

I told him of what had occurred, and begged him to remain with me on the chance of the phenomenon repeating itself. The last ripple died away, the shadows sank and faded, and Lake Ipi was again mysteriously motionless. Pole and I sat quiet; I was too ^{perturbed} ~~moved~~ to talk, and he was obviously worried - probably about me. We had not very long to wait, however, before another spasm rent the waters, and they heaved and tumbled and tore themselves until they boiled like a veritable whirlpool. Pole was as amazed as I was, for after a moment of frenzy, they suddenly sank into smiling slumber again, though this time the shadows continued to stain the blue surface with purple patches. What did it mean? Was the native tale true, and were the waters of the lake inhabited by some evil spirit? // Pole decided that he would watch the lake until he could arrive at some rational solution of the problem, and I told him ^{that} I must watch with him. We talked the matter over, and, as it was by this time fairly late in the morning, we arranged to begin our ^{vigil} ~~watching~~ tomorrow. I could not tear myself away from the lake, and spent all the afternoon wandering round it; my eyes seldom ^(leaving) its glassy silent surface; but nothing further happened. The shadows seemed to rise from below; they painted the water with their deep purple bands for a few moments, and then sank out of sight again. Once or twice some small ripples ruffled the sleeping lake, but they were gone almost before they had been. The sunset in a crimson

glory, and the lake caught fire before finally shrouding itself in a veil of darkness.

Just before turning in I stood looking once again.

Silence held the earth; the ~~heavy~~ blackness of the steep cliffs was just visible, and beneath them a pale glimmering indicated the quiet waters. The stillness was curiously intent - earth, sky, and water seemed holding their breath; not a murmur, not a splash, not even ~~a~~ ^{the} creaking of a branch, or the rustle of a leaf. Gradually a strange, shivering sigh arose from the water, increasing and vibrating till the whole air seemed shaking with it. ~~— agony made tangible,~~ And across this, a sharp, terrified scream shot up, tearing the quivering atmosphere. One sullen splash followed, and all was still once more. I crept back to my tent, cold sweat pouring from me.

September 27th: Before daylight Pole and I crept stumbling down the rough track which was to bring us to the water's level. The path was obviously a game track, but, obviously also, seldom used. No sound of lapping water, no hint of movement of any sort rose to meet us; in fact, the further we descended the stiller became the air. At the bottom of the track we had to cut our way through the looped lianas of some great creeper, and with alarming suddenness we dropped on to a rock some ~~few~~ feet

square which was raised a few inches only above the water - a projecting platform jutting straight from the cliff into the lake itself. It was useless attempting to watch from so prominent a point of vantage, so we clambered on to the path again, and, by dint of cutting and stamping, worked our way along the thick scrub until we were about fifteen yards from the stone and some twelve feet above it. We were however sufficiently off the track not to disturb or frighten any approaching beast, and we made ourselves a loophole in the bushes through which we commanded the entire lake.

The lake lay luminous and still - cold and ^{void of} colourless in the sunless half-light. The cliffs opposite were plots of thick, unrelieved black; Kololo hung faint and shadowy over us, his feet bound in rolling clouds. Just as that master artist the sun laid on his first delicate wash of heralding colour, calling the earth to wake and live again, we heard a gentle rustling in the rushes. It was evidently something descending the track; ~~so~~ we fixed our eyes on the slab of rock, for this was the only exit and foothold. A heavy black form dropped forward on to the rock. It seemed at first sight to be a man but proved to be a very large baboon. He was probably a "rogue," as he was alone, and he looked ugly and fierce enough to warrant his having been turned out of any community. Raising himself on to his hind legs, holding fast to an overhanging branch with his arms, he looked arrogantly round. He stood in the increasing

light until he was touched by the sun, his every hair standing out in the brightness. Suddenly he loosened his hold of the branch and shuffled forward to the edge of the rock. Supported by his large hands, he hung over the water, sucking it up in great mouthfuls - we could hear the indrawing sound of his breath. As we watched him a shadow rose to the surface of the lake, and, like a flash of ghastly lightning, an enormous open grey-green mouth appeared - a cavern in the water - seized the drinking baboon by the head, and sank silently out of sight. There was no struggle, no noise, nothing but the hideous apparition, and it all occurred so swiftly that it hardly appeared real. The ever-widening ripples testified to the recent disturbance, but with this exception there was no indication of life or movement. The "evil spirit" had, however, taken form, and our eyes had actually rested on ^{it}him for a fleeting second. The head which had emerged was that of an enormous crocodile, but the ^{mammal}beast who owned that head must be of such ~~vast~~ dimensions that to ^{visualize}picture him was a nightmare. ~~An ordinary-sized crocodile in fact a crocodile of any sort is a repellent and disgusting object, but it was a positively horrifying thought to visualize this beast he must be a veritable mammoth.~~ The probabilities were that he was ~~not~~ a hermit, though this might ^{not} be the case. What pointed towards the likelihood of his solitariness was that from native statement no living thing had ever been seen in the lake.

Their "evil spirit" was invisible and therefore the more terrifying. Had a large community of crocodiles been living in the lake, it is almost certain that at some time or other one or more of them would have been ^{seen} visible. Of course the lack of shore precluded any possibility of their exit from the water, for the cliffs were too precipitous for crocodiles to climb. Once in the ~~water~~ ^{Lake}, and crocodiles cover long distances over land to reach water, there they would have to stay - they were successfully trapped. *
 Pole and I had sat petrified, since that monstrous vision had sunk. As we were about to scramble to our feet and crawl away from this loathsome neighbourhood, we heard a crashing on the path, and before we could do more than drop back to our seats, a huge bull-buffalo shot on to the projecting rock. He was a grand sight, coal-black and glossy-coated, his great wide-nosed head crowned with a magnificent pair of curving horns. He stood, his four feet close together, defiant and unconquered, as if challenging the world to a test of strength, ferocity, and endurance. He stared unblinkingly at the sun, tosed his heavy head, and then bowed it over the water to drink. Bent forward

* It is quite possible that originally the lake was inhabited by numbers of crocodiles, but as ~~crocodiles~~ are cannibals, (and possibly the lake did not hold sufficient food for them all) they may have reduced their own numbers until only the giant remained, having devoured his weaker brethren.
 -Dayrell Pole.-

as he was, we could see the muscles tighten under his skin, and his obviously great weight (he must have weighed at least a ton) was emphasised by his position. He drank slowly and deliberately, raising his head and looking round between the copious draughts. Once or twice he stamped impatiently as a fly stung him, and he swung his tail from side to side viciously lashing his own sides. For the third time his head sank to the level of the water. But almost before it touched the blue surface, and so rapidly that he had no chance to draw back, the iron jaws of the ~~mammoth~~ crocodile fixed and held him. Now indeed began a battle of the giants. The buffalo, his ^{fore}~~four~~ feet planted firmly against the raised ledge of rock, pulled with his vast weight ^{against} that unseen monster who held him as in a vice. The jaws of the crocodile had snapped ^{like} a trap and hung like a leech to the buffalo, weight dragging against weight. It was of course an unequal ^{con fight} battle from the beginning, for the crocodile was uninjured and the hunter, while the buffalo was sore wounded and the hunted. He made a splendid fight of it, though. Throwing his head up, he pulled the crocodile's head right forward on to the rock and tried to gore it with his horns. He was held so firmly that he could not strike, so he raised one fore-leg and attempted to stamp on his tormentor. The crocodile played a waiting game well knowing his prey was secure; he showed no

fight whatever but simply hung on. Slowly, the sweat pouring from the heaving flanks of the buffalo, his breath forcing itself from his body in agonised pantings, he sank on his haunches. Though he was stricken with the certainty of death he was still game. Exhausted, ^{tormented} ~~agonised~~, beaten - sullen defiance still burned in his glazing eye. One more frantic effort he made to free himself, and it seemed as if he must tear himself loose; but his struggles were in vain, and slowly he was pulled forward, the dead weight which held him never shifting or slackening for a moment. His hoofs slid and scratched across the surface of the rock, he hung on the brink, he was jerked over and sank from our sight. White foam and a few blood flecks stained the rock, and for a moment a bright crimson dyed the blue water - this was all that remained to tell the tragic tale.

We had no rifles with us; I never carried one and Pole had not wished to encumber himself on our rough climb. He had a revolver in his pocket, but this would have been small use against the armour-plate of a crocodile. No; we must bide our time and select suitable weapons with which to fight this evil spirit - for fight and conquer him we would.

We crept from our hiding place, stiff and cramped after our long vigil, and stumbled painfully up the steep tracks.

It was a long and difficult climb, but we hardly noticed this; we were numbed with what we had witnessed, and burning with the desire to be avenged on the hideous monster who inhabited this lovely but cursed Lake.

On our arrival in our little camp we parted to rest. We had arranged to talk matters over later in the day, and to decide how best we could tackle and destroy the brute who was so well defended from attack by his environment. While I was lying wide-eyed on my bed, for sleep refused to come to me, Sita (the native Chief) stole quietly to my side. He squatted ~~quietly~~ on the floor, watching me anxiously. ~~He knew~~ ^{Knowing} that we had descended to the water, ~~and~~ he mutely begged me to tell him what we had seen. This I did, partly to relieve my own mind and partly to see if his instincts held any suggestions of how to circumvent this "spirit". He listened attentively to my description of what we had seen, and when I had finished he remained sunk in thought. His silence lasted so long that I became disturbed; he was seated with his body almost rigid, and his eyes fixed and protruding almost as if he had been mesmerised. I called his name and begged him to answer me. After a few seconds he began talking in a slow, toneless voice, as if he were repeating a lesson: he did not move, and his eyes remained fixed on the lake which was visible through my tent door. These were his words, as near as I can remember them.-

"The evil spirit of the Lake will die: he will die by the hand of a white man. I see before me two white men, one a mighty hunter, a man of few words, ~~and~~ who knows no fear; he carries death in his hand, he spares or he slays as he desires. The other is a youth - pale, & feeble in body, fearful of hurting others; full of gentle words, kind and compassionate - I love him as my own brother - ^{(also} ~~He~~ carries death in his hand. My eyes see dimly; a cloud of mist hides the truth from me. This, however, I know: one white man must perish - this is the toll which must be paid to the great spirits of nature for the slaying of the evil one. Death for death, and the body of a black man suffices not. The price of the blood of the evil one is high; the mighty ones can only pay it . . .

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 (The cloud is rising; the truth is upon me; my words are as the words of a spirit. It is the mighty hunter who must perish; he slays but he must be slain. He casts his fire at the evil one, ^(but the evil one) in the fury of his death-agonies, rises from the waters and destroys his destroyer. Nay, but what is this I see? The puny one, he of the gentle tongue, he who kills not even an insect, he rises before my eyes - he shines as with the glory of the sun, and the rage of a great love is upon him. He steps between the doomed hunter and his stricken prey; he takes the death-sentence ^{up} on himself; he

dies in the place of his friend; he is folded for ever in the blue waters. His gentle body has broken the evil spell. His great love has conquered; he has given what was good to wipe out the evil he "

With a start Sita fell forward and collapsed on the ground at my feet. His eyes remained open, but his body had lost its rigidity; his lips were foam-flecked, and he twitched convulsively as he lay. I sprinkled water on his face and laid him where the breeze could play on him. Slowly his eyes closed, his body assumed a natural pose, his breathing became quiet and regular—he slept. As for myself, I am filled with calm contentedness; all is made plain to me—my goal is reached. My small and useless life is to serve in the place of his splendid one - this is what I was being urged forward to accomplish, this is what I was born to die for. What a fulfilment of life! This is indeed the perfecting of the circle. My crystal door is past ~~the blue waters wait to receive me~~

I must have fallen asleep quite suddenly for I awoke to find Sita sitting on his haunches watching me, and my boy bringing me a cup of tea. Sita was quite normal, and though I discreetly questioned him, his mind was a blank on the subject of his own vision or seizure. It is better so. Now, however, I must see Pole; I must learn what he means to do, and I must find

some way of substituting myself when the time comes. How strange it all is - I came to Africa to save my life and yet I came to give it.

Pole means to return to the place we watched from before daylight tomorrow. He will take a goat with him and fasten it on the platform of rock - not too near the edge. To seize the goat the crocodile must expose its head and neck, and Pole will break its spine with a ~~well-directed~~ bullet. I have told him I shall go too - I shall, but not with him. After ~~my~~ ^{the} talk ~~with Pole~~ I went for a stroll, and purposely I went alone. Yesterday Sita pointed out where the second track to the water lay, and, seeing that I was not followed, I made straight for it. It proved considerably longer than the other track, and had evidently not been used for some time. Reaching the bottom I found what was almost a small beach. The rocks sloped quite gently to the water's edge, and one could walk along them for some thirty yards. This I proceeded to do, and to my joy, at the further end of the rocks and dragged up into the over-hanging bush, I found a small native dug-out. It seemed in good condition and actually contained a paddle as well as the usual pole. My plan ~~crystallised~~ ^{shaped itself} as I investigated the canoe. This part of the lake forms a small creek, and the cliffs jut out and screen it completely from our yesterday's hiding place. I shall come here before dawn tomorrow,

launch my canoe and wait for Pole's shot - as he fires I shall
~~come~~ round the point; The rock platform lies just beyond, for
though hidden from one another, the two places are close
together. The gods will decide the rest. I can see no
further. I am perfectly happy for I know that Pole will live,
and the world ^{needs such} ~~wants~~ (men like him. I am but a cumberer of the
earth and shall be taken back to her great bosom again. God
help me.

Note by Dayrell Pole:-

Before dawn on the 28th September I left my tent. My boy told me that Burnet had said he would follow me immediately. I took my ~~five hundred~~⁵⁰⁰ express with me to make sure of doing for the crocodile - he was an enormous brute, the largest I had ever seen. We measured him as well as we could after he was dead and made him thirty-three feet exactly. I fixed the goat in position and made my way to our yesterday's hiding place, momentarily expecting to see Burnet for he had so emphatically said that he wished to be with me. Time slipped along and there was no sign of him. I thought he had gone to sleep again and was rather relieved as he had been in a curious state ever since ~~we got here~~^{our arrival}. Just before the sun rose the goat got restive, bleated pitifully and tried to break itself loose from the ~~things~~^(things) which held it. The lake, which had been colourless and grey, began to brighten, and the strange shadow we had previously noted rose to its surface. This shadow glided nearer and nearer to the rock, and there it lay still and sinister. The goat had ceased struggling and stood panting with terror, its eyes fixed on the water. Slowly the shadow raised itself, and noiselessly the sharp nose and ~~wicked~~ flat head of the crocodile emerged. It could not reach the goat without showing its head and neck, so my shot was a safe one. The great hideous

* Footnote

head pushed forward over the rock, and the huge jaws opened to seize the ~~trembling~~ goat. The upper part of the crocodile was entirely exposed, as it was steadying itself with its fore legs on the ledge. I took a steady aim, and at the second when the goat should have been seized pulled the trigger. I must just have missed the spine (though the shot was fatal) and the beast was stupendous in its rage and agony. It made no attempt to return to the water, but holding itself on to the rock it began to drag itself out. I could not help thinking it had seen me and meant to attack me. It was just going to fire again when I saw that a canoe had rounded the small point on my right. It was within a few yards of the crocodile, and ^{was} still approaching. I could not fire, but I stood up and shouted, waving it to get back. Directly the crocodile saw me it made another effort to reach me. What would have happened I cannot say, for escape was impossible. At this moment the sun burst on to the lake and lit up the canoe and its occupant, bathing them in ~~the~~ a golden flood of light. The ~~hitherto~~ crouching figure stood erect, ~~the~~ ^a pole held harpoon-wise in his hand — the cup of my horror was indeed full, for it was Wilfred Burnet. The canoe glided forward, and Burnet aimed a well-directed blow at the half-emerged crocodile. Feeling itself attacked from behind, it slid back into the water and sank. I called with all my might to ~~Wilfred~~ ^{Burnet} to paddle back, but he stood as if spell-bound,

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the canoe swaying gently from side to side. In a second the waters of the lake began to move, and with incredible rapidity they were churned into a boiling fury. The crocodile was fighting his last enemy - death. The canoe heaved and pitched with increasing force, and suddenly it spun round, pitched backwards and disappeared. As the canoe sank, the crocodile rose to the surface, struggling and spouting blood; its enormous tail lashed the waters into a thick foam and struck the still form of Burnet which had just appeared. The blow seemed to break his body - he turned over and sank in the whirlpool. Gradually the waters quieted, and as they did so I stripped off my clothes and dived in. My search was fruitless.....

Sita and I watched by the lake all day. In the evening, as the sun was setting, the dead crocodile rose and floated. But there was no sign of my dear companion, who, unstayed by a horror surely unequalled, had premeditatedly given up his life for me. He was sleeping in the cool waters of the lake, and they would not give him up.
