standing in it now is a wooden implement not unlike a toy anchor; later on in the day the mother will pour in the filthy cream and milk she has managed to save, and will spin the anchor-like tool between the palms of her hands until the butter is formed. I must say the butter is more used for the purpose of greasing the body than for food.

Here is a stool, beautifully made from the strong bough of a tree, cut to the requisite length, with three stumps of branches protruding at the right angles to form legs. A water scoop, made by sawing a pear-shaped calabash in two long ways, makes an excellent ladle with which to fill the water calabashes from the wells, also the thin, bath-like wooden troughs made from the hollowed trunks of trees, from which the stock are watered. These troughs are of various sizes, and exceedingly thin and light. When packed they fit inside one another like a nest of pots. The smaller ones are for the sheep and goats, and should they crack, as they often do, the mother sews the parted edges together with green hide by means of a rough awl.

An axe, or stout chisel, stuck at right angles into a piece of wood; a wooden, cylindrical case or two containing ostrich feathers; a small skin bag full of coloured clay to paint the face; another containing pretty pebbles for cleaning the household utensils; sundry skins and pieces of hides; a rough awl; a coarsely-made knife, with a wooden spoon used to stir the matama porridge when it is made, and a couple of fire-sticks complete the household effects of the family.

The whole can be quickly packed between the four oval structures of lattice, netted with strings of skin, which when laced together to form a W is the donkey pack-saddle used by the Turkana.

Breakfast is over, and the family sets about the business of the day. The elder boys drive the cattle and camels out to graze, and the elder girls the sheep and goats. The watering of these animals in the dry season means a hard day's work, as the water must be lifted from the wells by a girl or young man, who stands at the bottom and hands it to someone

above; but the cattle have been trained to go two days without water, the camels much longer, so watering day only comes about three times a week. The mother busies herself for the remainder of the day preparing skins, bringing fire-wood, hunting for edible berries and beans, or mending the thorn cattle enclosures. The father strolls off to a shady tree and foregathers with a few cronies. By-and-by his small child joins him and begs for a story. Father tells him tales—nearly all of wonderful cattle, or of raiding forays. On his breasts are parallel rows of small black burned spots. "And what are these?" asks the child.

"This," pointing to the first row on his right breast, "is for the killing of a Karamojan warrior in battle. This for the slaying of a small Suk boy-baby; we surprised his father's kraal at early dawn, and I caught his mother with the child on her back, ere she could fly. She begged hard that he should be spared—but I killed him, and threw his body on the fire before I despatched the mother. Observe this row on my left breast, it is hers."

"And this one?" queries the child.

"Oh, that was for a tired porter belonging to a Swahili trading caravan. I found him lying on the veldt, deserted by his comrades and dying of thirst. He begged for water! 'Water! What do you want with water?' said I, as I removed the guard from my spear. 'My brother, you would not kill a poor defenceless man,' he whined, but I stabbed him to the heart."

Tiring of this conversation, the man remembers there is a sick camel at his kraal and suggests a feast. The camel is soon killed, and the people for miles around come up like vultures to the feast. Dancing is carried on during the preparations. A man sings a line or two, while women and men join in the chorus, keeping time to the refrain by jumping high in the air. A man and woman, or two men, face each other with hands on hips, heads held erect, bodies stiff, and continue this jumping and singing for hours. The steps or jumps are varied by one man commencing his leap as his partner is high in the air; the general effect is not ungraceful.

The dancing is over and the cattle are in. A boy attracted

by the singing and dancing during the day, has left his charges, and the brindled cow is missing. Mother scolds; father takes a cane to his offspring, and relentlessly sends him off alone into the jungle. He finds her, and with a stout stick belabours her the whole way home.

The milking is over; the animals are separated, and after much talk, and drinking of milk, with perhaps a little dancing by the children, the family retires to rest.

"My man," says the wife, "our eldest son is a big boy now. I am ashamed of him; he has not yet killed a man or a woman."

"Well, wife," says the father, "it is difficult at present. If a man go raiding into Suk, he stands as much chance of being surprised and killed himself by Government troops, who are much on the alert nowadays, as he does of surprising and killing a Suk man or woman. Of course, some of the young men do crawl up at night to a Government post and successfully stick a spear into a sleeping soldier; but that game is a dangerous one to play! Go to sleep now, and I will think it over."

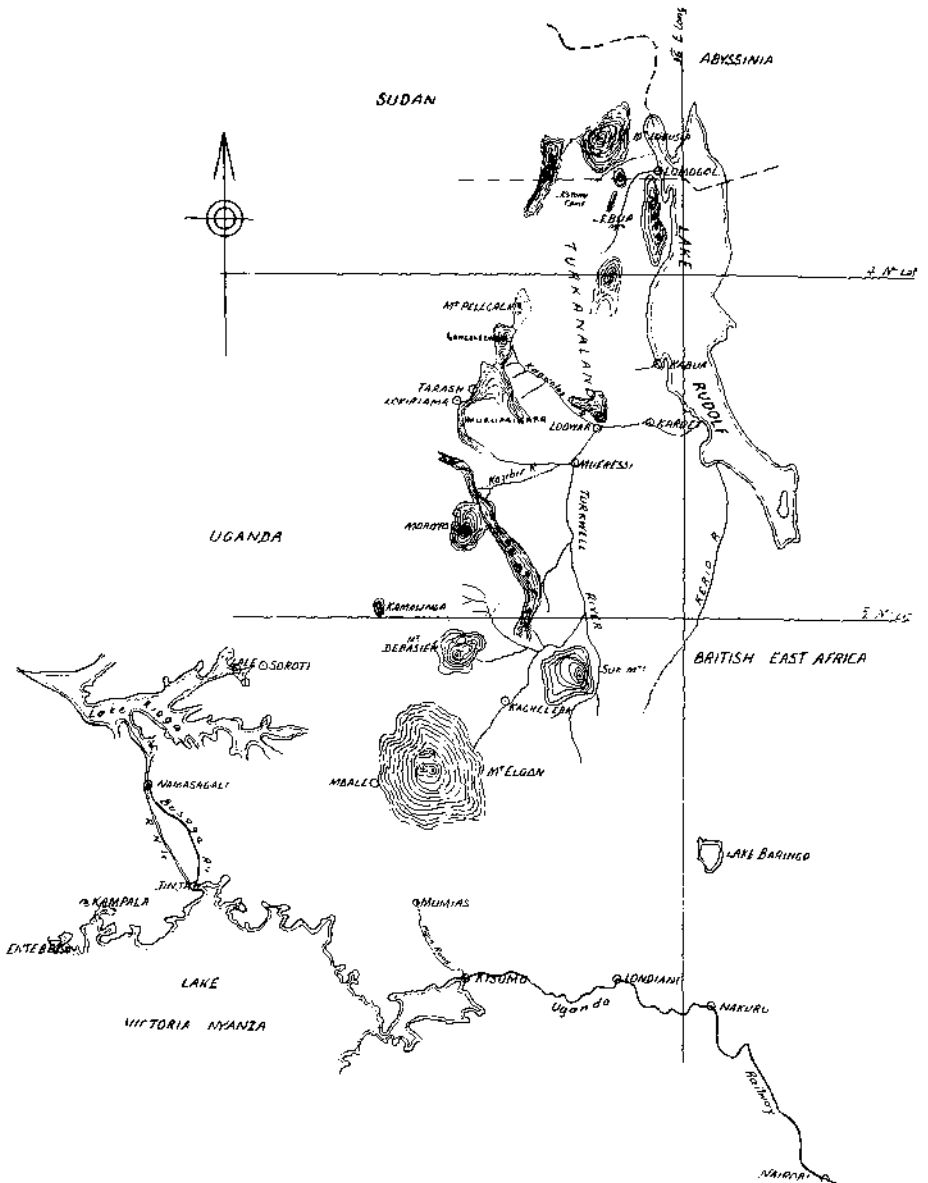
The Turkana is not a person to be admired, and yet, for some inexplicable reason, I must confess to a sneaking admiration for him. The conversations recorded above are not entirely fanciful. I have heard Turkana men speak with great pride of terrible deeds they have committed, which make me, even now, shudder to recollect. Their fierceness, blood-thirstiness, and inherent treachery are easily explained. The Turkana lives on low plains, surrounded by high hills and escarpments leading up to plateaux, on which live warlike tribes. The plains, though fair cattle country, are, for a good many months of the year, practically desert, and can only be held by a tribe inured to hardship. This tribe must be warlike, because its territory is so easily raided from the surrounding heights. Offence, under the circumstances, is the best form of defence; centuries of strife have taught the Turkana that one way to live in peace is to terrorise his neighbours—then they leave him severely alone.

He believes in no hereafter; all the joys of existence are to be found only in life, for to him there is no future. There

is no paradise for the warrior slain in battle, therefore he objects to anything of the sort happening. His ambition is to kill his man at the least risk to himself; and so he becomes treacherous. If he is armed only with a spear, he cannot see any shame attached to a hurried flight before riflemen—neither can I.

During the past four years the Northern Turkana have acquired large numbers of rifles from the Southern Abyssinians. Anyone who has come into contact with Turkana riflemen, takes them very seriously indeed; they are brave men, skilled in battle, and stand modern rifle fire well. But they are a thorn in the side of the East African Government. Given half a chance, they raid south to carry off thousands of head of cattle from the Samburru, Suk, Karamojo, and other tribes, now settled down happily under our administration. Men, women, and little children are mercilessly done to death on these raids; and their prevention calls for the strictest surveillance by the local authorities. The officer who is responsible for the administration of Turkana holds no sinecure. The Turkana look upon him and his régime as "the deep blue sea"; upon the Abyssinian, with whose trading and raiding parties they are well acquainted, as "the devil." They prefer "the devil" because he encourages them in their wild raids, even though he does appropriate a share of the loot.

I am afraid the character I have given the Turkana does not justify the sneaking admiration I have professed for him; I am puzzled to name even one of his virtues. He is extremely loyal to his own tribe; when employed by Government he is liable to play double in preference to doing his duty in bringing tribal brethren to justice. Can one call such a trait virtuous or commendable? I fear not. I cannot at the moment think of one other that might be so classed. However, he is at least cheerful; though of a very low type he is in some ways extremely intelligent. A stout marcher, he thinks nothing of walking fifty or sixty miles in one day; strong as a lion, he will, when he settles down, provide some of the finest material for our native army, so necessary for the preservation of law and order on our wild East African frontier.





## III.

The attached map, sketched roughly but accurately, by Lieut. Gemmell, shows clearly the position of Lake Rudolf. I need therefore waste no time in outlining it. A brother officer described the lake, when travelling up its western side, as one of the most ocean-like lakes in the world. On its shores I have spent some exceedingly happy and interesting days. I believe the Eastern side, which I have not visited, is unattractive in the extreme, and it must be understood that in the course of this article I speak only of its western side. The lake is brackish, caused by deposits of sodium dissolving with the water, which, though most unpleasant to drink, supports human life. The farther south one goes the more unpalatable the water; the farther north the sweeter. This is owing to the fact that it is very shallow north of Saunderson's Gulf, and that the principal feeder on that side, the Omo River, rising in Abyssinia, throws a very large volume of water into the lake. The Omo, and the Turkwell and the Kerio from the south, are the only feeder rivers worthy of the name. The plains to the west are intersected by numerous narrow channels, down which roar many lacs of gallons of water each year; but I have already stated that these streams run only for a few days—sometimes hours—at a time. The waters from the N.E. side of Mt. Elgon, the Suk mountains, and the Southern Abyssinian hills north of Lake Rudolf, it is that really fill the lake, the level of which I know rises and falls in the course of some years—according to the rains and dry season—at least nine feet.

There is no outlet whatever, although at one time I think there must have been, for some of the fish (tiger fish and Nile perch) caught by us in Lake Rudolf, are exactly similar to those inhabiting the waters of the Nile. I deeply regret I have had no opportunity of discovering what fish inhabit Lotikipi, for if they proved to be Nile fish it would perhaps help to clear up this point. Geologists—I am not one—explain that not only Rudolf, which is part of the Rift valley, but the whole of Turkana plains was formed by a succession of faults. This seems feasible, as the Eastern sides of all hills, such as Labur and Lorusia, Lakwanimur,

Pelegach, and others, are steeper and more precipitous than the western sides. On the sides of Labur—between five hundred and one thousand feet above the level of the lake—I have found a stratum of sand, numerous shells, exactly the same as those found on the lake shores. These shells are very delicate and fragile, generally white, either spiral or fan-shaped. There are, however, two stouter varieties: one a blue spiral kind, one to one and a-half inches long, with a blunted end, not unlike the end of a lady's thimble. Take a longish smooth thimble and carve a spiral line round it from top to bottom, paint it blue, and you have a passable model of the shell. The other is the ordinary large mussel shell, lined with mother-of-pearl. In 1907 while travelling through the Anuak country (Abyssinian territory, Sudan side), I came upon a party of Anuak natives sitting on the banks of the Gilo River. They were eating boiled maize meal, and using shells of this kind as spoons; as nearly as I can remember, they were the same species as those found on the shores of Lake Rudolf. It is possible that these shells may have been washed down the rivers, as I have found them in quantities in dry streams, as far as forty miles from the lake. I have never found a live mussel in Turkana or Rudolf.

Rudolf is, I believe, very shallow for its size. It is possible during the dry season to wade out 500 or 600 yards from the shore. Opposite Kobua Camp (about 5,000 yards from the shore) is a narrow island, barely more than a spit of sand. On to this island a party from our camp once succeeded in crossing on a raft, and reported that nowhere was the water more than about 10 feet deep. The island was inhabited by a few very poor Turkana natives, who, although in possession of some cows and goats, subsisted mainly on fish. Their fishing tackle is worthy of description. A piece of thin iron, 6 in. long, about as thick as an arrow shaft, is fitted with one barb. This barb—very exaggerated—was the substitute for a hook. The iron was made fast to a rope, not unlike an ordinary clothes line, on to the other end of which was secured a wooden handle, a little larger and of the same shape as a tailor's reel or bobbin. The iron was so long, it was explained to me, because the larger Nile perch (I saw one weighing 75 lbs.) bite through most lines.

Nile perch, several kinds of barbel (including the red barbel), tiger fish, and a species of carp are the most common fish found in the lake. The carp make most delicious eating, and run up to 5 or 6 lbs. in weight. After storms, during which large breakers beat the shores, I have found dozens of Nile perch washed up on the beach in the course of a few miles ride. Crocodiles are numerous, but, to the best of my knowledge, rarely attack man. My brother officers and I never lost an opportunity of bathing in the lake, and the men were just as keen, but no one was ever molested by these brutes. Hippo are scarce—I believe I saw not more than half a dozen.

Grass of a particularly short coarse nature grows right up to the lake shores, and follows the receding waters in the dry season, so that the brackish water is not inimical to vegetable life. The Labor patrol, which marched up to the shores of Rudolf in 1918, was accompanied by an expert native bird collector, whose specimens were forwarded to Dr. van Someren at Nairobi for classification, etc., and who will doubtless report on the bird life of Turkana. Duck of several varieties were plentiful, also teal, geese, and sand-grouse. One of the compensations of Turkana is the splendid bird-shooting to be had, not only upon the shores of Rudolf but all over the country. Up the water-courses flocks of common guinea-fowl abound, but I have never seen the vulturine. Francolin and spur-fowl are always in evidence, and during certain months quail literally infest the plains.

To return to Rudolf. Travellers have reported Eimolo island to be inhabited by a fisher tribe, who use reed canoes. I have seen none of these people, and Turkana report them to be extinct. This is doubtful. The only canoe I have seen on the lake was a wrecked one south of Lomogol, probably at one time the property of a Marille native. Some of my men saw a Marille dug-out canoe offshore at Lomogol, but the natives did not enter into conversation. The only craft used by Turkana are rough rafts made of the dried trunks of the doom-palm, which is a very common tree on the lake shores from Kobua southwards.

There are few other trees actually on the lake, but firewood can always be procured from half a mile to two miles back.

All trees, right through Turkana, are thorny and of little use for timber, but large stinkwood trees are to be found on the banks of the River Turkwell.

Towards the end of May, 1918, an officer at Lomogol saw large volumes of smoke rising from a spot on the N.E. shore of the lake in Abyssinia. He reported by letter to me on the subject, stating that he believed the smoke was of volcanic origin. Some days later I entered Lomogol, and the smoke was still rising; at night a dull glow could be seen in the sky. Some days later, forty miles south of Lomogol, the smoke by day and the glow by night could still be seen. Some twenty Europeans saw the smoke, and all were of the same opinion regarding its origin, as the officer who first reported the matter to me. I simply state the facts, but do not care to express an opinion on the subject, as we were too far away to be able to come to any definite decision as to the explanation of the phenomenon.

Game is not quite so plentiful in Turkana as in some other parts of Africa, but it is, nevertheless, a good game country. The elephant of late years have been systematically hunted by Abyssinians from Maji or Maggi, an Abyssinian post on the Kibish River. The dotted line showing the Abyssinian border west of Rudolf on the attached map is really the course of the Kibish. Maji is now the headquarters of the old elephant poachers and ivory raiders, who some years ago lived on the Turkwell, and periodically visited Mumias to refit. Between them and the Abyssinians the elephant have been driven back from the Turkana plains and are now very scarce.

A hunting expedition from Maji may consist of 150 rifles or more, and such a party generally works through the shooting season in scattered groups. Their activities are sternly discouraged by the East African and Uganda Governments, and their hunting grounds will soon be closed to them. On the long narrow spit running out into the lake, south of Lomogol, which forms Saunderson's Gulf, are large herds of tope. Why these animals prefer this spot—for they are much more numerous there than other parts—I cannot conceive. It is flat and quite devoid of cover. The common zebra are found

all over the district, as far north at least as Lorusia. Giraffe and rhino prefer the western side of the district, and are never seen on the lake shore. Of other game, Bright's gazelle, lesser and greater kudu, dik-dik, ostrich, and eland are the most common. The best shooting is to be had around Lorusia. Lions, jackals, hunting dogs, hyænas, etc., are as plentiful as in other parts of East Africa. Most of the stone kopjes are infested with baboons and rock rabbits or conies. Near Moroto—which is not in Turkana, but I cannot refrain from mentioning the fact—I once came upon a troop of the red or chestnut coloured monkeys. This is the only occasion on which I have ever seen these animals.

The domestic animals I have already mentioned. The camel is only a recent acquisition by the Turkana tribe, who captured or robbed large numbers of these animals from the Boran tribe. There is no future whatever in the district for the European settler, and owing to the unsettled habits of the tribe, very little trading is done.

The Karamojans on the west, the Taposseh on the north-west, are two tribes closely related to the Turkana tribe, but not on particularly friendly terms with it. Both these tribes, like the Turkana, are superstitious in the extreme, and completely under the power of their witch doctors. The Turkana possess "fighting chiefs," who are really the captains of the witch-doctors, and dare not do anything without first consulting them. The fighting chiefs must not be confused with the chiefs of clans, who have little influence over their young men; these latter participate in raids and forays without consulting the elders of their tribal sections, but return to them for protection when the day of reckoning comes. The lot of a Turkana headman responsible to Government for the behaviour of his clan is an unenviable one, but he is generally an irresponsible double-faced creature and spends few sleepless nights worrying over the peccadilloes of his people. If the worst comes to the worst, he can always pack up and take to the jungle, staying there until the District Commissioner is tired of looking for him.

H. RAYNE.