

Strange Race of People who Live in the Water

PROF. OTTO VON STOCKLAGER, the distinguished Belgian explorer and adventurer, whose recent gift to the museum of his native town, Herentals, attracted much attention in Europe, has announced the discovery of one of the strangest races of mankind—a race of amphibians. In Lake Brasser—which Von Stocklager discovered and named in honor of his distinguished coworker, Frans Brasser—the Belgian discovered a tribe of men, women, and children who live practically all the time in the water, eating and sleeping there. After months of study of this strange race, during which he twice came near being drowned, Von Stocklager managed to learn enough of their queer, patling language to gain a slight insight into the history of the tribe, and, from what he discovered, believes that generation after generation has lived in the cool, soothing waters of the lake.

Lake Brasser is situated in the westward of the Albert Nyanza, about 225 miles in the great forests of the Congo Free State, and perhaps 120 miles northwest of the northern end of Lake Tanganyika. The people of the forests are branches of the Bakomas and a few wandering tribes of pygmies. Part of these, according to the explorer, still eat human flesh, and it was to study these cannibals that the last expedition, which resulted in the discovery of the amphibians, was undertaken.

Finds Land Never Charted.

He left Brussels in April, 1904, with Carl Horix, a young student who had accompanied him on a previous trip, and went up the Congo to Falls station, at Stanley Falls, and, unloading the outfit and employing native bearers and guides, started into the wilderness in a southeasterly direction. The investigations among the tribes of the forest were continued for several months, and the party penetrated a district never before reached by white men, so far as is known. A few Arab traders had touched the country, but the natives were wild and unfriendly to them, and had little to trade, so they were left unmolested.

Nov. 11, 1904, according to Prof. von Stocklager's diary, the party arrived at a lake hitherto unmarked on any maps. It stood in the center of a beautiful valley, the lower end of which was low and marshy, and the upper end surrounded by heavily wooded hills that sloped down to the water's edge. The water of the lake was clear, and of a soft, soothing coolness that was noticed at once. Apparently the outlet at the lower end of the lake is the source of one of the rivers that flow into the Congo—probably, according to the explorer, either the Itira or the Itinda, although the party made no effort to trace the little river beyond a few miles from the lake, the country being marshy and heavily overgrown, and passage being impossible for canoes.

Nearly Shoots Supposed Crocodile.

Camp was built on the southwestern side of the little lake, which is, perhaps, three miles long and nearly two miles wide in the widest part. The native hewers were set to work hewing out a canoe for the exploration of the little lake, and the streams emptying into it. That evening about dusk Horix, who had gone down to the edge of the lake to take a dip, was standing on the bank,

when suddenly he cried out: "Professor, bring a gun, quick!"

One of the carriers hastily grabbed a gun and ran down, thrusting it into Horix's hands. The student threw the gun to his shoulder and started to fire—then stood blankly looking at the water.

"What was it?" asked Prof. von Stocklager, running to the spot.

"I thought it was a crocodile, but it was a man," was the astonishing reply.

"Impossible!" exclaimed the professor. "If it had been a man we should have seen him rise again."

"Nevertheless," insisted Horix, "it had the head and face of a man, and it was not black, but a chalky colored brown one, very much wrinkled."

The native carriers had withdrawn apart, and were discussing something in low tones. The white men saw that they were frightened. After dark that night strange noises were heard in the lake, like a pack of porpoises at play, and above the splashing there came voices—human voices, undoubtedly, yet strange and unnatural, like the sound made by big fish when they are landed and dying; a croaking, hissing, watery sound.

The natives with the explorers were frightened, and wanted to flee at once, but Von Stocklager became more and more interested. He advanced to the edge of the lake, calling aloud and waving a burning piece of wood. As he stood there a long, tentacle-like arm shot out of the water just at his feet and gripped quickly on his leg. There was a struggle, and when Horix reached the scene, carrying a gun, the professor, wet and bedraggled, had succeeded in fighting off his unseen adversary and had scrambled up the bank.

There was no more sleep in the camp until daybreak.

Then the scientist, more determined than ever, proceeded to make a search. Work on the canoe was hurried, and before noon Horix and Von Stocklager, with one native—the only one who would accompany them—launched the boat and started to row eastward, keeping close to shore.

Within ten minutes there was a commotion in the water around them, and the three astonished men, two white and one black, sat in the canoe and saw a circle of human beings closing around their boat. The white men grabbed their guns and prepared to fight, while the huge black bent his paddle driving the canoe through the circle of strange forms.

Suddenly arms shot up out of the water, and in an instant the canoe pitched and rocked under the weight of half a dozen pairs of hands, while a row of odd, shriveled faces peered curiously at the persons in the boat. The black dropped his paddle. Horix grabbed his gun and prepared to beat off the assailants. Prof. von Stocklager restrained him, and, smiling pleasantly, he made signs of friendship to the weird forms around him.

Instantly every face broke into a smile, and a wild

chattering and jabbering arose from the water. Prof. von Stocklager kept smiling and motioning, and in a few minutes one of the human fish dived under the water, and arising an instant later, handed a large fish, still throbbing with life, to the scientist, who took it and, smiling his thanks, placed it in the boat, and, in return, handed out the bread and meat that had been brought along for lunch. The recipient jibbered unintelligibly and passed the food around among the others, and they all tasted, smiled, and then ate ravenously.

Makes Friends of Fish Folk.

That was the beginning of the strange friendship between Von Stocklager and the fish folk. They never seemed to like Horix, and they hated the blacks, but they appeared to have an intense admiration for and trust in the big blond Belgian scientist. Some of them, evidently the head men of the tribe, consented to come ashore and eat with him at the camp.

It was on that day the first good opportunity to examine these queer specimens of humanity was had. The following extract from Von Stocklager's diary describes them:

"They are undoubtedly Ethiopian, but bleached and shriveled from living in the water. The burn of the sun has turned them a reddish brown, which convinces me that the black pigment partially has been destroyed and that their color, which is like chalk showing under or through brown, is from generations of exposure. The hair is bay colored and extremely scarce. Part of the body is covered with heavy scales, probably the result



of some skin disease produced by the water. Their arms, necks, backs, and shoulders are powerfully developed, while the digestive organs are small and apparently weak, the stomach giving a pouched appearance to them. The legs are diminutive, shriveled, and, perhaps, are disappearing generation after generation.

"The eyes are the most peculiar feature. They are glassy, and the lids are hairless. From what I understand they see better under water, at depths of from two to ten feet, than in the open air, where they are blinded by the glare of the sun. Their excursions on land are mainly at night and they remain sleeping in the water in shaded spots during the day, hunting food at night.

Finger Nails Are Fish Spears.

"The nail of the index finger of each hand is long, solid as a bone, round, and rounding to a sharp point. The first finger nail of each hand is sharpened at the end and curved. Evidently it is with these that they capture fish, which form their chief staple of diet.

"These people can stay under water for remarkable lengths of time. I have seen one remain under water thirteen minutes without inconvenience.

"They live really in the water. They sleep floating on the water, eat fish in the raw state, and apparently know nothing of fire or cooking. They have killed all the dangerous fish and reptiles in the lake, and apparently guard the water carefully.

"There were 280—perhaps a few more—members of the tribe, living in two colonies. The children are born on rush or reed mats, floating on the water. We had the good fortune to see a mother with a baby two weeks old floating in the water. The mother was towing the youngster, who seemed to take to the water naturally, although its eyes were scarcely open.

The study of the strange tribe continued for months, Prof. Von Stocklager refusing to leave the lake. He swam with the people of the lake, once being near death by drowning. He discovered that the language of these fish folk consists of about 120 distinct sounds, each with a separate meaning. Ten of these words, he declares, are distinct forms of the Bakoma words. The enunciation of the fish folk is distinct, but odd, the nose being used greatly in making the words, while others are deep chest sounds, uttered explosively, as if expelling water.

All Bow to One Leader.

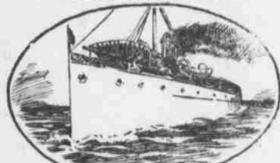
The tribe swims in schools, seeking the cool spots during the heat of the day and the warm outlet during the evening. In conclusion of his first brochure on the subject Prof. von Stocklager says:

"The economic arrangements of the tribe are ideal. One fish man is leader and rules absolutely and with perfect justice. Just enough fish are killed to supply the needs of the tribe, and a great part of the food consists of the tender submerged stocks of a certain water lily. The young suckle the mother to the age of 4 years at least, often nursing on the surface of the water."

From Near and Far.



PANAMA'S NAVY.



The navy of the little republic of Panama consists of one small steam yacht. There is no army.

IN MUNICH.



Few things strike the visitor to a German town more than the juxtaposition of the most modern civilization with the most old-fashioned. You will find a highly developed system of electricity, splendid cars whirling along, and in the same street you will see a farmer with a cart in which are yoked a lean cow and an indifferent horse, the cart itself being clumsy in the extreme. Thus one is not surprised to find in Munich, beautiful and up to date as it is, women being employed as scavengers. Women drive the market carts and women do the street cleaning in some sections of the city.

GERMAN AD.



A German firm advertises its baby carriages by representing the stork putting a baby into the carriage.

DRESSED IN STYLE.



The smallest ponies in the world, Bijou, Prince, and Ideal, which are among the curiosities of the zoological gardens of Paris, are dressed in the latest Paris style for ponies when they go out walking with their groom in autumn weather. They wear little blanket overcoats, made of handsome material, and carefully fitted.

FIRST HANSOM.



It was used in London in 1834.

A LOAD OF BANANAS.



Great ox carts carry bananas from the plantations to the seaports in Honduras.

DIVINITY.



Symbol often used to express divinity.

COWBOYS OF 5,000 YEARS AGO.



From an Egyptian frieze of 3300 B. C.

COSMOPOLITAN AMERICAN PORT.



On the dock at Jolo, Sulu Islands, awaiting the steamer's arrival, American soldiers "brush elbows" here with "John" Chinaman, the Moro Malay, and in the town itself is to be found the merchants from India, the Englishman, German, Spaniard, and representatives from all quarters of the globe.

HARNESS TO MAKE BEAUTY.



This woman is not a hospital patient or an accident victim. She is wearing a harness strap arrangement to reduce double chin and prevent forehead wrinkles.

NO. 13.



Dickens' "Old Curiosity Shop" is No. 13 of the street where it stands near Ludlow's Inn fields. It is now owned by a waste paper merchant, who is enterprising enough to carry on beside his professional trade a business in selling Dickens' souvenirs.

"TO WHAT BASE USES—"



Tusk of mammoth adapted by native Siberian as support for his pot hanger.

BOWL SHAPED BOATS.



These bowl-shaped boats used on the Euphrates are deep round baskets covered with matting. They are propelled by means of a paddle.

COMMERCIALIZED.



The ancient church of St. Laurent at Rouen has become literally commercialized. It is some years since it was deemed safe to use it as a church, and all its chapels and its porches have been rented out as little stores, while its exterior wall spaces have been let to advertisers.

RACE TRACK.



This picture shows an extraordinary race track for cycle and motor cycle in Germany. Its peculiarity is to be found in the fact that it is almost perpendicular.

SOUVENIR.



While the king of Spain was in Paris an attempt was made to assassinate him. The bomb, however, fortunately killed two horses only. The skins of these animals were bought by a well known tanner, were converted into rugs, and were offered to the king of Spain.

CAKE WALK.



Characteristic position of a trained horse while doing a cake walk.