



Trip up the River Kiwira, Mwaya, Tanganyika

Whilst on a short cruise aboard the steamship Ilala on lake Nyasa and having left Kambwe (Karonga), the most northerly port in Nyasaland we reached Mwaya in Tanganyika. Only four passengers remained on board and the ship was being washed down. It was then that the Mate suggested we might spend two or three hours in one of the ship's boats and venture "up the creek", a narrow waterway which entered the lake at Mwaya - I think it was named Kiwira. The motor started up and we chugged away from the ship. We had two African crew, the mate, and four of us to take this three hours trip.

We soon entered a narrow stream with reed covered banks, there was no scenery, just masses of reeds on either side or trees and bushes coming down to the waters edge. But what we missed in scenery was made up for by the number of birds we saw. Many of the trees were covered by large communities of weaver birds, there seemed to be thousands



of them, hopping about all over the trees, building far more nests than they could possibly use. They dangled neatly from the end of twigs. Lovely brilliant scarlet, green and blue Kingfishers flitted across our bows, while many other birds of many types flew over over the river making for their nesting grounds as the sun began to set. Cormorants perched on rocks airing their wings, the

occasional Fish Eagle would appear and fly over or perch on a nearby tree. Huge flocks of white birds which we could not identify flew low over the flat countryside (they could have been Egrets).



The reeds then gave way to papyrus and the river grew narrower, in several places the boat passed through channels so small that the papyrus closed in on us and then opening up again into large pools. And on into the heart of the country side. All about us fish were rising sending ripples out in rings which spread towards either side of the the river bank.

We had gone up stream for over an hour when the mate decided it was time to turn back. This was quite difficult as the river was so narrow. There was lots of backing and turning before we were on our homeward journey. As it was downstream the boat went that much quicker, the sun had set and quite suddenly the moon appeared seeming to rise as if pushed up on a stick and the river became a shining bar of silver running into the lake.

Another turn and we were out into the Lake and we could see the lights of the Ilala arriving back on board in time for drinks before dinner. It had been a very pleasant interlude. Very much enjoyed and during our absence the ship had been cleaned with new freight and passengers on board.....And so to dinner.

Mary Brill