

SAHI LAKE, MERU DISTRICT.

By C. M. DOBBS.

This lake is sacred in the eyes of the local natives. The track leads through thick forest, and the going is very slow. It is a crater lake, entirely surrounded by thick forest, and without any outlet, except possibly subterranean. The only people who know the way there are certain old Wanderobo, and they have to carry a supply of honey and wimbi grain before they will make the venture. We started with them at about 7-30 a.m., and walked through thick forest for about an hour, till we struck a large elephant track, which led us easily in 15 minutes to the lake. Several times during the walk our guides stopped, chewed up honey and wimbi, and spat it out towards the four corners of the compass, muttering prayers the while. I was informed that they were praying for strength to continue the journey.

When we struck the main elephant track at about 8-30, all the natives with me sat down, while the old Ndorobo went through some ceremonies. When we reached the shore of the lake, they had to go through the same ritual before they went near the water. The lake is about a mile in diameter, almost circular. There appears to be no outlet on the surface. There is a good deal of clear water, and I saw none of the blue water-lily that covers almost the whole of Gunga Lake, which is another crater lake, close to Meru, on the Nyeri road. There were many duck on the lake, but my Ndorobo guide would not hear of my shooting any; apparently, they are regarded as the property of the local Shaitan.

The legend about the sacred Lake of Sahi is that an old man of Katheri, called Nkuchuchu, shot a buck close to the Lake and was accused by the resident Spirit of killing his goat. He was punished by having all his hair taken off, and it never grew again.

On another occasion, I visited Gunga Lake, and heard a curious noise, evidently emanating from the lake. I asked the boy who was with me, what the noise was. He immediately replied: "It is the Shaitan of the Lake."

All the crater lakes are said to be inhabited by spirits of sorts, and the natives are very afraid of them.

USE FOR ANTS' NESTS.

There are numerous ants' nests in the trees and bushes in the Meru District. They look something like wasps' nests at home, and are made of cow-dung and mud. The Meru call the ants "Mpampo"; they are small and black. The natives use them as a charm to keep off the evil eye. Nearly every village has an ants' nest at its front gate, stuck up on a stick.