

THE KISINGIRI AND GWASI DISTRICTS OF SOUTH  
KAVIRONDO, NYANZA PROVINCE

BY C. M. DOBBS

The country in the vicinity of the Ulambwi Valley, including the islands of Lusunga and Mfangano, has always struck me as being extremely interesting, and I am sending the following few notes in the hope that they may be of interest to others as well.

The Ulambwi Valley itself is a very low-lying strip of land running down between the high country of Kaniamwa on the east, and Gwasi, Kasigunga, and Kisingiri on the west.

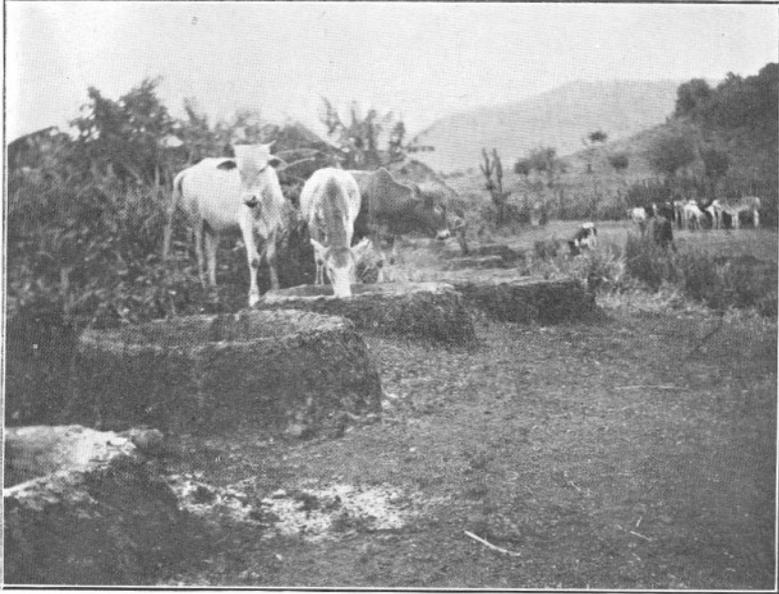
The Ulambwi river only exists during the rains, when indeed the whole valley is a swamp. In the dry weather, it is simply a line of caked mud running through thick bush to the lake. There is a fair amount of game—topi, hartebeeste, and mpala—in the valley, and at certain seasons the elephants come down from the higher country in Kabwoch and Kaniamkago. About three years ago, when the elephants were being shot at continually in the higher country, one of them—a small bull—took refuge on Lusunga Island, which is separated from the mainland by a very narrow passage called Mbita. It was not far from here that three or four elephants some time previously crossed over the Kavirondo Gulf to Uyoma, in Kisumu district. The natives say that they do not swim, but walk along the bottom with their trunks held up vertically.

This elephant cannot have had much cover on Lusunga, which is to a great extent a desert. It was subsequently shot. To the west of the Ulambwi Valley and on the lake shore is the district of Kisingiri, the natives of which at one time made most of their money by manufacturing salt, in which there was quite a brisk trade carried on with the Baganda. The soil of a large part of this district along the lake shore is impregnated with salt, and the natives dig this up, and put it into earthenware pots. A small hole is knocked in the bottom of the pot, and water is poured in at the top. The water, filtrating through, comes out quite clean, but very

salty. It is then caught in other vessels and boiled, till by the process of evaporation the salt is left behind. Over the whole of this dry stony country near the lake, both on the islands and mainland, large quantities of the silk cotton plant are found. It grows into quite a large shrub, and produces a sort of ball about the size of a very large orange, which, when ripe, is found to be full of the most beautifully smooth silky cotton.<sup>1</sup> It is extraordinary how it grows at all, considering the soil in which it is found. The harder, drier and more rocky, the better it thrives. About a couple of miles back from the Lake shore here, one reaches the foot of a huge escarpment, which rises almost perpendicularly from the low lands of Kisingiri to Upper Gwasi. The track climbs up somewhat to one side of the steepest place, and when it has almost reached the top, it turns off to the right and crosses the face of what can only be described as a precipice. When I went along this road in 1910 at the steepest place where the slope on either side was almost sheer up and down, I was shown where an elephant had rolled down from top to bottom. It had apparently been coming along the higher Gwasi country, and when it reached the crest of the hill, had missed its footing and rolled head over heels right down to the bottom, where it was found, almost reduced to pulp, by some natives who had been cutting wood. Their attention was attracted by the noise made by the animal falling, and they saw what must indeed have been a most extraordinary sight. Even when I saw the place three or four years after the occurrence, traces of the fall were still visible. There was a clear line marked by broken euphorbias and displaced rocks, showing the terrible force with which the huge mass crashed down.

On reaching the top of the hill, the path descends again somewhat to the camping place in Upper Gwasi, a sort of hollow in the mountainous range facing the higher part of the Ulambwi Valley. Water here is a great difficulty and is only obtained at the bottom of the deep pits, which the natives dig in one of the side valleys running down from the mountains. At a depth of about eight to ten feet, very good water is found.

<sup>1</sup> This plant is an *Asclepiad*.—ED.



CATTLE WATERING TROUGH, GWASI MOUNTAIN, S. KAVIRONDO.

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In order that the stock, more especially the calves, may be able to get water without going down into these deep pits, the natives make enormous saucers of mud, to fill which they have to draw water in earthen pitchers. A large part of every day is employed in making and repairing these saucers and keeping them filled.

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## AN INTERESTING POLYMORPHIC BUTTERFLY

By D. G. HALE CARPENTER, M.D., F.E.S.

During a stay of fourteen months' duration on Bugalla Island—one of the Sesse Archipelago in the north-west corner of Lake Victoria, on which I was investigating the bionomics of *Glossina*—I was able to make an extraordinarily interesting collection of butterflies of the Nymphaline genus, *Pseudacræa*, which are very excellent mimics of sundry species of the Acraeinae genus, *Planema*. These models are of the following types. In one, both sexes have the same colour and pattern; the wings have a very dark brown ground colour with a tawny orange band across the fore wings and a white band across the hind wings (*Planema poggei*). In another type the wings are black with white patches (*Planema macarista* and *Planema alcinoe*, the female sex only. The male *macarista* is of the same type as *poggeoides*; the male *alcinoe* is of a different type again and is not a member of the mimetic combination about to be described). In a third type the fore wings are dark fulvous brown with two orange areas and the hind wings are orange with dark border. Both sexes of this species (*Planema tellus*) are alike. In a fourth type in which also both sexes are alike, the wings are dark fulvous, with creamy blotches (*Planema epæa*, form *paragea*). Each of these types is very closely copied by forms of the Nymphaline genus, *Pseudacræa*, that resembling the first type was known formerly as *Ps. Hobleyi*, male, the corresponding female resembling type two. That resembling the third type was known as *Ps. terra*, both sexes alike, and