

Duke of Brabant, the Institute arranged its organisation in Africa, settled its administrative policy, and commenced on its first programme for the scientific exploration of the wonderful domain of the National Park.

The results of the studies carried out were, in November 1954, the creation in Ruanda of a new Park, the « Parc National de la Kagera » and a further extension of the « Parc National Albert » the sections of which, since then, have come to constitute a continuous band between Lake Kivu and Lake Edward.

The creation of the « Parc National de la Kagera » justified the change in title of the Institute. The « Parc National Albert » became the « Institut des Parcs Nationaux du Congo Belge ».

This new decree, dated November 26th 1954, was intended to revise the statute of the Institute, as a result of the practical experience gained during the first five years of activity.

The following year another decree, dated November 12th 1955, incorporated in the « Parc National Albert » the Belgian waters of Lake Edward (*Photo 5*), the plains of the upper and middle Semliki and the western slopes of the Ruwenzori Range, thus increasing the total area of this Park to nearly a million hectares (approximately two and a half million acres).

Finally, on March 17th 1958, the « Parc National de la Garamba » was created by special decree, on the borders of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, between the rivers Aka and Dungu and close to the Elephan-t training Station at Ganga-na-Bodio.

Another expedition, during which Akeley lost his life (*Photo 4*), explored the district between Lakes Kivu and Edward and brought back sufficient information to permit in 1929 of a considerable extension of the small reserve of 1925.

Then appeared, in the decree of July 9th 1929, the important principle which decided the independant character of the « Institut des Parcs Nationaux du Congo Belge ».

The Administration of the territories thus set aside as natural reserves was confided to an autonomous organisation « Parc National Albert », with its own civil rights and directed by an Administrative Commission and a managing Committee, responsible only to the Minister for the Colonies.

The institution thus constituted was endowed, thanks to its rational charter, with the freedom of action indispensable for carrying out a far-sighted policy.

There was another great innovation: The Administrative Commission of the « Parc National Albert » consisting of sixteen Belgians, had also eight foreign members, all people of international standing and particularly interested in the problems of the protection of nature.

On this Commission six countries are represented: England, the United States, France, Holland, Italy and Sweden.

From 1950 to 1954, at the instigation of its President, H.R.H. the

gorillas, living near the peaks of the extinct volcanoes, Mikeno, Kartsimbi and Visoke (*Photo 5*).

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4. Kabana (Mikeno-Kartsimbi, 2,500 m.)
 (to the right) and Lake Edward.
 (Photo J.P. Harroy).



5. Kamander.
 Moonlight on Lake Edward.
 (Photo J.P. Harroy).

III. Local Organisation



7. «Parc National de la Kagera». - Savanna. - (Photo J. P.

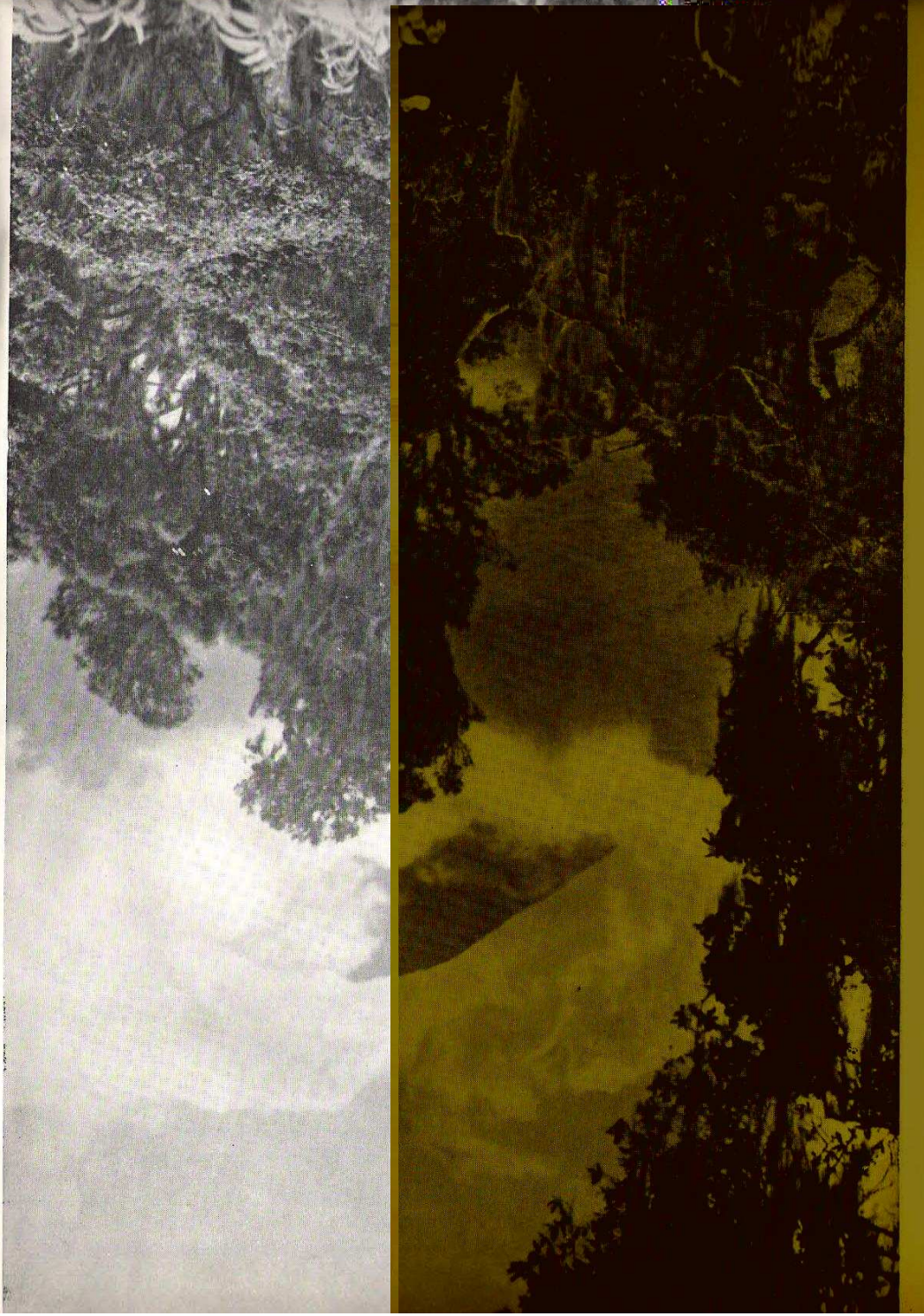
THE administration in Africa of the National Parks is delegated to one or more Commissioners.

« Parc National Albert », the most important in view of its size, position, touristic interest and variety of animal and vegetable species, is divided into two zones, one under the authority of a Commissioner domiciled at Rutshuru and the other under a Commissioner living at Mutsera, on the western slopes of Ruwenzori.

In the « Parcs Nationaux de la Caramba et de la Kagera », administration of the former is carried out by the Manager of the Elephant-training Station at Gangala-na-Bodio, and control of the latter is in the hands of a member of the Territorial Administration of Ruanda. The territories set apart as reserves have been chosen in such a way that practically no ground suitable for colonisation is included in the area covered by the National Parks.

The rugged chain of active and extinct volcanoes (Photo 6), the plain of comparatively recent lava, the barren and fly-ridden plains of Rwindi-Rutshuru and of the upper and middle Semliki, are all as unsuited for habitation by colonists or natives as the steep slopes and snowclad summits of Ruwenzori. The same is true of the Caramba savannas and the barren hills (Photo 7) or swampy reaches of the « Parc National de la Kagera ».

As regards the native population, this has been reduced to a minimum. To enable the Institute to ensure effective preservation, it has been found necessary in certain cases to move native inhabitants to beyond the zones of strict reserve. These transfers have been effected either permanently after the purchase of the native rights in accordance with the laws in force, or temporarily, under the evacuation provisions established to assist the fight against sleeping sickness. The sections of the National Parks are divided into sub-sections for supervision, for which purpose native keepers are employed. These latter are often aided by pygmy assistants. The activities of these keepers are controlled and supervised by the Commissioners.



6. A view taken from
Mabuye (3,000 m.).
Columbian volcano. Mountain and lakes

IV. THE "PARC NATIONAL ALBERT"

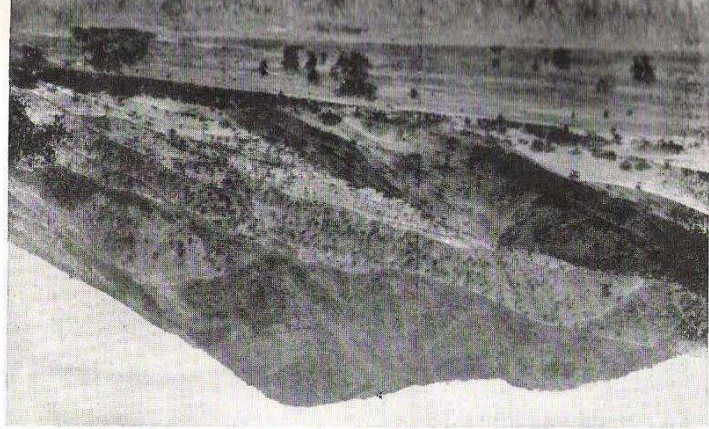
A. GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION

EVERYONE can conjure up a picture of the great «Albertine Rift», that huge trench, marked by the series of great African lakes, and stretching along the eastern borders of the Belgian Congo. It has an average width of 50 kilometres (appr. 30 miles) and is several thousands of kilometres long, bounded on the east and west by an escarpment rising in places over 1.000 metres (3.300 feet) (Photo 8). To the north of Lake Kivu it is closed in by the volcanic chain of Virunga or Mufumbiro.

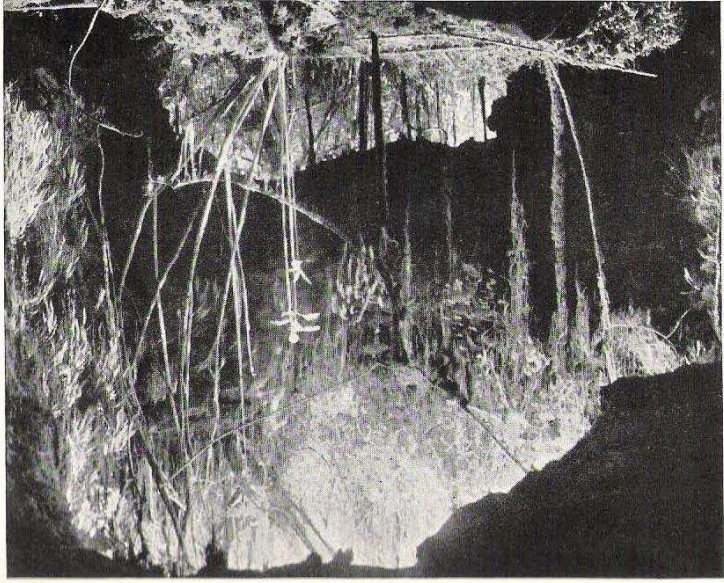
This geological accident, of relatively recent date, has formed the watershed between the basins of the Nile and the Congo.

The «Parc National Albert» is situated at the bottom of this «Rift» between Lake Kivu to the south and the first degree of latitude North, covering a length of about 300 kilometres (190 miles). To the east and west it is literally walled in by the scarps of the «Rift», which are so high and precipitous that they act as a serious barrier to botanical or zoological migration. Its geographical position, therefore, makes it ideal for the purpose for which it is intended, a centre for biological study immune from outside influence.

For administrative purposes the «Parc National Albert» is subdivided into seven sections, each bearing the name of a notable geographical feature and each offering a distinct geological, botanical, and zoological aspect. These sections, from South to North, are known as Mikeno, Nyamuragira, Rwindi-Rutshuru, Lake Edward, Upper Semliki, Middle Semliki and Ruwenzori.



8. Kivuiba (Plain of Lake Edward) - Escarpment. (Photo G.F. de Witte).



9. Tshamungussa (Northern slope of Visoke, 2.250 m.). - - Crotto. Ferns and lianas. (Photo G.F. de Witte).

a. THE MIKENO SECTION.

To the east of the Coma-Rutshuru road, on the borders of Uganda, touching the Congo-Ruanda frontier, this section includes the slopes situated in Belgian territory of the six extinct volcanoes: Mikeno 4.437 m. (appr. 14.600 f.), Karisimbi 4.507 m. (appr. 14.800 f.), Visoke 3.711 m. (appr. 12.200 f.), Sabinyo 3.501 m. (appr. 11.500 f.), Cahinga 3.475 m. (appr. 11.400 f.), Muhavura 4.127 m. (appr. 13.600 f.). These volcanoes, extinct for many centuries, show traces of deep erosion, but are now densely covered with recent vegetation.

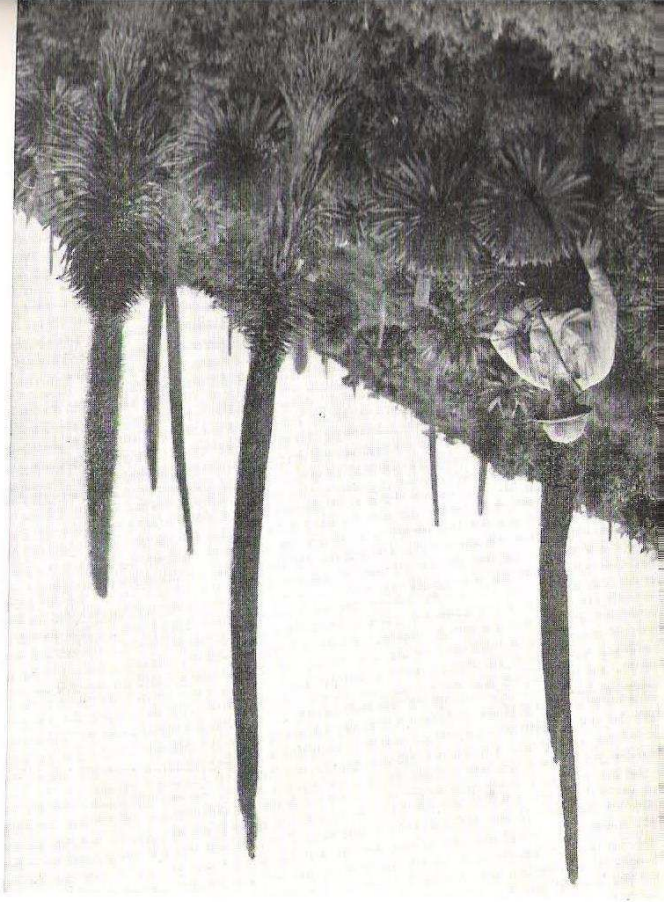
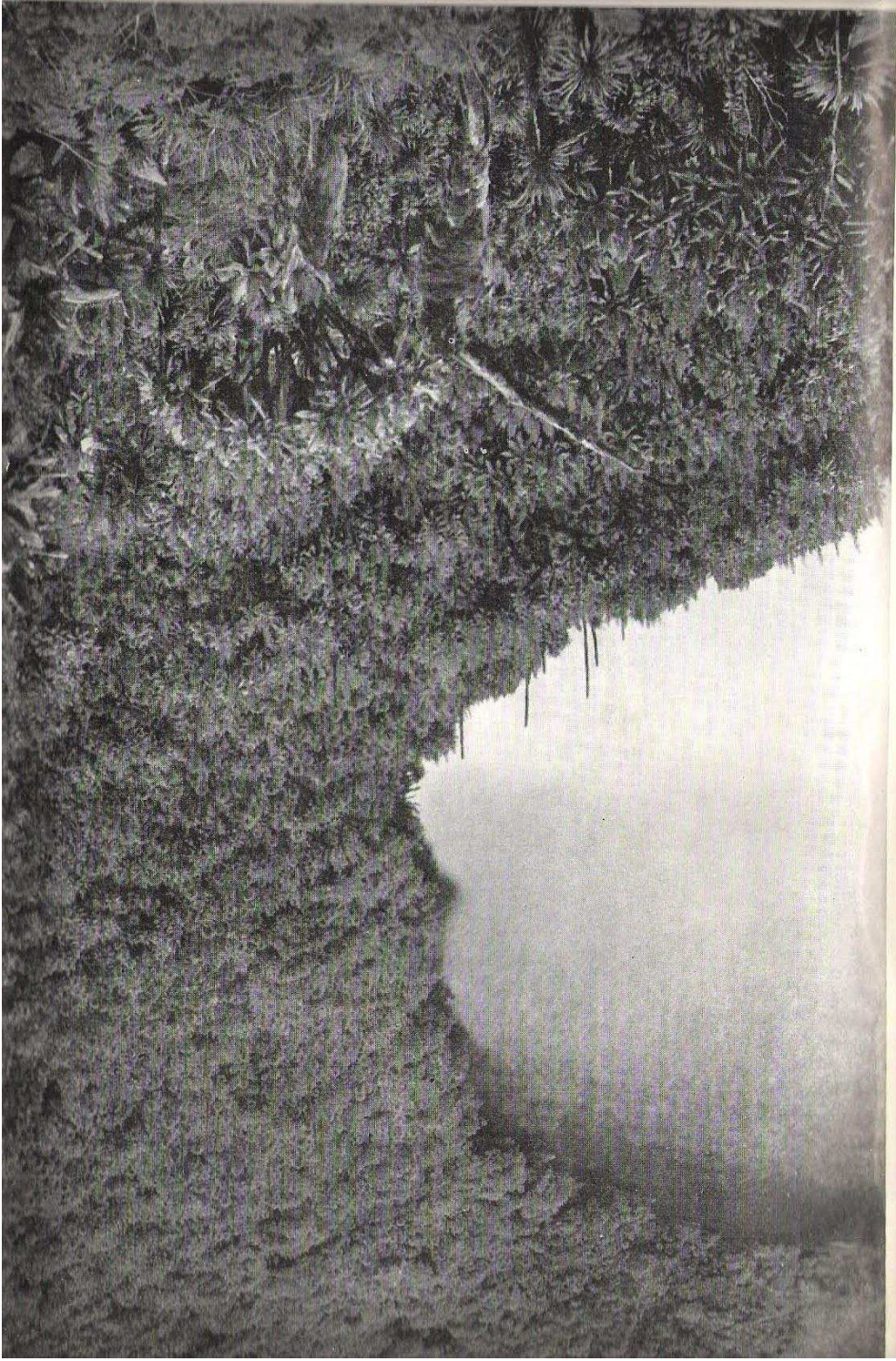
The altitudes of these volcanoes and their close proximity to the Equator subject this vegetation to very unusual climatic conditions, thus accounting for the strange types of flora to be found at the higher levels. Around 2.600 m. (8.500 f.) the vegetation found at the lower altitudes (Photo 9) gives place to a zone of bamboo (Photo 13), some of which are exceptionally large.

Toward 3.000 m. (10.000 f.) *hagenias* flourish (Photos 4 and 6). These are the last signs of the forest proper. Here amid typical undergrowth with wild celery live the gorillas, for whose protection the first measures were taken.

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Then the climber passes through different stages of vegetation: hypericum, tree-heather, senecios and lobelias, which are the last conspicious plants at these altitudes (Photos 10, 11, 12).
 Still higher, towards 4,000 m. (appr. 13,000 f.), carex, immortelles and alchemilla, blending with the last of the senecios and lobelias, give the scenery a prehistoric appearance. Finally, towards the peaks, there is no vegetation except lichen and moss.
 A great variety of the larger animals is to be found on these slopes, although the altitude would normally be considered too high for them. At nearly 4,000 m. (13,000 f.), elephant, buffalo, leopard, and even lion have been seen, when the dry season causes a shortage of water at the lower levels (Photo 14).
 This region, difficult of access, is closed to tourists and visitors, for reasons already explained, although the natural vegetation flourishing there makes it one of the most picturesque parts of the « Parc National Albert ». Visitors who wish to admire similar fairy-like scenery can do so on the slopes of Ruwenzori.

11. Crater-lake of Visoke.
Lobelia and Senecio.
 (Photo G.-F. de Witte).



10. Muhavura (photo taken near
 the summit, 4,127 m.).
Lobelia.
 (Photo G.-F. de Witte).

To the west of the Mikeno chain lies the section comprising the active volcanoes, the chief of which are Nyamuragira, 5,055 m. (appr. 16,585 f.), and Nyiragongo, 5,470 m. (appr. 17,946 f.). A third centre of volcanic activity, at a lower altitude and less impressive in appearance, is formed by the small volcano Rumoka (Photo 21) situated close to Lake Kivu, to the north of the Kateruzi Strait. The eruption which took place here in 1912 almost changed Sake Bay into a land-locked lake (Photo 17).

This section, about 50 kilometres (31 miles) long, consists entirely of streams of lava, old and comparatively recent, on which growths of typical vegetation can be seen in all their stages of development (Photo 18). The juxtaposition here of lava-flows of different yet well defined periods allows the botanist to study the development and spread of vegetation over a one-time barren region.

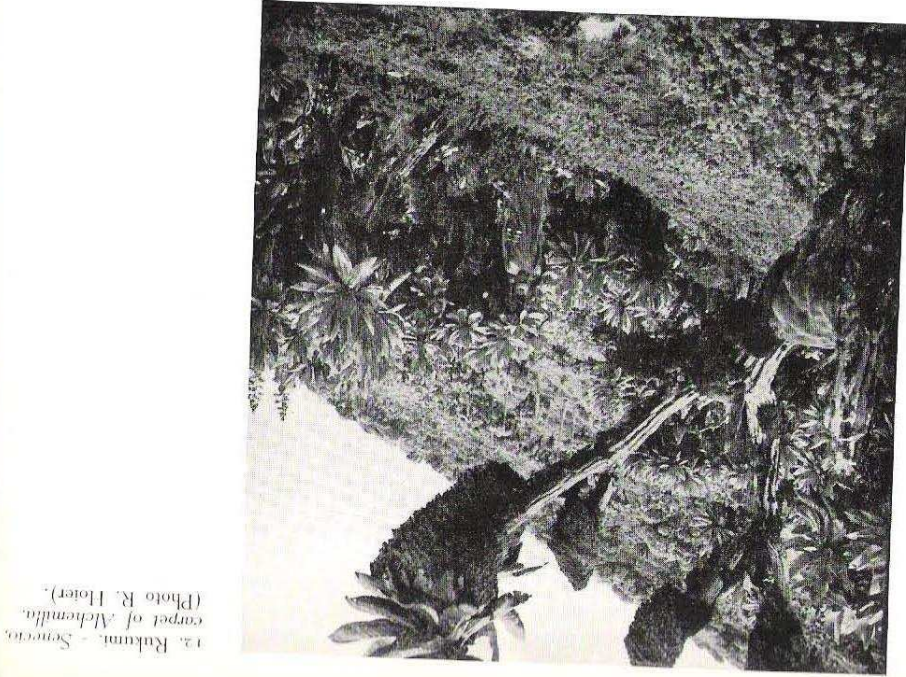
In the immediate vicinity of Rumoka, the lava from the 1912 eruption is already covered with a considerable amount of vegetation. This appears to have but a distant relation to the magnificent forest covering the plain of lava, from which emerge the summits of Nyiragongo and Nyamuragira.

The trees in this forest, which include mahogany of considerable girth, grow on roots widely spread out like a huge grid, for ten inches

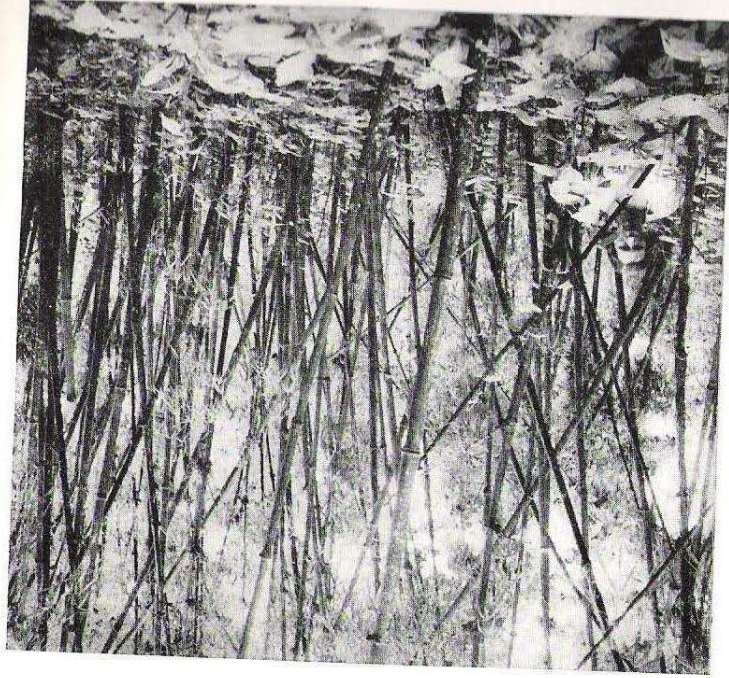
11. THE NYAMURAGIRA SECTION.



14. Karumbi
at 4,000 m.,
killed by lava.
(Photo
J.P. Harroy).



12. Rukumbi - Senecio
carpet of *Alchemilla*.
(Photo R. Hofer).



13. Rweru (Northern slope
of Karumbi, 2,800 m.),
Bamboo.
(Photo J.P. Harroy).