

# Congregation Israel and the Beautiful New Temple It Will Occupy

NE evening in August, 1865, a little group of eleven of the Jewish residents of Omaha, impelled by that devotion to the religion of their forefathers which has been a mark of the Jewish people since time immemorial, met in a private room in the thriving little city and formed the congregation Israel. Next Friday the congregation which was started so unambiguously thirty-nine years ago will dedicate a place of worship, the new Temple Israel, which for architectural beauty is surpassed by no other church building in this city.

The first little band of eleven was composed of men who had come west to build their fortunes and none of them was possessed of large wealth or means very much beyond what was absolutely necessary to provide his daily bread. Yet without the advantages of much money they established the congregation on a firm foundation and struggling through the first years of adversity it has now grown to a membership of 65 and some of the wealthiest and most influential business men of the city are included on its rolls. Besides being the oldest Jewish congregation in Omaha, it also has the distinction of being the largest.

The new temple is not only a thing of beauty, it is an inspiration, especially to those who have regard for its sacredness, but also to the large mass of people to whom its architectural features will appeal as art. An architect after becoming acquainted with the structure, said on viewing it from the outside:

"To come before the new Temple Israel is to come before a presence. It is not one of multitude, it is the one only. It is massive and yet of spirit. Its dome of the air, airy, yet rooted to the world, a sure refuge. The great spread of steps an invitation to come into its gates, not heedlessly, but as one ascending to a 'high place.'"

**Beautiful New Temple.**  
One who fails to feel the spirituality of the edifice lacks some element of the soul. The modern French classic style of architecture in which it is built gives it grace and beauty and at the same time a massive and impressive appearance. The artistic qualities are increased by the buff brick terracotta and Bedford limestone of which its walls are made.

The broad steps leading to the main entrance are indeed an invitation to enter, and once inside the impression of the exterior is intensified. The vestibule into which one enters from the front is handsome with its tiled floor and ornate ceiling. The decorations of the interior are quiet and effective. The walls are light tinted, the windows of stained glass of the highest class.

Two of these will attract immediate attention because of the artistic picture that has been painted in the glass. One of them depicts Moses descending from Mount Sinai bearing the two tablets of stone and the other represents King David in his youth, with his harp. The main arc across the front is a handsome piece of work in selected oak.

The pipe organ, which was installed at an expense of \$2,000 is a work of beauty and its sound qualities are of the best. It fills a space in the front of the auditorium directly over the rostrum.

The seating is arranged on an inclined, balled floor in such a way that every seat commands a view of the rostrum. The acoustics of the auditorium are unusually good for a high domed room and the steam heating and ventilating system of the best.

On the main floor is seating capacity for 433 people and in the gallery for 100 more, not including the space occupied by the choir.

The basement floor contains a Sunday school room 42x60 feet in size. By rolling partitions it can be divided into a number of smaller class rooms. The basement also contains a kitchen, a women's parlor, toilet and the boiler and store rooms. All the incidental appointments of the structure are perfect and of the most modern type. The cost of the temple is \$45,000, including the site, and the architectural plans were made by John Latenser.

**Ups and Downs of Congregation.**  
The early history of the congregation of Israel was full of the ups and downs that go with the pioneer. As has already been indicated the first members possessed more religious zeal and devotion than wealth and even though their meetings were limited to the most important holidays of the Jewish year, the day of Atonement and New Years, it was a continuous struggle to keep the organization together. So far as the records disclose there is but one member of that band now living in Omaha.

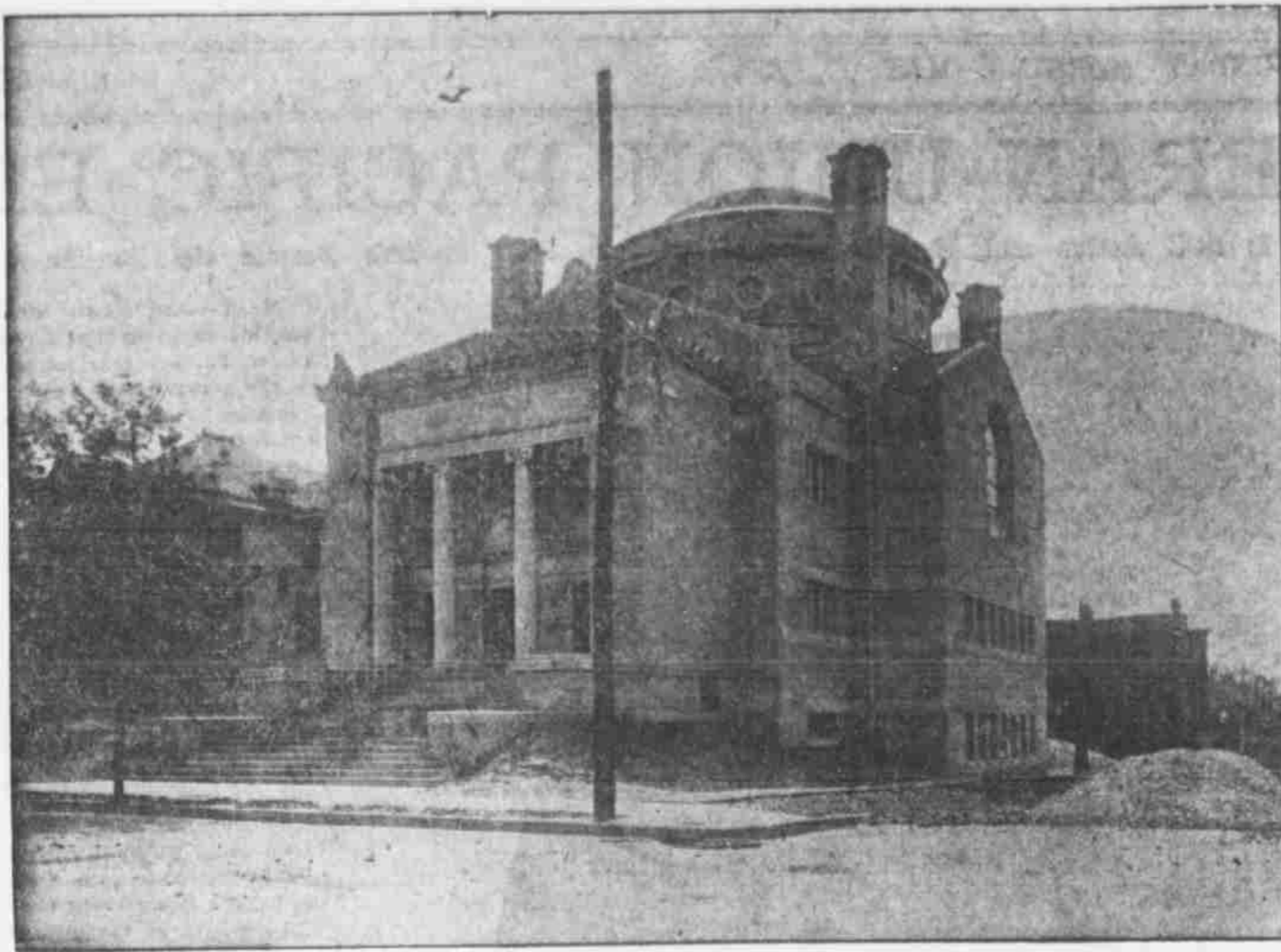
Most of them have passed away and the others have left Omaha. Lewis Brash is one of the faithful and he recalls with the enthusiasm of youth the early struggles he and his companions went through.

There were just eleven in the original organization. They were Isaac M. Frank, E. Gladstone, E. Simon, Max Meyer, S. Lehman, M. Hellman, A. Caino, David Davidson, Morris Elgutter, Lewis Brash and M. Goldsmith. Mr. Frank was the president of the congregation. During the first days when the congregation met in rooms between Tenth and Eleventh streets on the north side of Farnam.

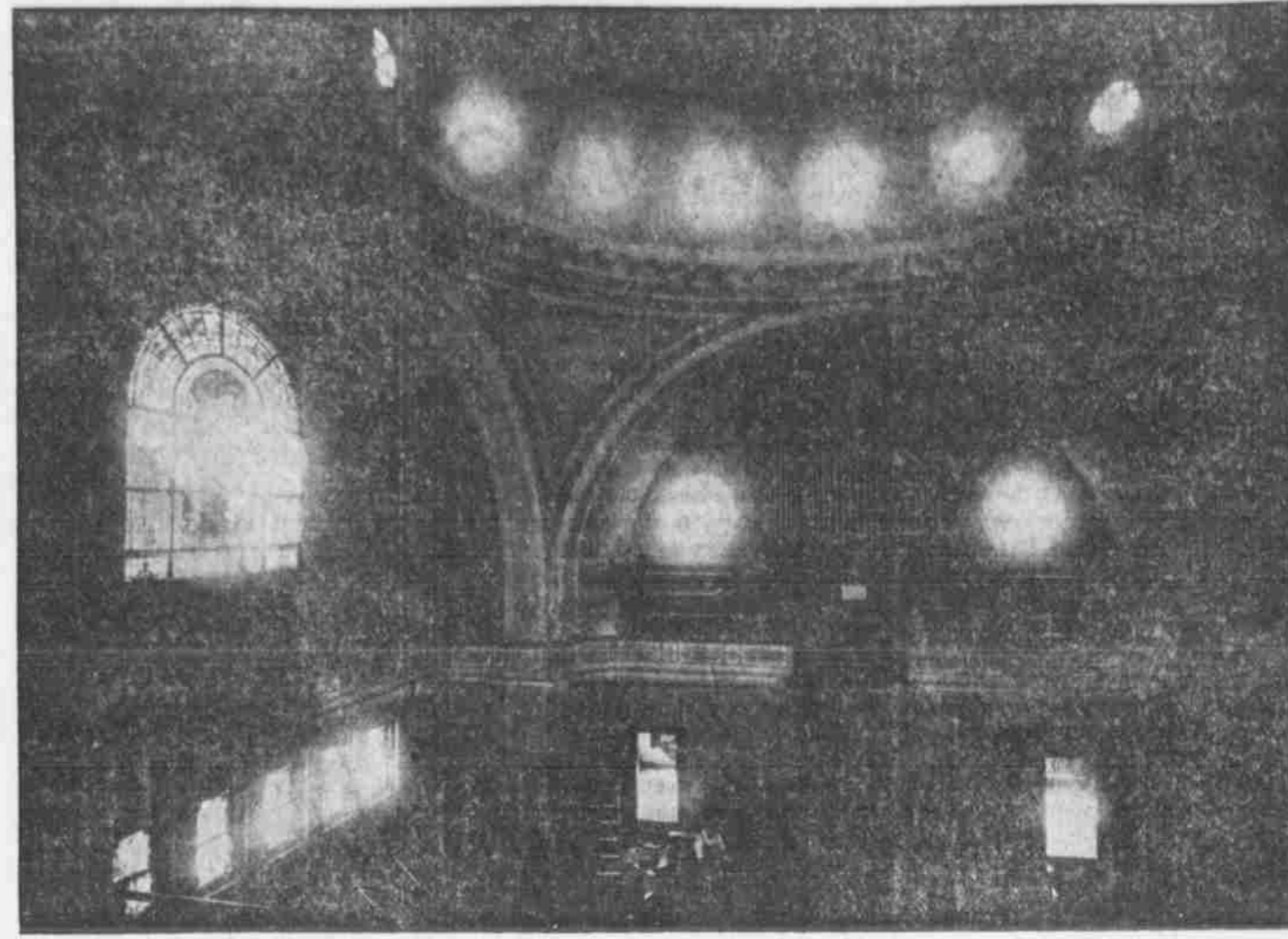
Unable to secure the services of a rabbi, they assembled to celebrate by themselves the important feasts and holidays. At first these meetings came out often than twice or three times a year, but later they became more frequent.

**Burial Ground Association.**  
About the same time the congregation of Israel was formed another society known as the Burial Ground association was organized, the membership of the two being almost identical. The two societies flourished side by side for a year or two and the Burial Ground association had purchased and laid out Pleasant Hill cemetery. Here provision was made for the interment of the members of the congregation in a Jewish cemetery.

But the burden of maintaining the two societies separate was considered too great for the struggling little group of devotees and in a year or two the two were combined. The Burial Ground association deeded its ground to the congregation members, reserving only the right to their cemetery lots.



NEW TEMPLE OF THE CONGREGATION ISRAEL



INTERIOR OF TEMPLE ISRAEL, SHOWING THE GREAT ORGAN

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In the uncertain days of the early organization the meeting place was changed. From the hall on lower Farnam it was moved to Max Meyer's hall at Thirteenth and Farnam, occupied by the Masonic order. This was used for the few meetings then held by consent of the Masons and afterward the place was changed to Sixteenth and Capitol avenue when the Masonic temple was moved there.

**Moving for a Permanent Home.**  
With the passing of years the temple congregation was added to gradually until in 1878 it had grown to the size that the members considered it could take on all the dignities of a permanent corporation. The articles of incorporation setting forth briefly the objects of the corporation were filed with the county clerk November 28, 1873. At that time A. S. Brawn was clerk and Morris Elgutter, B. Gladstone, Max Meyer, Jacob Newman and William Rawitzer were trustees.

It was ten years later before the congregation felt itself able to build a permanent temple. An example of thrift had been set by the trustees several years before the temple became an established fact. Investing a small amount of money in real estate, which at the time it was intended should be used as a site for the prospective temple, the congregation found itself the possessor of a comparatively valuable property, and it sold out, purchasing another site and moving a vacant building on it to provide an income. In the course of time this site was also sold at a profit sufficient to buy the site of the old temple on Harney street and leave a little balance to go into the temple fund.

**Rabbi Stern the First.**  
During the last years of this formative period the congregation had found itself able to support a rabbi. Rabbi Stern was the first to be called, but after a short period of service he was called to a larger field. At his resignation Rabbi Bronson was called, remaining for three years. Then Rabbi William Rosenau was selected in 1889, remaining until 1892. When he left Omaha he was called to one of the prominent congregations in Baltimore, where he has since become

the temple the congregation had prospered both materially and spiritually. Its membership roll had increased to between fifty and sixty, and the members had enjoyed their share of the prosperity which visited Omaha and the west about that time. The temple was planned on a scale considered ample in those days, and when completed was a pride to the congregation and to the city. It proved to be sufficient in size for the congregation for over twenty years. But, naturally enough, the membership roll continued to increase at a rapid rate. In recent years the structure has been found inadequate to the needs of the congregation, both in size and in its appointments. The new temple, which will be dedicated next Friday, will meet the requirements of the organization for years to come.

**Progression in Creed.**  
The Congregation Israel has been of the modern, progressive cult of Judaism. The reformed ritual is used in worship. It has been very fortunate in the rabbis who have been called to minister to the needs of the flock. Among them are some who have attained national prominence in Judaism. The uniform growth of the congregation is an evidence of the high quality of the talent that has been in the lead.

The first rabbi called after the new temple was ready for occupancy was Rabbi Hartford, who served for about a year. At his resignation Rabbi Bronson was called, remaining for three years. Then Rabbi William Rosenau was selected in 1889, remaining until 1892. When he left Omaha he was called to one of the prominent congregations in Baltimore, where he has since become

one of the influential men in the ministry of the Jewish church. When Rabbi Rosenau left here he was succeeded by Rabbi George M. Franklin, who remained six years, leaving here to go to Detroit, where he has attained unusual prominence. He was succeeded in 1898 by Rabbi Abram Simon, a speaker of force and a man of unusual learning. Rabbi Simon went to Washington to a prominent congregation. In 1904, following Rabbi Simon's resignation, Rabbi Frederick Cohn was called by the congregation. He has been the minister since then and has been very successful in his work for the congregation. His profound learning and eloquence has made him unusually influential both in the organization and among the people of other religions and in the affairs of the city.

**Officers of the Congregation.**  
The membership roll at the present time contains the names of men of influence and prominence in social and civic affairs. The officers now are: Samuel Katz, president; Samson Frank, vice president; C. L. Elgutter, secretary; H. Rosenstock, treasurer; Isidor Sommer, Morris Levy, Harry May, Leopold Heiler and Henry Rosenthal, trustees.

The committee which had charge of the building of the new temple consists of Samuel Katz, Nathan Spiesberger, Emil Brandeis, Ferdinand Adler, Louis Kirshbaum, Herman Cohn, C. S. Elgutter and Rabbi Frederick Cohn.

The history of the congregation of Israel is the history of many a religious organization in the growing west. It reflects as few organizations can the ups and downs of life in a developing country. The early existence of the organization was similar in its struggles to the history of all movements battling to gain a foothold in a community where resources are still rather meager and of a more or less temporary and uncertain nature. The early pioneers of the congregation may be considered in the light of the martyrs who worked hard and sacrificed much in order that the faith which their ancestors had lived and died by for thousands of years might become to them and their children a source of inspiration and spiritual uplift. In supporting the simple little congregation of ten or a dozen in 1865 the members had to sacrifice much and that with small prospect of gaining in their time the earthly reward that goes with the knowledge of a concrete end accomplished.

In the latter '90s, when the more or less temporary organization took on a permanent form and became a body corporate it also reflected that period in the growth of the city when business and social conditions began to assume a fixed and certain form. Still later, when the congregation built its first temporal abode and established a permanent place of worship, it reflected the period in the life of the city when permanence and stability was the dominant idea.

In its later and more prosperous days it has again reflected the advancing ideals of the city when freed from the necessity of holding itself down to absolute necessities of existence it gives to the city a structure that adds both the architectural beauty of its buildings and to its spiritual life.

# With the Baziba Inhabitants on the Western Shores of Victoria Nyanza

(Copyright, 1908, by Frank G. Carpenter.)

**B**UKOBA, German East Africa. (Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—I have just made a big bargain in clothes. I purchased the wardrobe of a girl 13 and six and a half years old, in the midst of a crowd and the price for the whole was equal to just 16 cents of our money. The clothing was in cowry shells, about as big as my thumb nail, and I had to pay 200 of these for the costume. The dress had all the usual of a silk bodice, and it rustled as the young woman walked along with me to the town of Bukoba, where my silver money was changed into shella.

**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 high, and was as straight as an arrow. Her dress consisted of the waist and reached to her ankles. Above it she had on only two strings around 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 stayed 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 shirt and, here, she slipped a fiber shirt a little at the waist, she slipped it on 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 me, and we went on together to the village to change our money to shella. On the way there the archdeacon talked with the girl. He told me she was trembling 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 3. Here she was selling her old skirt for 100 shella, equal to six or eight days of hard work. When I gave her the shella she started laughing and then thanked us again and again for my great generosity. In the whole transaction she displayed not the slightest immodesty, 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 shirts 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.

This 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 bark cloth; and it is lupulite for a man to lift up his gown above the middle of the calf. Nevertheless, the Bazibas are said to be much less virtuous than the naked Kavirondo, and I venture they will not rank higher 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 \$2. This is for a fat, good looking maiden of 15 or so. The price from there on falls according to age, and a full grown woman or widow often brings less than \$1.

**In German East Africa.**  
But before I farther let me tell you about this land of the Bazibas, where I now am. It lies in German East Africa just below Uganda, on the western side 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 mountains of the East African highlands, 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 twenty miles. I passed this river on my way to Bukoba.

We left Entebbe, the British capital of Uganda, at 4 a. m. and were all day long steaming off the western shores of Lake Victoria. Our first course was through the Sessa 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 caused by the bite of the tsetse fly, which infests their shores.

After traveling through these islands we went westward along a country road, three or four feet wide and two feet deep. It had a heap made of the trunk of a tree and the sides were of hewn boards about a fourth of an inch thick and one foot in width, running almost the full length of the boat. The boards were sewn together and fastened

to the keel by threads of fiber or bark and the whole was made water tight. There are also larger boats, some even fifty feet long, which are used for navigating the lake. They are made the same way.

We stepped out on the shore under the bluffs and walked perhaps three-quarters 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 pass through into the large inclosure which contains the barracks and other buildings.

The grounds comprise several acres. They are covered with green grass and have also beds of red flowers surrounded by hedges. As we went in we saw chain gangs of blacks bringing dirt to make the flower beds. Each gang consisted of about twenty men chained and padlocked. Every man had a steel collar about his neck and there was a chain which ran from man to man by being attached to these collars, so that the gang made a great grizzling as it walked along. Each had a sheet of corrugated iron on his head, and upon this, about a bushel or so of black earth from the swamps outside the fort. The men were guarded at the front and rear by soldiers, with guns.

**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 with 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 after-dinner 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 fifteen minutes he did so, and after that we were very well treated. The name of the governor is Baron Captain von Stumman. He is a short, fat, little man with a blond beard. 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 goatkins 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 German East Africa was beginning to prosper and that it would eventually be a well paying colony.

**Business Among the Bazibas.**  
Shortly after this we left the governor and strolled out into the town of Bukoba 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 favorites, 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 thicknesses, from 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 woven wire fences and twisted together.

In the market square, near these stores, I saw many black peddlers. They squatted on the ground, with their wares piled about them. Here a woman sold sweet potatoes, there one offered little piles of the entrails of sheep or goats, and farther over were others selling peanuts and white ants. The white ants had been roasted. They were displayed upon bits of banana leaves and were sold at so many shella per pile.

**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 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 1,000 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 150 shella each, a carved milk bowl at 200 shella and a native chopping knife which cost 1,000 shella. These shella are very small, but when used by the thousand they are clumsy to handle. Indeed 20,000 of them weigh seventy pounds, and that is all that one man can carry. When I go through the country I shall have to have at least fifteen 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 sixteen 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 hellers, of which 100 go to a rupee, so that one hell 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 hay-stacks or straw tents. They are made of poles fastened together at the top, making a framework the shape of a cone. This is lined with reeds which run from the bottom to the top and are fastened together by bands 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.

The floor of this hut was well pounded down and the wall inside was plastered with clay to the height of my waist. There was no grass or hay on the floor, as is common in Uganda, and the entrance, which was very low, was by no means so beautifully made.

In my trip over the country nearly 1000

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 Bukoba. 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 lightly sewed together by vines. Inside each fence is the establishment of an African nabob and his numerous wives. In going through the village I wound my way about inclosure after inclosure, through one walled valley into another, and in and out among buildings of poles and mud until my sense of direction was lost and I seemed to be in Rosamond's bower. One of the chiefs was putting up a new establishment and I had a chance to see how the buildings were constructed. 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 capes 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 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 at the 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 shella 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 alas, alas, he had only one.

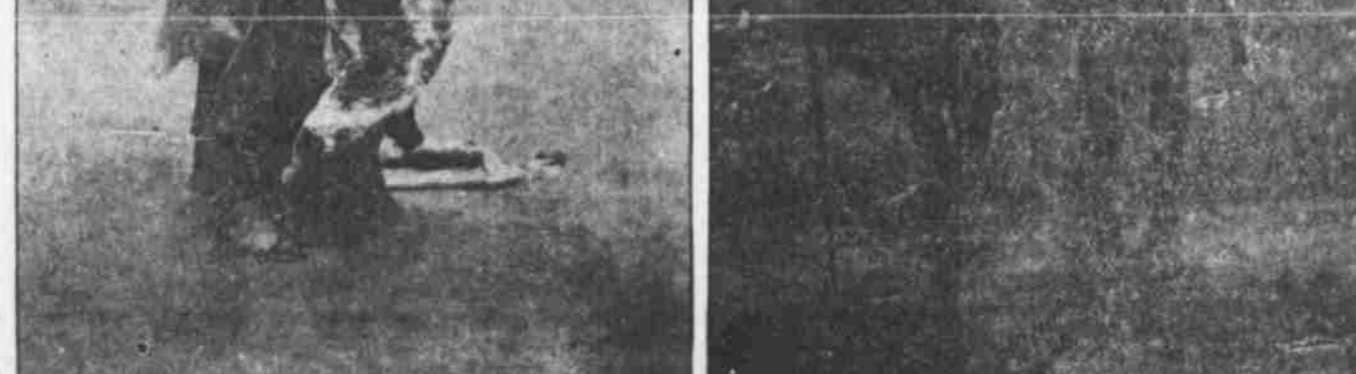
**Prattle of the Youngsters.**  
When 6-year-old Margie was taken to see the new twine she exclaimed: "Oh, mamma, you have been to another bargain sale, haven't you?"

Small Elsie—Grandma, is your teeth good?  
Grandma—No, dear; I haven't any.  
Small Elsie—Then I'll let you hold my candy 'till I come back.

Mamma—Here comes your father. See how cross you've made him. Now, go and tell him you're sorry.  
Tommy—My Pop, I'm sorry you're so cross.  
The boy having found a fulminate cap immediately secured a hammer. "I'll see what that is," he remarked.  
The little sufferer came out of the opera-

tion well, and when the effects of the showman had passed off signaled his mother to approach.  
"She stooped over him tenderly.  
"Mamma," he said feebly, "what was it?"

Sunday School Teacher—The wisest man that ever lived said: "There's nothing new under the sun."  
Small Pupils—Didn't they never have a baby at his house?  
"Is your sister at home, Tommy," asked Mr. "Bumby."  
"I don't know," replied Tommy. "I heard her tellin' Ma she expected a proposal tonight and if you ain't the fellow I guess she ain't at home."



DRUM MR. CARPENTER TRIED TO BUY. NATIVES IN FULL DRESS.