CHAPTER II

Forward as wind or fate chooses—Negro stories—Malakal—Our interpreter—Bahr el Zeraf—The Nuer—Their habits and customs.

We are advancing slowly, a bare kilometre in an hour. Eventually Kosti comes in sight, where we receive our mail.

A strong north wind now sets in and carries us swiftly forward with full sails. In a few hours we should reach the rapids of Abu Zeled. As it is getting dark and this stretch is only navigable by day, we have to anchor. The whole night long the wind blows steadily and before sunrise we are under way again. Three hours later we reach the rocks which the Arabs call *Gebelein*, that is, the two mountains, although there are in reality three. A few years ago this district was still full of game. One could meet with formidable wild boars, several kinds of gazelle and in a thicket not far off leopards. A game reserve was even established here. To-day that is a thing of the past; one cannot get a glimpse of a single gazelle and similarly the wart-hogs, leopards and lions have disappeared and the game reserve has been abolished. I hear the grunt of an isolated hippopotamus, but its knell will also be rung before long, for while I was at Khartoum, information came in to the Game Warden from an inspector that an English engineer on the Upper Nile had demonstrably murdered over two hundred of the defenceless monsters in a single year. He had sold the teeth and hide at a trivial price to native dealers.

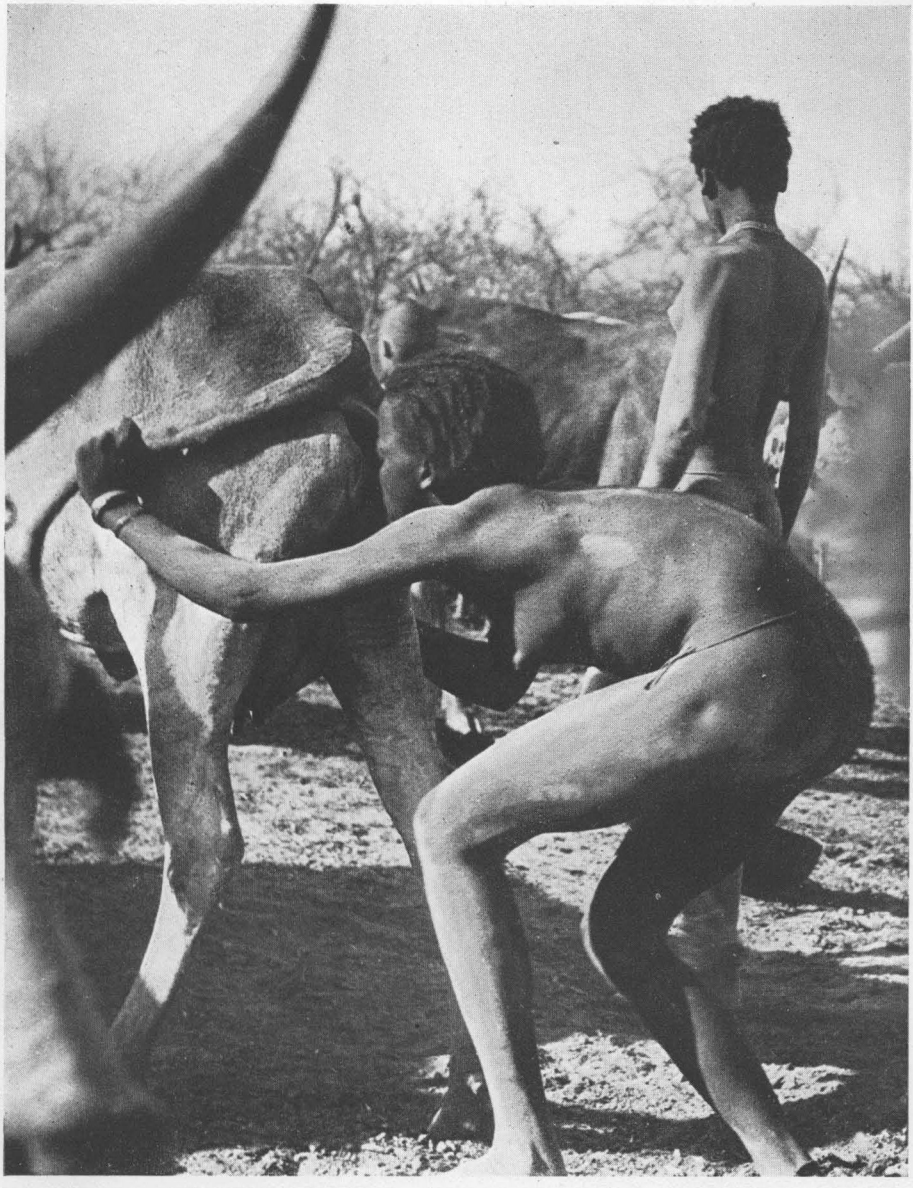
We have long left the last irrigation plant behind us. We advance slowly up-stream and meet the first Shilluk

warriors, who have spread their nets as far as here. The banks of the river are densely overgrown with rushes; thickets of ambach stretch out into the water and kingfishers, the halcyons of the south, have settled on them. A number of *anhinga*, the African darters, are swimming after fish, while from time to time a sea-eagle flies ponderously away. In the evening after sundown I surprise single green-footed moor-hens, which with their long toes run over the water-lilies like spiders.

The sun has set five times since we left Khartoum and we have reached Renk. Renk is the seat of the Dinka administration. The villages of these negroes extend southwards along the east bank of the Nile, while on the west the Bagara tribes breed their cattle. It is here that the country of the Shilluk, Dinka and Nuer begins. These three peoples are easily accessible from the Nile and thus have long been known to Europeans. They have notwithstanding preserved themselves and their character unchanged; their language, their manner of life, their customs are as they were thousands of years ago. In the course of time they have suffered badly at the hands of the Arabs. The Caliph of the Mahdists alone carried away thousands to Omdurman. Most of them died on the way. In one single transport of slaves more than two thousand Shilluk, women and children, lost their lives. Those who survived the fall of the tyrant returned home almost without exception and to-day only a few old women are still to be found at Omdurman. As soon as they reached home they discarded everything Arab along with their clothes and became once more negroes pure and undefiled, and so they have remained. At first the English tried to force their administration upon them. This attempt, however, split on the rock of their totally different mentality. They were left in peace before things came to a clash and at the present time the natives get on famously with the white men, who content themselves with supervision and leave the negroes to be ruled quite inde-

13. African sea-eagle rising. With its dark brown body and snow-white breast it is one of the most beautiful African birds of prey.

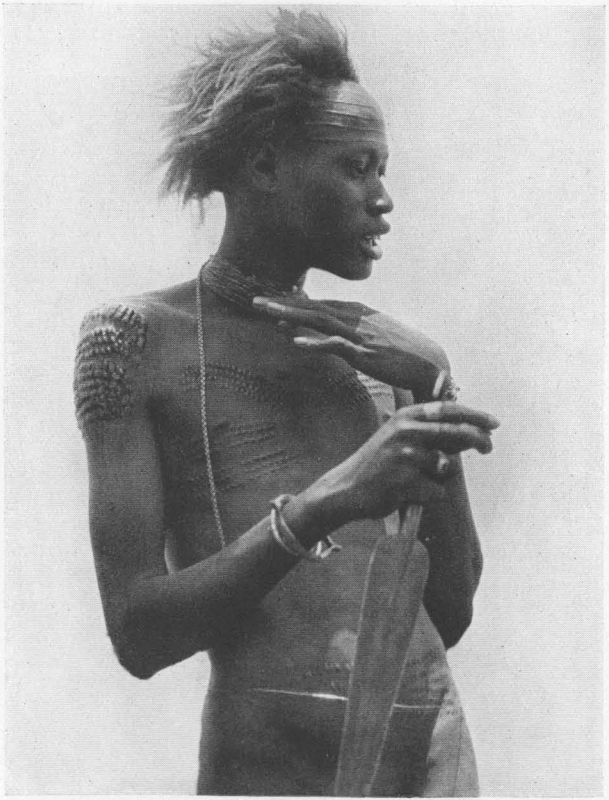
14. Many Nuer girls have almost European features. The short hair is straightened with cow's urine, wood ash and clay and dyed red.



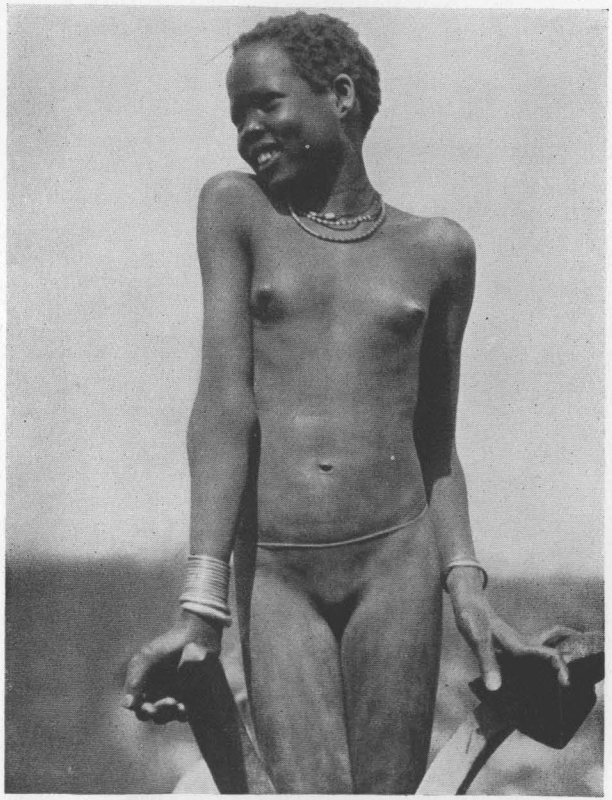
15. The Nuer blow into the anus and vagina of the cows to stimulate them to give milk.

16. Nuer landing-place on the upper reaches of the Bahr el Zeraf. Palm groves extend far into the swamp.

17. Cattle-pen among the Nuer. It is made of thick thorn bushes as a protection against lions and leopards. The cattle spend the night here ; the smoke from fires of half-dry cow's dung keeps the numerous gnats away.



18. Nuer warrior with ornamental scars on the upper arm and chest, and clearly-cut tribal emblem on the forehead.



19. Nuer girl in the local costume.

20. Nuer warriors just off to hunt. Each one carries several spears and a club. Although multitudes of crocodiles make the water unsafe, such dug-outs are loaded till they sink up to the gunwale.

21. Nuer warriors in the swamp. They run over the roots of floating cotton-grass. The body is rubbed with wood ash as a protection against gnats ; where the water has washed the ash away, the black skin comes to light.

pendently by kings and chiefs. One thing alone gives them but little pleasure and therein they entirely resemble Europeans: they have the utmost repugnance to paying taxes.

There are plenty of stories about the early endeavours of the English administration. It must first be understood that the Nuer, among whom the following episode took place, regard cattle-lifting as the most heinous of crimes. A certain man was accused of stealing several head of cattle. The witnesses declared against him and finally he admitted the theft. The official sentenced him to return the booty and to hand over two beasts in addition as a penalty. Thereupon great indignation among the Nuer. "You are an Englishman and want to be just, yet you condemn a man to two punishments for one crime. It is enough that he must return the stolen cattle and that all the trouble he took to steal them was in vain. To take away his own cattle as well is the height of injustice," said the chief.

A Catholic missionary had no better luck with the Shilluk. He was delivering a moving address and had gathered round him a large crowd of natives. He told them how delightful it was to live in Europe, how fertile the land was, how well watered, and a lot more about similar beauties. A young Shilluk warrior then stood up in full war-paint and said, "That isn't true or you white men would stay in that land instead of disturbing us here!" "We don't want to disturb you," said the preacher gently, "we only want to teach you." "Oh, then tell me what you can really do. Can you build a hut?" "No," said the missionary. "Or make a spear?" This was also an unfamiliar art to him. "Well then, can you at least mould pots?" He was forced to disclaim this too. "You see, amongst us even the women can do that and you fancy that you can teach us something!" The missionary defended himself: "Those are all trifles. Look at the steamers on the Nile—that's what we can do." "All right," said the Shilluk, "show us how to do that!"

On another occasion a mission station was awaiting an expedition of the King of Saxony. There was great excitement among the Fathers. They were anxious to have a mosaic floor for their church and hoped that the monarch would present them with one. It was customary for every expedition to give something, according to rank and means, and the station did well by them. Now the fame of this king's piety had preceded him and the missionaries built castles in the air right up to heaven. Meanwhile they made industrious preparations. Children were sent with presents to the Shilluk to induce them this once at least to visit the church. A whole mob of warriors intended to come, so the occasion was awaited with confidence. Some ingenious soul hit on the idea that it would be particularly impressive if innocent children also took part, their necks adorned with an image of the Virgin on a rosary. The plan met with general approval. At length the eagerly awaited day drew near. The guests arrived, were ceremoniously received and the king declared himself willing to attend mass in the church together with the Shilluk. That evening the Fathers distributed to the children pretty little brass crosses on dark chains and everyone went to rest. In the morning they all streamed to church. The children too came from all sides. But the dear little things in their innocence had hung the rosaries, not round their necks, but in negro fashion round their hips, so that the Virgin's image dangled between their legs at the spot which Adam and Eve veiled with fig-leaves.

A good wind is blowing and we must take advantage of it. One peculiarity of Africa strikes us. A fine piece of parkland in a sparsely populated area is often empty of game, while ten to twenty miles away at some place which seems quite unsuitable for them there is any amount. Without the guidance of someone who knows the country well there is not much hope of meeting rare game.

During the night we are wakened by a jolt that knocks the bottles off the shelves. At first I fear that we have run

against a rock. As the ship sails calmly on, I ask the steersman what the cause was. He tells me that a crocodile was surprised on the bank not far from the ship just as it was comfortably getting out to browse. When it saw us in the bright moonlight it took fright, plunged into the water, misjudged the speed of the sailing-boat and in coming up, to its dismay, bumped its head against the keel of the vessel.

We pass Kodok and on the tenth day arrive at Malakal. We make a little tour of the place. A hospital lies not far from the Nile. A few convalescent Dinka are strolling in the garden, and in hospital get-up with shaved heads they look truly extraordinary. In the market-place I meet some highly ornamented young women who are busy shopping. As soon as the first catches sight of me, she waves in unmistakable fashion and casts lascivious glances at me. Even as far as this the Europeans have brought prostitution! The negroes know no such thing. The young people marry early—the man several times if he can afford it—so that this civilised institution is foreign to them. And now we come to a field marked out in white and boasting two goals. On the crossbar of one goal a vulture is sunning himself. An African football field!

Our prime need at the moment is to procure good interpreters, for neither my people nor I understand a word of the local negro idioms. Arabs who assure us that they know the languages offer themselves in large numbers, but they are useless. They can at a pinch make themselves understood by the negroes on such subjects as hunting and trading, but they are quite unable to discuss abstract matters; and that is precisely the point to which I attach special importance, because I want to find out about the government, religion and history of the Nuer, who are difficult people to approach. After considerable search we find what we require, namely, a Nuer, a Dinka and a Shilluk, each of whom has a good knowledge of Arabic as well as his own tongue.

To celebrate our departure a *karama* (feast) has to be held. That means that I buy a sheep, which is then slaughtered according to ritual. The entrails are plaited into pigtails and cooked in that form, while the liver, heart and lights are chopped up, strongly seasoned and eaten raw as a delicacy. It is accompanied, of course, by the daily *kissra* (durra cake) which, eaten with a sharp sauce, is much relished. It is astonishing what quantities the people are able to put away on such occasions.

We resume our journey. Before long we catch sight of some *tukul*, and a number of ambach rafts indicate that Shilluk have settled here. I put in to the shore and try to buy a raft. The owner is away, but his young wife represents him in a very business-like manner. In the end we strike a bargain and I leave, well satisfied with this substitute for a collapsible boat which will come in very handy for fishing and hunting. Not far from the village some Shilluk warriors are gathered round a fire, roasting a gazelle they have killed with their spears. At a burnt-up spot on the bank a family of crowned cranes are looking for food. I am surprised to find young cranes on the 17th of February. It means that the last rainy season must have set in very late. Other observations confirm this assumption. The banks, which by this date should be yellow and largely burnt up, are this year still green and juicy. This offers a poor prospect of meeting elephants in the swamp. They often stand up to their bellies in water, so that there can be no thought of stalking them on foot in the swampy land. The thick elephant grass and the papyrus six yards high, on the other hand, make it impossible to approach in a boat.

A few days later we reach the point where the Bahr el Zeraf flows into the Bahr el Abiad (White Nile). So far the sky has always been heavily clouded by day, the vapour accumulating over the swamps, so that no photography was possible. But now we leave the swamp land, for the Bahr el Zeraf flows across the plain. An odd river! Not more

than thirty paces wide on the average, it is several yards deep. A powerful current prevents weeds from clogging up the surface. The banks are almost bare and afford a view for miles over the open country. One has the impression of sailing along an artificial canal cut through the plain. Game begins to be plentiful. We already see reedbucks and tiang antelopes, and the bones of a giraffe are bleaching in the sun. We also begin to pass Shilluk villages and our interpreter now comes into action. As we approach, the negroes hide in the grass. Boll—that is our Shilluk's name—shouts a few joking words across and good relations are at once established. The people bob up laughing and facetious remarks are bandied to and fro. Boll calls to a woman who is drawing water and a long talk goes on between them as we sail slowly by. It seems to me that Boll's tone has changed, so I ask him if he knows the woman. "How should I not?" he answers. "She's my brother's wife." Then he tells me that he knows this district very well, as he has often hunted hippopotamuses here with his companions. We learn further that Boll was formerly a soldier and served in a Sudan regiment of the Egyptian Army. In 1924, after the mutiny at Khartoum, the English disbanded those troops which seemed to them unreliable and he returned home with several fellow-tribesmen. He is a lively, useful fellow and we were lucky to get hold of him. Tudj, the Nuer, is also serviceable and intelligent. One of his fellow-tribesmen is standing near the river watching us. Completely naked, with long red hair waving wildly in the wind, his appearance has something savage and dangerous about it. Tudj exchanges a brief greeting with him, whereupon he hurries off to the Nuer village with long, prancing strides.

The Nuer are divided into numerous tribes, the most important of which are the Lak, Tiang, Gaweir, Lau and Jekaing. They occupy the land round the rivers Bahr el Zeraf, Sobat and Pibor, eastwards towards the Abyssinian frontier. Other tribes live on the Bahr el Jebel, in the

Bahr el Ghazal Province and north of Lake No. The inaccessibility of the country where these primitive folk live makes any census impossible, but the strength of the whole people is conservatively estimated at over 320,000 souls (70,000 warriors). The Nuer are accordingly one of the largest peoples of the Sudan, and as they are very warlike represent a power factor not to be lightly underrated. Their home is the boundless plain, the steppe, which is often surrounded and interrupted by swamps. The granite rocks that stand out abruptly on the Bahr el Zeraf are the only raised land in the Nuer country. During the rainy season, from June to October, the people live in the villages far away in the interior; during the dry period, from November to May, the warriors wander with their numerous cattle to the banks of the river and put up large thorn enclosures near the drinking-places to protect their herds (Fig. 17). The old folks stay behind in the village with the children. The Nuer cultivate durra, though far too little in proportion to their needs and the fertility of the soil. The small amount of grain is frequently used up in a short time in the form of *merissa* (millet beer), and for the greater part of the year the people depend on fishing, hunting and cattle-breeding. They fish in an extremely primitive way with spear and baskets. Hooks or nets are unknown. The negro throws his spear at random among the reeds and actually catches large fish in this way, so plentiful are they in these waters. Hunting is done by means of snares, traps, spears and also guns, with which the hunters often bag giraffes, hippos and even elephants, besides gazelles and antelopes. During the rainy season they sometimes manage in their boats to catch the sitatunga swamp antelopes which are so rarely caught by European sportsmen in the Sudan. Small dogs like greyhounds, which the negroes with their long legs are able to follow at an incredible pace, are used to chase the game. The man whose spear first wounds the animal keeps the booty and shares the meat with his family and friends. The

negroes often go short of food, but they are masters of the art of fasting. Not infrequently they eat nothing at all for two to four days on a journey without suffering any particular harm.

Unlike the Shilluk, the Nuer recognise no authority. The power of the Sheikhs is small and every warrior's highest law is the principle of *Might is Right.*

The Nuer can tell practically nothing about their origin. The little that is known to students comes from the traditions of the Shilluk and Dinka. According to them, the Nuer, Shilluk, Dinka and Anuak appear to have come originally from the same country. Every Nuer bears the marks of the starving inhabitant of swamp and steppe, exposed to the severest hardships in his fight with a relentless environment. His body is emaciated and covered with scars. Time and distance are nothing to him. He will gladly go 250 miles to steal a cow, trusting to the steppe to provide food for its child. The Nuer are wild and rough in character and opposed to innovation or progress of any kind. They love dances, but their festivities mostly degenerate into violent brawls and several dead are as a rule left on the field. Nowadays the Nuer are practically unapproachable for all strangers and it takes a long time to win their confidence. Formerly, sixty to eighty years ago, this was not the case. Unfortunately they suffered so much at the hands of the *gelaba* (petty Arab merchants) and slave hunters that their original openness and hospitality to strangers have utterly disappeared.

The men protect themselves against the plague of insects by rubbing their bodies with ashes. Women, on the other hand, are only allowed to do this for certain dances. Both sexes often use no water to wash with for weeks on end, especially during the winter months. But they are fond of washing their eyes with the warm urine of cows, which they regard as strengthening. The hair is carefully removed from the body (Fig. 18) and even the eyelashes are plucked

out " to prevent blindness." The ashes of cow-dung are used to clean the teeth. The hair of the head is dyed red. At the age of six or seven the children's lower incisors are knocked out, " to distinguish man from the beasts of prey," as they put it.

The chiefs, as has been mentioned, exercise little authority and are judges rather than leaders. When a Sheikh dies, his rank passes to his son or nearest relative. The medicine-men enjoy much more prestige than the Sheikhs. Their art also descends from father to son. The Nuer believe that the Great Spirit " Kot " has lent the medicine-man or priest (whichever one chooses to call him) his powers, which are of very different kinds. One has divine visions and interprets them to his believing fellow-tribesmen, another can make rain and cause or avert illness and death. The objects used for magic are certain roots, leaves, bits of bone and the like. Each of these medicine-men has an animal or inanimate object as totem.

The fundamental institution of this people is the family. The place round which family life for the most part centres is the *vidch* or cattle pen. Here the mothers suckle their infants, the children play with dry cow-dung, here the eternal fire burns and the great ash heap is piled up in which the people sleep, here they defend their animals with incredible courage and tenacity against attack. The *vidch* is the Nuer's sacred place; it surrounds the magic tree against which the men lay down their spears and which has to see to it that the cows do not miscarry but bring good female calves into the world. The *vidch* changes its appearance during the winter months. The cattle remain in the village and are housed in a huge *tukul* made of grass. The fire smokes in the centre, as in the summer *vidch*, and is fed with half-dried cakes of dung. A wooden platform is built over it to serve as a sleeping-place for the unmarried men, the smoke keeping insects away. The married people live in *ud* or *dwel*, which are small *tukul* of straw lying in the

middle of the few tobacco, durra and maize fields which these negroes cultivate.

The father presents his son with a bull, which from that moment is the child's guardian spirit and forms the foundation of his property. How the boy looks after it! He puts his arm round its neck, talks lovingly to it, decorates it with tassels and glass beads, sings to it and often consults it when he has an important decision to make. This bull cannot be sold and the boy would sooner die of hunger than even think of slaughtering it. The whole devotion of these primitive people is concentrated on their cattle. The bull, for its part, seems well aware of its function and of the great respect in which it is held, and looks about inquiringly with its great eyes as it slowly and majestically leaves the pen.

The cattle are not the only recipients of kindness. The goats and especially the jolly little dogs have nothing to complain of. One constantly sees the children playing with them in the most charming fashion.

Every Nuer makes for himself the things he needs. The only ones to follow any sort of trade are the smiths, who buy pig iron (European as a rule) from Sudanese traders and make spears and primitive ornaments and utensils of various kinds out of it. One quite often comes upon interesting old spear-heads of negro iron, but they have nearly always been acquired by barter from the Dinka of Bahr el Ghazal Province. The wood of which the shafts are made also comes from there.

The notion of tabu plays a great part among the Nuer. All feathered creatures and all reptiles are tabu and may not be eaten even during famine. The crocodile appears to be an exception, for I have often seen freshly-killed crocodiles skilfully cut up by the hunters, and the eggs of this reptile are a favourite dish. Among the Gaweir, on the other hand, the gentle waterbuck is tabu, on the ground that, as they believe, it eats snakes.

Although the Nuer are rich in cattle, they very seldom

slaughter them. Only at the greatest feasts, such as a marriage, will they eat an aged cow or bull. To celebrate other occasions goats and sheep have to do. In times of great need, however, the Nuer will drink the blood of living cattle which are bled for this purpose—a custom as normal as the use of milk among certain other peoples, the Masai and Somali for instance.

The men, women and children take their meals in separate groups. The boys and the warrior classes, called *rik* or *rek*, also eat alone. Unlike the Shilluk and Jur, who eat with their hands, the Nuer use small gourds or shells as spoons.

The warriors' weapons, besides the spears already mentioned and smuggled guns, include clubs and shields. These last are either large ones made of crocodile or hippopotamus skin or small parrying-shields of ambach wood. The ambach shields in particular are very much carried, as they are light. They are sometimes hollow and provided with a cover, so that useful objects, like tobacco and amulets, are kept in them.

In general the Nuer go naked and simply hang ornaments of glass, ivory, brass or iron about them, but those who come in contact with Arab traders are beginning to wear cheap cotton. Unmarried people are always completely nude. The women wear an apron of leather or plaited palm fibre after the birth of their first child. The most important feast is marriage. The bride's head is shaved, a cow or bull is slaughtered and the guests are generously entertained with *merissa*. The man presents his bride with all sorts of ornaments, but in the event of a subsequent divorce these gifts have to be returned. The bride-price (*mahr*) which the man has to raise may be up to fifty head of cattle for a virgin, but it is very small for a widow or a divorced woman. This price is shared out among the bride's relatives. The girl's father, mother and grandmother, the first uncle and the first aunt on both

sides, all receive their share. The cattle which these women receive pass into the possession of their husbands. Correspondingly a bridegroom's entire family helps him to raise the necessary gifts. Parents, uncles, aunts and friends support him to the best of their ability.

It is the family council that tries divorce cases. If it finds the wife guilty, the whole of the bride-price goes back to the man. Cattle which have died need not be replaced, as among the Shilluk, but this rule does not apply to any that have been slaughtered. If the husband is the guilty party, the price is also returned to him minus two cows. One compensates the woman for the hair that was shaved off at marriage, the other for her lost virginity. Adultery does not necessarily lead to divorce. In general the adulterer is compelled to pay the husband from two to six cows, but if the wife is with child by him the price is considerably higher. On the other hand, if a husband is unable to beget children, he lets his wife have connection with another man and, should she actually become pregnant, pays him a cow with a calf. The child is then regarded as legitimate. If a married man dies his brother takes over the widow. In the absence of a brother the woman can choose a man who shall provide for her. He has no bride-price to pay. The children of this union bear the dead man's name and have the same rights as those whom the dead man begot.

A virgin enjoys a high value. If a girl has given herself to a man otherwise than in marriage, she may send a deputation of friends to her lover to demand that he marry her. Should he refuse, he must pay from ten to twenty cattle as expiation, or a blood feud will break out between the two families. Marriage between blood relations is prohibited. I could find no trace of the immorality and dissoluteness which certain missionaries in particular have reported.

The law of the family is based essentially on inheritance. The heir is always the first-born son, and when there is no

son, the dead man's eldest brother. There is a strong sense of meum and tuum. Naturally anything acquired in war or tribal quarrels is not reckoned as stolen. In other cases a man who has been robbed has the right not only to get back his property from the thief, but also to receive something along with it. For the most part exact penalties are fixed for every sort of theft. For stealing any quantity of durra a cow has to be paid as compensation to the wronged party. A dug-out canoe is valued at two cows. If anyone has stolen a cow and killed and eaten it, the penalty is five cows. But if the stolen beast is still alive, he has only to restore it. If a man lifts his neighbour's decorated family bull, the foundation of Nuer property, he is fined ten cows, whereas the killing of any other bull is punished by the mere payment of one female calf. A stolen gun is valued at three cows, a spear at from two to five. The punishments for bodily injuries are sharp. If a thrashing is not followed by serious consequences, the victim receives no compensation. But if, for example, his foot or hand should be broken, the damage must be made good with ten and six cows respectively. If the man is totally blinded, he gets from ten to thirty cows; if he loses one eye, it is only from two to ten. If a girl has a tooth knocked out, she is awarded a cow with a calf.

As a rule it is the medicine-man who acts as judge, but here and there the Sheikh. The parties, on the principle that greased wheels turn best, try to influence him as far as their means allow and often with success. The litigants form a half-circle round the judge and squat on the ground. A small trench is dug in front of the judge. Each witness as he is heard gets up, advances and dips the point of his spear into the trench. Whoever tells a lie in giving evidence will be overtaken by death, so the negroes maintain, and the trench is there to remind the speaker of his grave. In important cases the judge takes council with the oldest men and only then does he deliver his judgment, from which

there is no appeal. If a Nuer kills a fellow-tribesman he must at once take refuge in the medicine-man's house and stay there till the penalty, in the shape of from ten to forty head of cattle, has been paid. Otherwise a blood-feud will break out between the families. The medicine-man's house serves as prison and the ill-doer is not allowed to see anyone, even a member of his own family. It is often several months before the murder is atoned by the transfer of cattle to the victim's family, accompanied as it is by troublesome and complicated ceremonies.

When a warrior dies he is buried by his friends, never by his relatives. Adults are interred under the entrance of the dwelling *tukul*, children inside the hut. The friends who have performed the last service of love to the dead man are presented with a bull by his family. Without this payment there is no burial, and should a Nuer find a dead man in the bush he will calmly leave him to the vultures and hyenas.

As soon as young Nuer have reached the age of manhood the ceremonies of initiation begin. On a fixed day someone of position, often the medicine-man, appears in the circle of lads. A hole the size of a skull is dug before each of them, then a cut is made in the skin of the forehead from ear to ear with a sharp piece of metal. A last-born son of his mother receives six parallel cuts in this way. The blood is caught in the hole and the gaping wound is rubbed with cow-dung ash. After this proceeding the youth remains shut up in a *tukul* for a short time and only his mother or an old man supplies him with food. Strict care is taken that no girl shall come within sight of him. The initiation is then celebrated with dancing, a feast and *merissa*, and as a rule the festivities end with a free fight.

Whereas the Shilluk warriors milk their cows and women may scarcely touch them, among the Nuer the opposite is the custom. Only women and children milk, and as soon as a youth is declared mature he leaves that work to the

other sex. If he should milk after becoming a man he will die, so the Nuer believe. He must even give up that caressing and scratching that he was so fond of. If he were to transgress this law, he would risk the loss of his right hand or paralysis of both arms, so it is believed.

The youths who have been declared men are divided by the medicine-man into groups which are called *rik* or *rek*. Each group is given a name reminiscent of important events that have taken place at the time of the initiation. The medicine-man often gives them the name of his own totem. The members of these groups are now blood-brothers. Blood-feud can never break out between them. They go out to battle together and no warrior will ever leave his rik-comrade in the lurch. Together their way leads them to victory or to death.

Nuer men and women are great tobacco-smokers and, like most negroes, love alcohol more than is good for them. Fortunately for them the English prohibit the import of liquor. Their weak durra beer causes more than enough damage as it is. They are unacquainted with salt. Like the Jur, they add other seasoning and the ashes of certain kinds of wood to their dishes.

Superstitious fancies are widespread among these children of nature and make themselves unpleasantly felt in their daily life. For instance, a woman may not drink milk during menstruation or for a month after the birth of a child, otherwise the cow from which it came will die. During menstruation women are altogether baneful for cows. If a pregnant woman sees a sea-eagle fishing, she and her husband must abstain from fish, or the child will come into the world with the face of a sea-eagle. If anyone eats or drinks out of a vessel that has come in contact with a snake, death will overtake him.

The Nuer worship a great spirit " Guak " and a power called " Kot." The great spirit is lord of good and evil. He created the sun and the other phenomena of nature.

According to their tradition, the Nuer received a sacred spear from Kot, which is kept in a village on the Pibor and watched over by its own special guards.

The Nuer only know two points of the compass, west and east, but not north and south. The year is reckoned from the beginning of the rainy season. Many of them bear the names of particularly decisive events, such as famine, epidemics, cattle pests and the like.

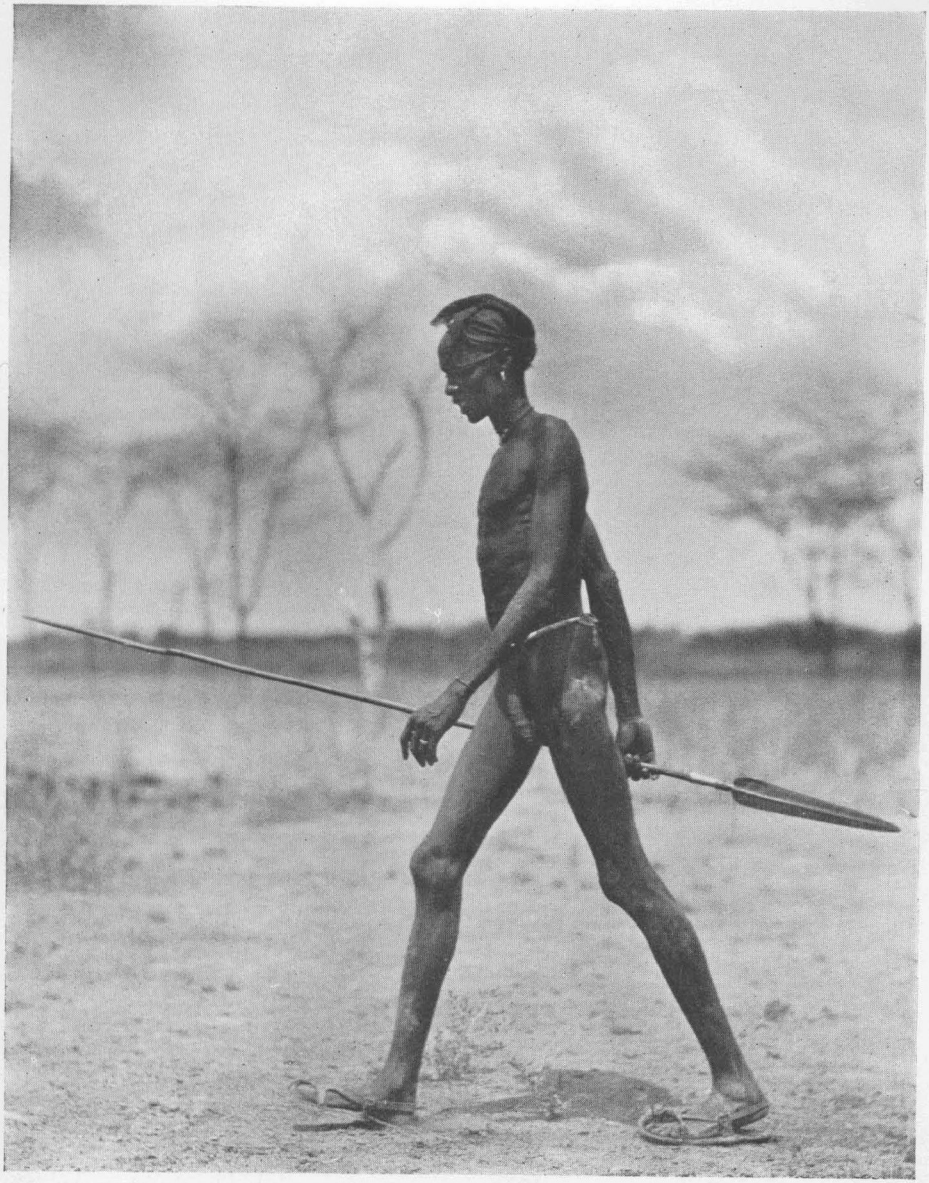
Cannibalism is unknown to the Nuer. They are strictly forbidden to eat the flesh of their totem animals. Human sacrifice, which to this day is a custom among the Shilluk, is also unknown among them. On the other hand, bulls and barren animals are sacrificed on the most various occasions. The sacrifice at a marriage is designed to ensure the fertility of the young woman. On the appearance of a comet, which is generally reputed to usher in epidemics for man and beast, an attempt is made to ward off the evil by means of sacrifices. The individual also tries to find healing from illness by making an offering to the god. In the same way they try to influence fate in their favour, as when a woman after a year of marriage has not borne a child or when the fertilising rain stays away. They believe that they can induce heavy storms to abate by throwing tobacco in the air.

The totems, communal and individual, play a great rôle in the life of this people. The former include all kinds of birds, perhaps because they can fly up into the sky to the great Kot. Individual totems are chosen from a miscellaneous collection of inanimate objects and living creatures. Certain trees or stars, various sorts of snake, the varanus lizard, crocodiles, separate kinds of fish, sometimes the waterbuck—all are tabu. Woe betide the stranger who dares to eat or kill totem animals in the presence of Nuer! He will have unwittingly turned the village to bitter enemies. Special importance attaches to the totem symbols of marriage. For example, suppose a Nuer whose totem is a crocodile

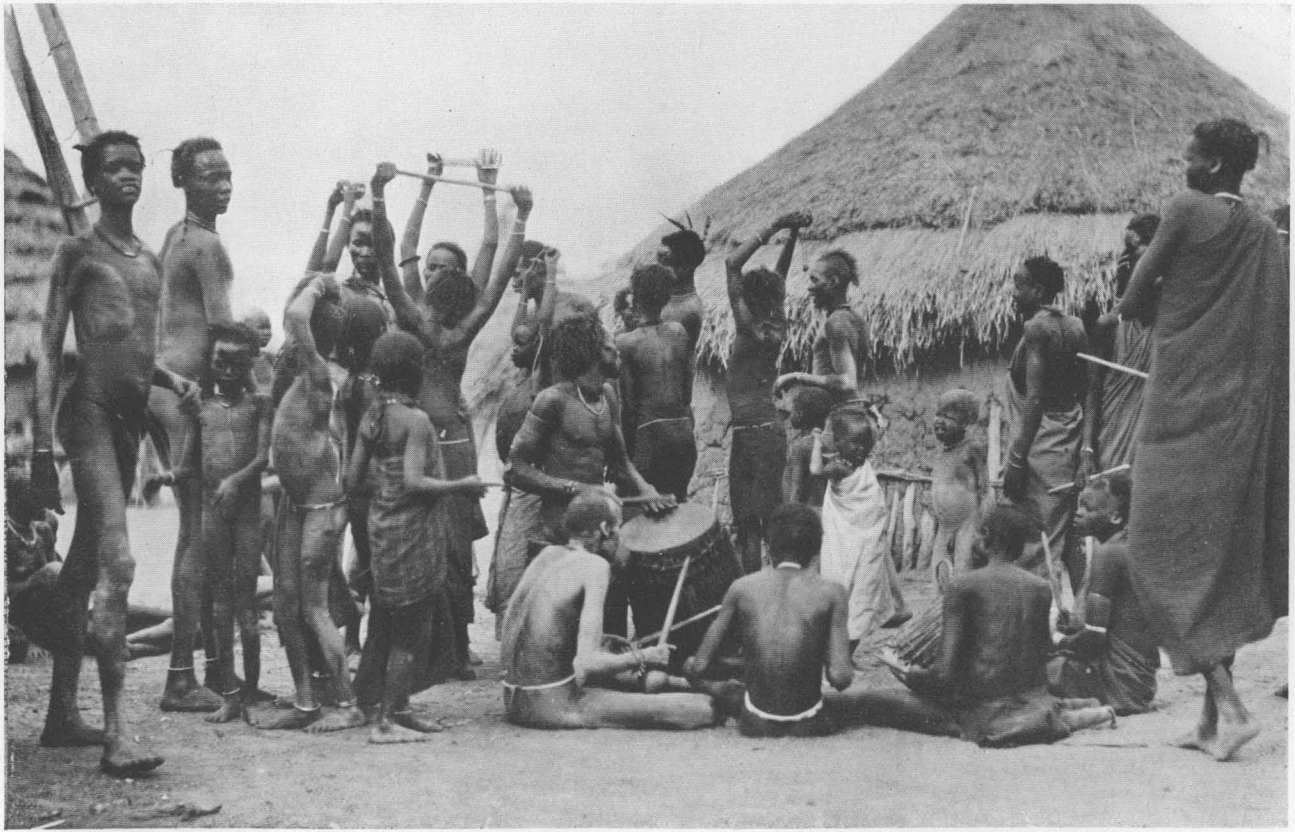
chooses to marry a girl with a snake totem. After the wedding not only any children they may have but the married couple themselves acknowledge both the crocodile and the snake as totem.

Interesting as this people is, little is known of them. Yet outside influence is already making itself perceptible. Arab traders are beginning to import cheap linen and cotton. Missionaries are exerting themselves to abolish ancient customs and the "indecent" nudity, while glass beads from Gablonz are ousting the round discs of mollusc or ostrich egg shell out of which the natives contrive to make such curious ornaments. Spear-heads of horn and ebony have become exceedingly rare. Already one meets imported domestic cats here and there in the villages. How long will it be before civilisation makes its entry, complete with cheap spirits and prostitution?

Our sailing-boat is now out in the middle of the steppe. We take a rest and Tudj passes the time fishing with an Arab casting-net. In the evening grass fires light up the horizon. Before long we make a closer acquaintance with the fire. As I have already mentioned, the river here is not broad. We are now compelled to pass a particularly narrow spot where the grass fire is raging on the banks. A horribly beautiful picture unrolls before our eyes. The wind drives the blaze before it, from every bush tongues of flame wave high in the air. Birds of prey circle overhead in the expectation of enjoying the roasted creeping things. Vultures, falcons, kites and hawks share in the feast. We do not feel very happy; the wind carries sparks and burning tufts of grass on to our sailing-boat and we have our hands full to avert a catastrophe. Everything on board is as dry as tinder, to say nothing of the petrol. But at last we leave the danger spot behind us and I sit down, dead tired, in my cabin. There I overhear a conversation between Boll and the ugly negress who cooks for the crew. This negress,



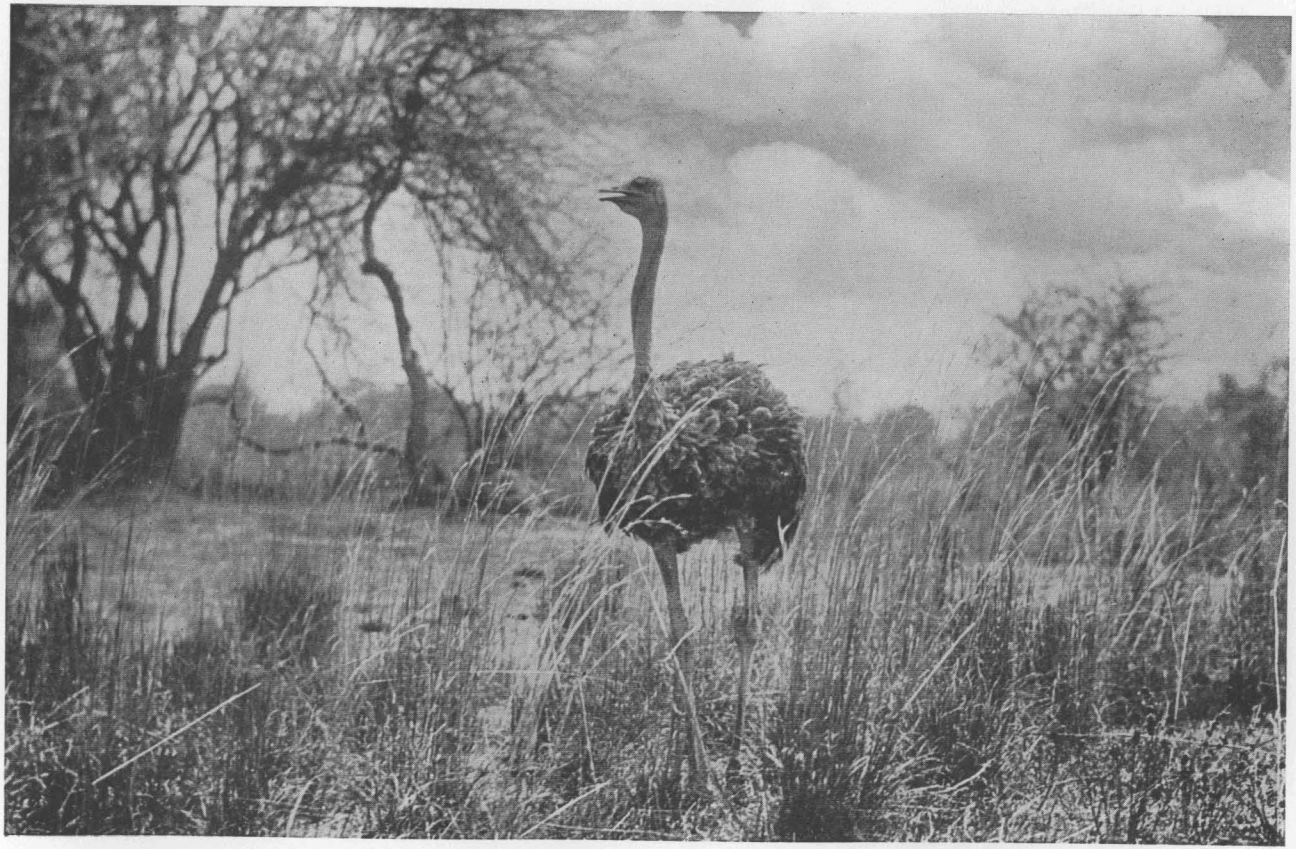
22. Natives of the Dinka enclave. They are extraordinarily tall. This man, over six feet six inches, has a stride of more than a yard.



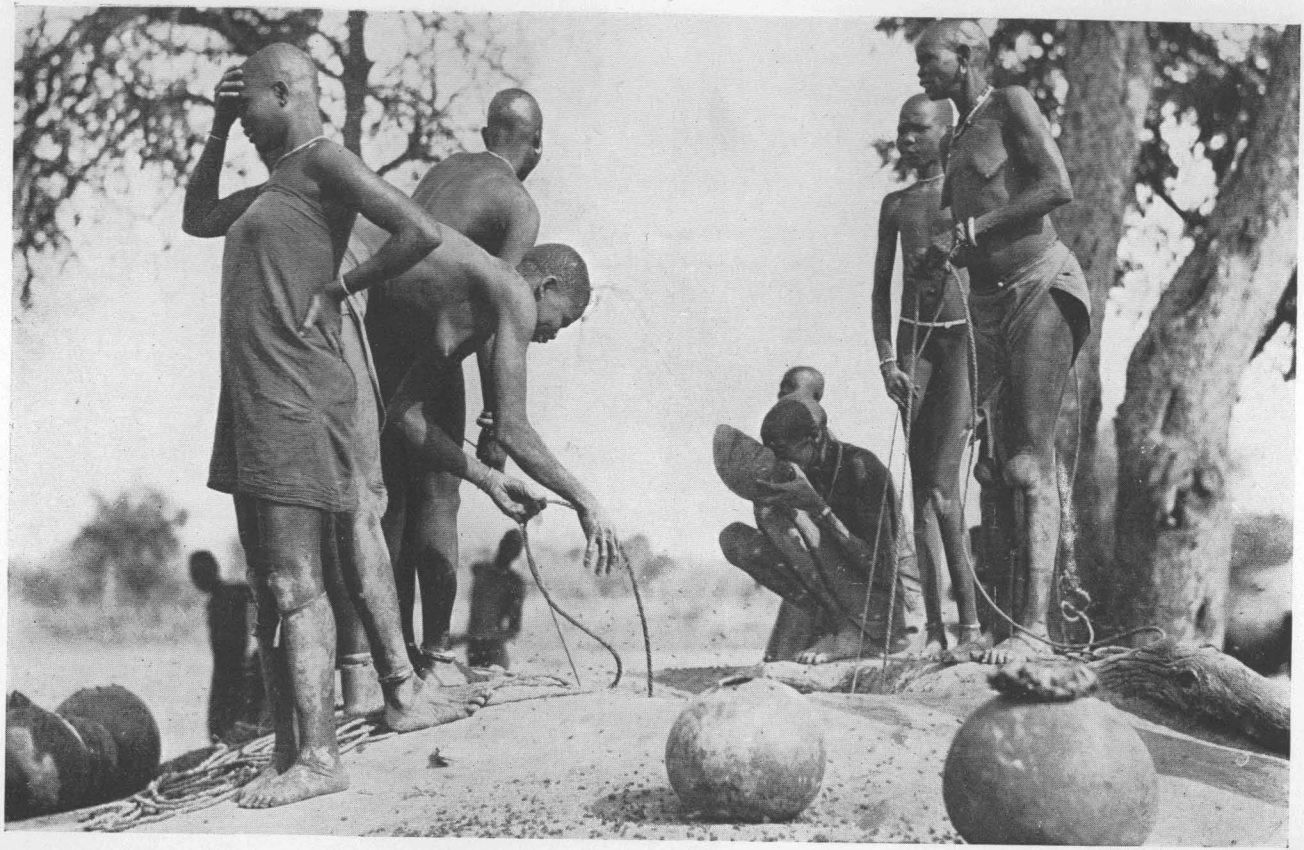
23. " Cow-dance " in the Dinka enclave. The natives dance in pairs face to face but without touching each other.

24. The Dinka enclave in Nuerland. The Dinka here have given up their own characteristics and adopted Nuer customs.

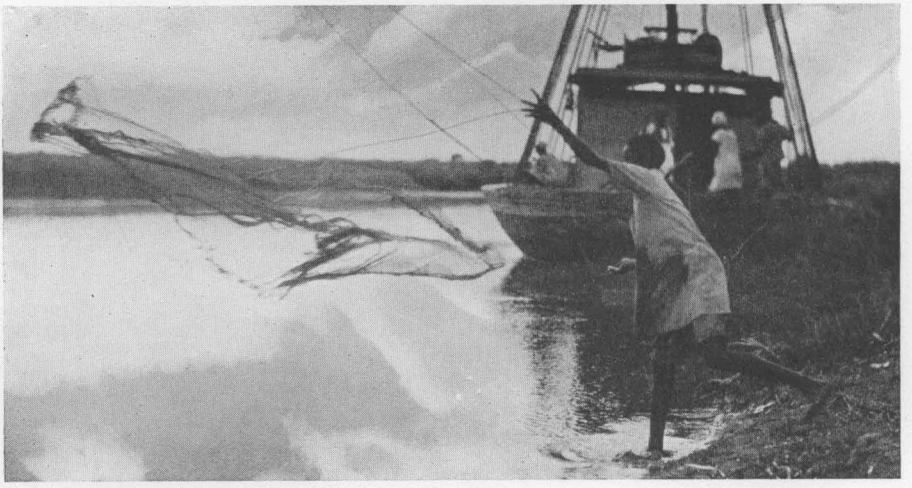
25. A Dinka in Nuer costume smoking a mixture of tobacco and cow-dung.



26. African ostrich west of Shambe in typical African park landscape.

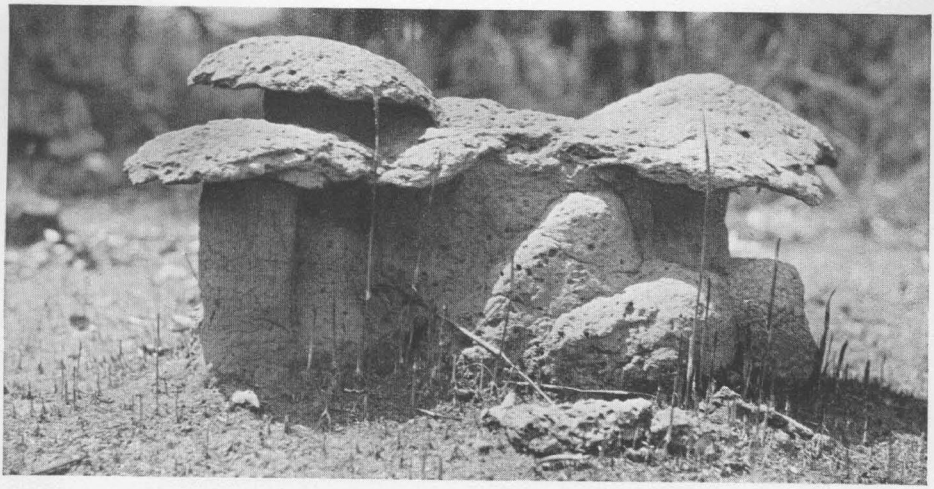


27. In the thirsty land of the Southern Dinka, gourds on cords of palm fibre serve to draw water.



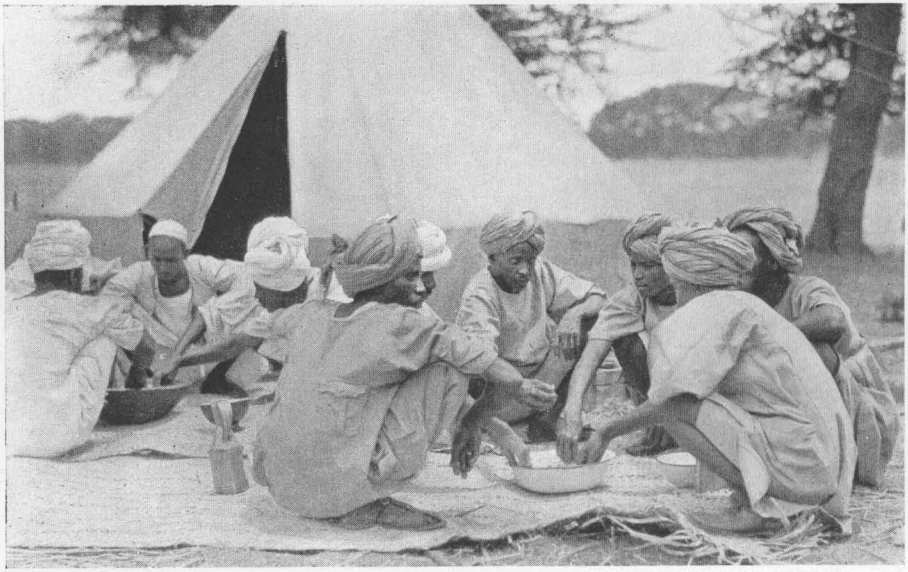
28. Tudj, our interpreter, fishing with an Arab casting-line.

29. Dinka three-stringed instrument something like a guitar (Dinka enclave).



30. Strange termite hills in mushroom form.

31. Drops of dew like pearls on the leaves announce the approach of the rainy season.



32. My people at a meal. They eat with their fingers out of a common dish like Arabs.

33. My people make friends with the Nuer girls who visit us on board.

who is no longer young, has taken a fancy to Boll and has long talks with him. "I was once married," she tells him, "and had a nice husband. What things he used to bring me! Durra, ornaments, oil for my hair and even henna leaves! I could actually count on having meat twice a week!" Boll listens respectfully. "Look here," she begins again, "wouldn't you like to marry me? There isn't a woman in Omdurman who can bake such delicious *abri* (dry durra cake) as I can—as thin as a leaf!" Now at last Boll bestirs himself. "Bah!" he drawls, "I'm not going to marry *you!* I want a young wife." "How are you going to get a young wife?" says the ardent one. "You haven't got any cows to buy her with." "If I can't get a young one, I'm certainly not going to take an old one," Boll explains firmly, and his partner turns away with a sigh to her work.

In the evening the dark room is again put up. We are rather short of space on board and so the torture-chamber, as the tent is called, has to be erected over the kitchen. It shuts almost air-tight and is very small. If I have to work in it for long, the air gets used up and the temperature rises to an unbearable degree. To-day the smell of burnt fat has penetrated and I am in danger of asphyxiation. But I must stick to it because I am just at work on a rare picture. Photography in these lands is no simple matter.

Before sundown we sight a huge crocodile. For a long time the large head of the beast with its two bony projections at the back are visible above the water. Heglig trees, the elephants' favourite food, grow on the banks and small copses of blossoming Cook acacias stretch along the river. That bees are plentiful here is obvious from the well-filled honeycombs that some Nuer are eating on the bank.

While I am going to sleep I hear that my skinner (taxidermist) has found in Tudj a victim for his anecdotes. Abd el Kader, for such is his name, is a queer fellow. Seldom have I met a man with an itch like his for button-holing

people and forcing on them his long-winded stories which ramble away down every side track. "I was once in Omdurman buying meat," I hear in my half sleep. "You know, there's a butcher at the corner of the women's market, who has very good meat. By the way, did you ever see the women's market? No? You can buy almost anything there. Caps—beauties!—embroidered with yellow silk! I had one, left me by my father. It was a lovely piece of work . . ." But by that time I am asleep and I imagine that Tudj cannot be very wide awake.

The following evening we reach the telegraph station. It is small and run by a negro who, although he was formerly a slave, feels himself vastly superior to the Dinka living here. He wears Arab costume and entertains us to coffee. This Arab coffee plays a great part among all the Sudanese. No business, no serious greeting can be thought of without the inevitable bowls. The devotion with which it is prepared is a thing to be seen! The beans are put into a wooden bowl with glowing wood embers and in this way roasted. Each bean when it is well roasted is taken out with wooden pincers. Then they are all carefully examined. The coffee is now ground in a wooden mortar with an iron pestle, the powder mixed with water in an open metal basin and brought to the boil, and then the brew is poured into an oddly-shaped earthenware jug. This proceeding is repeated several times till the coffee, at last ready, is left in the jug, from which it is served into the drinking bowls. The preparation takes a long time but the product is beyond all praise. How indispensable their coffee has become to these people I had an opportunity of observing two years before on the Dinder. A honey-seeker who directed my caravan on its way had run out of coffee. He fell ill and complained of all conceivable ailments. At last I had pity on him and gave him a little from my small supply. His joy had to be seen to be believed! When he set eyes on the beans, his features lighted up. His hands trembled as he

stretched out both arms to take the precious stuff. Without a word he hurried to the nearest fire and an hour later came back rejuvenated to pour out his thanks at great length.

The head of the station informs us that he is not well up in the condition of the game, but that there are Dinka living here. As a matter of fact, we have come to a Dinka enclave which extends for some distance between Nuer villages. The people are beginning to resemble their neighbours. They go naked like the Nuer and wear Nuer ornaments (Figs. 22, 24 and 25). Their hair-dress too is like that of their neighbours. The women wear cheap cotton things knotted over their shoulders.

During the night the Dinka Sheikh comes and, after ceremonial greetings, tells us that four lions have torn a giraffe to pieces four hours from the village. He went there with his people to secure it. As the men had not finished cutting it up they were staying the night on the spot to dispute the booty with the lions.

There was plenty of game and the animals came to a small pool not far from this place to water. Two days' march away was a resort of elephants. While we are in the middle of the conversation four Shilluk arrive in their dug-outs and tell us that they are on their way to the next khor, where a large number of their tribe have already gathered to harpoon hippopotamuses. To watch the natives at this sport would be an unhoped-for piece of luck, as nowadays few Europeans have any further opportunity of witnessing this kind of hunting. The Shilluk also report that two days before lions had torn some sheep to pieces on the other bank of the river in the presence of their shepherds, who, though armed with spears, had not been able to rob the lions of their prey. With so many good reports I have the best prospects of realising one or other of my hopes. We decide, therefore, to camp on the spot and explore the neighbourhood next day with the motor-car. This trip will at the same time be the Ford's test, as it has so far had no chance

of proving its worth in the pathless steppe and in high grass.

I am up before sunrise. The car is landed without any special difficulty. At that moment the Dinka return from the giraffe, heavily laden with meat, and tell us that they were kept awake the whole night by the incessant roaring of the four lions which closely encircled the spot where they were. I ask if any meat has been left behind. They say No, and add that they have even brought the bones with them. As a protection against the furious animals they had set fire to the steppe round about them. So there is no further question of the lions. Had meat been left behind, we should have had a chance of photographing the beasts during the next night. Well, first of all we must go with the car to the pond where the animals water. One Dinka takes his seat in the car. The other runs ahead to show the way. At the start all goes well across the burnt-up steppe. Then we come to country which is flooded during the rainy season and therefore overrun with swamp grasses. Innumerable deep ruts make the going difficult. In addition the ground often gives way when we drive over countless burrows which animals have made here. In the end I manage to maintain a speed of six or seven miles an hour. Our guide's powers of endurance are amazing. The man has had no sleep and has already carried heavy loads for hours, yet without a rest he runs ahead of the car with elastic step like a machine. Thus we proceed to the *fulla* (pool), which is the centre of a swamp in the rainy season. Old cattle marks show that the natives brought their herds here when there was more water. There are only a few game tracks. The newly-made footprint of an ostrich catches my eye. But the main point is this: there have been no lions here. According to the guides, they quench their thirst at a distant khor. Without catching sight of any interesting game I return to the landing-place, where I inform the disappointed Sheikh that we think of continuing

our journey next morning. He asks if he may stage some dances in our honour. I gladly approve the idea and the drums are soon brought out. Decorated women appear with men in their festal paint. I see that we have here really poor devils, although the Dinka on the whole are a prosperous tribe. Hardly a man possesses a shield and the spears are primitive and unornamented. Still, a series of highly interesting dances now begins. Each of them has its particular meaning. The rhythm of the drums is often quite complicated and changes with every dance. The women open with the " cow-dance." Holding their arms above their heads they imitate rhythmically the movements of cattle (Fig. 23). Little by little the young men join in and a " peace-dance " starts. An old man leads up a long chain of warriors. The men take hands and leap round the dancing women. At the same time they sing in chorus: " Do you like me? I like you. Then follow me. I'll follow you." And so on. Now comes a war-dance, in which the men mime the attack and parry of a fight with an enemy. The conclusion is very remarkable. The people dance in pairs! But it has not the meaning that dancing in pairs otherwise has among the negroes. A feast, that is to say, usually closes with such a dance, every warrior holding his own wife in his arms and often disappearing with her into the bushes in the middle of the dance. Here quite old men dance with young girls and the dancers constantly change ladies. It is charming to see how gently the savage-looking warriors clasp the girls. Everyone is in good spirits and both dancers and onlookers give vent to their feelings in high, long-drawn, vibrating cries. Not till late do the festivities draw to an end and the people now come aboard to fetch their reward. Each one may choose what he will have: white, red or blue stuff for clothing, or else glass beads for his sweetheart. A nasty, suppurating wound on the wrist of one young warrior catches my attention. He is wearing spirals of thick brass wire just above the inflamed

spot. The wire was fitted when he was still a boy and is preventing the bone from growing. The hand is just beginning to mortify. I tell him he must have the rings cut if he does not want to lose his hand. He replies that he would rather have the hand removed.

Everyone who comes on board receives a costume, measured and solemnly tied on by my headman in the presence of all the onlookers. The whole village has assembled by degrees; little children are sitting on the floor, old men on their haunches smoking negro tobacco in huge clay pipes with gourd mouthpieces. The fragrant weed is an odd product. The tobacco is, in fact, mixed with cow-dung and ashes, which are supposed to improve the flavour considerably. A musical instrument with five strings attracts my notice. Unfortunately it has a European enamel bowl in a plaited cover as its body, so that I cannot make up my mind to buy it. (Fig. 29.)

With a buzzing head from all the noise and tumult we at last go to bed.

Next day, as the Shilluk have left the khor, which is here completely overgrown, and gone far up-stream so that there is no hope of photographing a hippo hunt, I decide to move on to the next khor and visit the police station near by at Fangak.