

Dearborn, near Detroit, in which the whole range of objects made or used in the United States from the earliest days is on view. The museum was entirely financed by Henry Ford because of his personal interest in the history of the United States.

This idea is beginning to spread in South Africa where, for example, the Rembrandt Tobacco Corporation has started sponsoring a museum at Graaff-Reinet. As South African museums are always short of money to pay skilled workers to prepare the displays required to show the treasures of the institution to advantage, this may be a method worth introducing. But discretion is essential if our museums are not to degenerate into advertising fairs. The intention is not that this should be a reason for the authorities, whose responsibility it is to provide a museum, to curtail the amounts they vote for such amenities. The point is that additional and better displays can be provided if some advertising funds are made available to museums without too obtrusive advertising to detract from the exhibit itself.

It is being said on all sides that within the next few years the number of tourists to South Africa is going to be far greater than anything ever experienced before. It is therefore necessary to refurbish our museums so that they will be worthy of our great country and compare favourably with those in the home towns of the tourists. There is undoubtedly adequate material available in the historical field to build up as attractive and interesting displays as any overseas museum can offer. It is only necessary to mention South Africa's archaeological, ethnological, botanical, zoological, and historical treasures at present buried in museum storerooms because of the lack of adequate display space. It is known that there are things such as, for example, various types of fire engines or steam engines, which are reasonably plentiful here, but which have disappeared in many overseas countries as the result of war. These should be shown in such a manner that they become major tourist attractions. We still have relics of the days of narrow gauge railways, of early mining, of animal-drawn transport, and of an African way of life of earlier centuries, and our museums should be placed in such a financial position that it will be possible to have the skilled and imaginative staff to display these unusual items in such a manner that our museums will attract overseas visitors in the same way as is the case in Europe and America.

Sometimes assistance—financially or otherwise—in obtaining exhibits is most welcome. The Africana Museum has, for example, on various occasions been asked to pay the large transportation firms a token amount for moving unwieldy items such as trams or buses for the James Hall Museum of Transport. On other occasions renovations on early vehicles have been carried out at cost or less because the owner of the firm doing the work has been sufficiently public-spirited to contribute his share to the preservation of South Africa's past.

Endowments take various forms, and here individuals can be of great assistance. Various memorial collections have been built up

with funds presented by an individual or a group in memory of a public man or a relative. South Africans are generous, but few museums have interested the public generally in the need for endowments which would perpetuate someone's name. The time has come for us to take a leaf from the Americans' book and be more active in obtaining endowments.

Gifts of exhibits are received from many sources, and specialised collections brought together by a knowledgeable enthusiast can be of great importance. It is of interest to note that the Africana Museum has over the years benefited from a number of such collections, for example, in the field of ethnology from the Junod, Maingard, and the Roberts families. More recently the gift of the collection brought together by the Photographic Foundation to illustrate the history of photography has enabled the Africana Museum to illustrate this aspect of our history to advantage. Until such time as the Africana Museum has its new building the Pharmaceutical Society of South Africa is storing an excellent pharmaceutical collection for the Museum.

In these, and a number of other ways, patrons and sponsors are taking more and more interest in museums throughout the country and enabling institutions to preserve something more of South Africa's cultural heritage than would otherwise have been possible.

A. H. S.

IN SEARCH OF THE UNICORN

(SUBSTANCE OF A TALK TO THE
S.A. LIBRARY ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 1967)

WITHOUT KNOWING MUCH about either, I have for some years dabbled in cartography and heraldry, and looked a little at both subjects mainly from the Africana angle. Among the many facets of these subjects which have intrigued me, the part played by fabulous beasts in general, and by the unicorn in particular, in both heraldry and cartography, has caught my fancy. So, there might be others who have a liking similar to mine for these creatures of the imagination, and I might be fortunate enough to hold the attention of my readers who are not usually interested in a disquisition which, as an early nineteenth century geographer, William Vincent, wrote, is curious rather than useful.

The unicorn in heraldry

Let us start with heraldry and with the coats of arms of South African families. C. Pama's *Die Wapens van die Ou Afrikaanse Families* records at least half-a-dozen South African families who include the unicorn as part of their coat of arms. Among them are Bergh, Bester, Erasmus, Krige, Pass and some of the Meyers. In these

coats of arms the unicorn appears in various heraldic positions as a charge, or device, on the shield. Why he comes to be there, can, in most cases, no longer be stated with any degree of certainty, except that the unicorn symbolises power, purity, and Christ. In a few cases, the unicorn or, more usually, his head, is used as the crest in a South African coat of arms. The Meyer coat of arms noted earlier and that of Grey College in Bloemfontein are examples. The last, of course, is based on the family coat of arms of the Cape Governor, Sir George Grey, familiar to every collector because of the munificent gift to the S.A. Library, Cape Town, of the finest collection in South Africa of mediaeval illuminated manuscripts and books printed before the year 1500, as well as other great literary treasures such as the first and second folios of Shakespeare. Do not let us forget that we also owe the only surviving copy of many of the oldest works in South African Bantu and Hottentot languages to Sir George Grey's interest in the early publications of the South African mission and other presses.

To indicate, no doubt, the healing properties associated with the horn of the unicorn, the unicorn occurs as a supporter of the coat of arms used by the Apothecaries in Britain, and by the Wellcome Institute. Because the unicorn signifies rarity, it is a favourite sign of goldsmiths in Britain, and, perhaps more to the taste of collectors, it was for the same reason, used as a printer or bookseller's sign, for example, as in the case of the "Unicorn and Bible" in Paternoster Row, London, during the seventeenth century.

Everyone who has ever handled British government publications, and particularly British bluebooks of which there are many of very special South African interest, will be familiar with the British Royal coat of arms which appears in various forms on most of these publications. A second look will show that one of the supporters, i.e. figures which stand on either side of the shield, holding it up as it were, is a unicorn with a crown round its neck, or as the heraldic description has it—gorged with a coronet. When James VI of Scotland also became James I of England, and the union between England and Scotland was achieved, the unicorn was taken from the Scottish Royal Arms in 1603 and the lion from the English Royal Arms to form the supporters of the newly designed Royal Arms. Much to the annoyance of the more conservative authorities on heraldry *The Times* of London shows the British arms with the supporters couchant, i.e. crouching with the animals' heads looking forward and their tails between their hind legs and standing up behind their heads.

I am sure various readers have been reminded of the nursery rhyme:

"The lion and the unicorn
were fighting for the crown
The lion beat the unicorn
All round about the town.
Some gave them white bread,
And some gave them brown;

Some gave them plum cake
And drummed them out of town."

Iona and Peter Opie in *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*, (p. 269) have a learned note in which they point out that the antagonism between the lion and the unicorn reflected in this rhyme is popularly supposed to refer to the amalgamation of the English and Scottish Royal Arms, but in fact this is not so, as fighting between these two beasts is legendary in many countries, dating back to as remote a time as 3500 B.C. From Persepolis in Persia comes, for instance, an ancient tile showing a fight between a lion and a unicorn, and the same incident is depicted on an ancient coin. Even in English Edmund Spenser wrote of the animosity between the lion and the unicorn in the *Faerie Queene* (II, v) published in 1590, some years before the union of England and Scotland.

There is also an old tale, told by Helen Jacobson in *The First Book of Mythical Beasts* (p. 32) of how the unicorn chased the lion across the skies. When the unicorn began to gain on it, the lion dodged behind a tree. The unicorn rushed headlong into the tree, plunging its horn into the trunk. Before the unicorn could free itself, the lion leapt on it, and killed the unicorn. That is how the lion became the King of the beasts. The unicorn is a very live figure even today in children's literature as is evident from the part it plays in two Carnegie Award Winners—Elizabeth Goudge's charming *The Little White Horse* in 1946, and C. S. Lewis's poetic *The Last Battle* of 1956. Lynette Muir's *The Unicorn Window*, published in 1956, set in the fantasy land of heraldry with its fascinating mediaeval traditions and courtesy, is a delightful and unusual children's book in which the unicorn is the central figure.

While we are in the nursery, do not let us forget the famous section of Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*, where Alice attends the fight between the Lion and the Unicorn, and Alice says to the Unicorn: "Do you know, I always thought unicorns were fabulous monsters, too! I never saw one alive before!" This half-uncertain feeling about unicorns is reflected in a statement by J. Franklyn in his book, *Heraldry* (p. 83) published in 1965, where the author says that the unicorn is the best known of the fictitious creatures, and not everyone who knows the unicorn is quite certain that it is fictitious. Compared with the unicorn, the giraffe is undoubtedly a highly improbable animal, the armadillo and the ant-eater are unbelievable, and the seahorse equally unreal. So, why should we be surprised that generations, who had never seen a lion or a leopard or a unicorn, simply accepted them all as animals of another clime? How many of us can describe even the unicorn of heraldry with any degree of certainty? It seems to resemble a horse in head and body, and has a horse's mane, but a goat's beard, the tail of a heraldic lion, cloven hoofs, tufted hocks, while its most characteristic feature is one long straight, spiralled horn projecting from its forehead. The unicorn, undoubtedly is the most glorious of the mythical creatures, and has even today in this sceptical age, retained much of its magic and

glamour. As Odell Shepard, the author of one of the most extensive modern studies of the unicorn (*The Lore of the Unicorn*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1930), points out, the unicorn of heraldry was devised in the classic tradition and has rather more of the horse than of the goat in its composition. It is an aristocrat and fit for a gentleman's crest. Because of its veneration for womanhood, the unicorn has a close affinity with mediaeval European chivalry and is indeed a worthy emblem of Chaucer's "verray parfit gentle Knight."

The Chinese unicorn

As is the case with so many marvels, the unicorn is first met with in the East, if Peter Lunn is correct in his *Fabulous Beasts* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1951), where he associates the unicorn with the Ki-lin of the Chinese sages. The Ki-lin's first recorded visit occurred about 2800 B.C. when the Emperor Fu Hsi was sitting near the Yellow River wondering how to express his thoughts regarding the universe in such a way that they would be intelligible to posterity. The Chinese unicorn came out of the river to the Emperor. Fu Hsi carefully observed and copied the magic signs on the unicorn's back, and from these signs together with his knowledge of the movement of the stars, the Emperor, according to tradition, evolved the first written language of China. The Ki-lin is like a large deer with the tail of an ox, the hoofs of a horse, and it has a single short horn. Its voice is like the sound of the bell of a monastery and it is the incarnate essence of the five elements, fire, water, wood, metal and earth. By nature it is so gentle that when it walks it lifts its feet high and places them most carefully, in true Buddhist tradition, lest it should inadvertently step on a living creature; the Ki-lin eats only dead grass, so that it does not injure the living plant. It lives alone in remote regions and cannot be captured or slain.

The resemblances between the Ki-lin of China and the unicorn of Western Europe are certainly sufficient to presuppose a possible common origin in some real or fabulous creature. Perhaps one more reference to the Ki-lin will be permitted. Once upon a time there was a good woman in China who was very sad indeed that she had not borne her husband a child. She went for a walk alone in a far away place brooding on her sorrow, and, unbeknownst to herself walked in the footsteps of the Ki-lin. He appeared to her and dropped a piece of jade at her feet. On the jade was the following inscription: "The son of the essence of water shall succeed to the withering monarchy and be a throneless king." And it came to pass in time that the good woman and her husband were overjoyed by the birth of a son. The son she bore became the great Chinese sage Confucius. Towards the end of the philosopher's life the Ki-lin again appeared, and Confucius completed his *Spring and Autumn Annals* with the record of the unicorn's appearances, and died shortly after. Very little is known about Confucius's personal life, and these traditional tales supply charming answers to our questions.

The unicorn in literature

Exactly when the legend of the unicorn originated is veiled in the mists of time, but it is first mentioned in the literature of the western world circa 400 B.C. Ctesias, a Greek who was physician to the court of Persia during the reigns of Darius II and Artaxerxes, is mentioned by Xenophon. After sixteen years the physician returned to his hometown and there wrote two works, one of which, his *Indica*, is preserved in the form of an abstract made in the ninth century A.D. by Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople. The passage, as Photius summarised it, reads as follows in English:

"There are in India certain wild asses which are as large as horses, and larger. Their bodies are white, their heads dark red, and their eyes dark blue. They have a horn on the forehead which is about a foot and a half in length. The dust filed from this horn is administered in a potion as a protection against deadly drugs. The base of this horn, for some two hands' breadth above the brow, is pure white; the upper part is sharp and of a vivid crimson; and the remainder, or middle portion, is black. Those who drink out of these horns, made into drinking vessels, are not subject, they say, to convulsions or to the holy disease (epilepsy). Indeed, they are immune even to poisons if, either before or after swallowing such, they drink wine, water, or anything else from these beakers. Other asses, both the tame and the wild, and in fact all animals with solid hoofs, are without the ankle-bone and have no gall in the liver, but these have both the ankle-bone and the gall. This ankle-bone, the most beautiful I have ever seen, is like that of an ox in general appearance and in size, but it is as heavy as lead and its colour " is that of cinnabar through and through. The animal is exceedingly swift and powerful, so that no creature, neither the horse nor any other, can overtake it." (Shepard, O. *The Lore of the Unicorn*, p. 27-28).

Some students of unicorn lore tell us that the basic source of this account of the unicorn was the Indian one-horned rhinoceros. The next witness for the unicorn is no less a person than Aristotle (born 384 B.C.), who accepted the existence of such an animal. The story went on being embellished first by Aelian in his *Historia Animalium* and then by Pliny the Elder (A.D. 23-79) in his famous *Natural History*, and finally by Caius Julius Solinus (fl. 3rd century A.D.) in his *Polyhistoria*. The last was translated into English by Arthur Golding in 1587 and the relevant passage reads:

"But the cruellest is the Unicorn, a Monster that belloweth horrible, bodyed like a horse, footed like an Elephant, tailed like a Swyne, and headed like a Stagge. His horne sticketh out of the midds of hys forehead, of a wonderful brightness about foure foote long, so sharp, that whatsoever he pusheth at, he striketh it through easily. He is never caught alive; kylled he may be, but taken he cannot bee."

To conclude the references to the unicorn in classical times, it must be mentioned that Julius Caesar in *De Bello Gallico* (Bk VI, 16) bears witness to the existence of a one-horned animal rather like a giant stag.

Willy Ley in *The Lungfish and the Unicorn: an Excursion into Romantic Zoology* (London, Hutchinson's Scientific and Technical Publications, 1948), p. 34 notes that Semitic literature delighted in exaggerating the size of the unicorn, while the Arabs said that the unicorn loved to pierce elephants with its horn, but that it never succeeded in shaking off the carcass from its horn. After three or four dead elephants had accumulated on its horn, the unicorn lost its mobility, and fell prey to another fabulous creature, the bird known as the roc. The Talmud asserts that the unicorn was so large that it could not enter the ark and was towed along behind by a cord tied to its horn. The poor animal had to swim for the duration of the flood and could only occasionally rest the tip of its horn on the ark.

But as various authorities have noted, the legend of the unicorn is unlikely to have survived as far as the common man in Western Europe was concerned if it were not for the fact that the unicorn is mentioned many times in the Bible. The Authorised Version uses the word unicorn because in the Septuagint (i.e. the Greek translation of the Old Testament mostly made in Alexandria in the first half of the third century B.C.) the Greek word "monokeros" (one horn) was used to translate the Hebrew "re'em." These old translators were not quite certain, we are told, of the meaning of the Hebrew word, but the Hebrew animal seemed to have many of the characteristics of the unicorn, so unicorn in its Greek form it became. Consequently later versions of the Bible in Latin, French, German, English and Dutch used the word for unicorn to translate the Hebrew "re'em", and so Western Europe came to accept the unicorn on the authority of the Bible.

Also in Alexandria, but in about A.D. 300 under Christian influence, a whole body of animal stories was collected and fitted with a moral, rather like the fables of Aesop. It is believed that each fable began with a quotation from Scripture followed by the phrase: "But the physiologus (i.e. the naturalist) says," which preceded a description of the particular animal, and then followed the moral to be deduced from what went before. The collection became known as the *Physiologus* and from this developed the mediaeval "Bestiary," of which an easily accessible example is *The Book of Beasts*, a Latin Bestiary of the 12th century translated by T. H. White and published by Jonathan Cape in 1954. Here we meet the mediaeval Christian idea of the unicorn which is "a very small animal like a kid, excessively swift, with one horn in the middle of his forehead, and no hunter can catch him. But he can be trapped by the following stratagem. A virgin girl is led to where he lurks, and there she is sent off by herself into the wood. He soon leaps into her lap when he sees her, and embraces her, and hence he gets caught. Our Lord Jesus Christ is also a Unicorn spiritually," etc. (p. 20-21). This is the unicorn of mediaeval art and literature in which the erotic element is manifest, but nevertheless the unicorn has long

been looked upon as the symbol of purity, innocence and chastity, and been used as a decorative motif in every type of Christian art.

Cosmas Indicopleustis, a Greek from Alexandria, who was a merchant travelling in Ethiopia and the areas round the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, wrote his *Christian Topography circa 550*, and he tells yet another story concerning the unicorn: "This animal is called the unicorn, but I cannot say that I have seen him. But I have seen four brazen figures of him set up in the four-towered palace of the King of Ethiopia. From these figures I have been able to draw him as you see. They speak of him as a terrible beast and quite invincible, and say that all his strength lies in his horn. When he finds himself pursued by many hunters and on the point of being caught, he springs up to the top of some precipice whence he throws himself down and in the descent turns a somersault so that the horn sustains all the shock of the fall, and he escapes unhurt." The drawing to which Cosmas refers has been reproduced in the Hakluyt Society edition of 1897 of his book translated from the Greek and edited by J. W. McCrindle. It clearly shows the tusk of the narwhal, which was often treasured as the horn of the unicorn instead of the rhinoceros horn, which generally did duty for that of the fabulous beast.

Isidore of Seville, the churchman and encyclopaedic writer, who died in A.D. 636, summarised all knowledge accessible to him in *Etymologiae*, which was for centuries the most popular work of reference in Europe. This work was read, copied, imitated and almost learned by heart throughout the Middle Ages, and his account of the unicorn fixed the story of the unicorn firmly in the popular imagination. From this time to the present day no other fabulous beast has been as significant in literature or art. The relationship of the rhinoceros and the unicorn is rather like that of Sancho Panza to Don Quixote, or of the caterpillar to the butterfly.

Marco Polo, the Venetian traveller, who lived for many years in the East in the 13th century and visited countries unknown to Europeans until modern times, in his famous Book (*circa 1300*) described the rhinoceros as the unicorn and noted that it was "a passing ugly beast to look upon, and is not in the least like that which our stories tell of as being caught in the lap of a virgin" (*The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, tr. & ed. by Sir Henry Yule, 3rd ed. v. 2 p. 285).

Every popular or learned book on geography or travel for the next few hundred years mentioned the unicorn and its horn. There was for example, Sir John Mandeville with his book of marvels (c. 1360); the cosmographies of the Renaissance in which geography, astronomy, history and the natural sciences were described under regions, with maps and illustrations. Petrus Apianus (1495-1554) and Sebastian Münster (1489-1552) published such works in the first half of the sixteenth century, and, as is expected, the unicorn figures here as it did in the famous best seller of the late fifteenth century, the *Nuremberg Chronicle*. Between 1550 and 1700, Shepard (*The Lore of the Unicorn*, p. 156) states, that twenty-five extended discussions of the unicorn were

published, and Bacci's *Discourse* published in Florence in 1573, has a bibliography. So, it is obviously impossible to record even a fraction of the publications here, but mention must be made of Conrad Gesner's *Zoology* published in 1551 under the title *Historia Animalium*, as his illustration of the unicorn (reproduced here) is the picture most familiar of all.

With all this wealth of material it is not surprising to find the unicorn being used in every possible way ranging from watermarks on paper made in France, England and Holland from the 16th to the 18th century (cf. Edward Heawood's *Watermarks*. Hilversum, Paper Publication Society) through medals, gold coinage, rings and tapestries, to the name of a constellation between Canis Major and Canis Minor so designated in 1624 by Jacobus Bartschius.

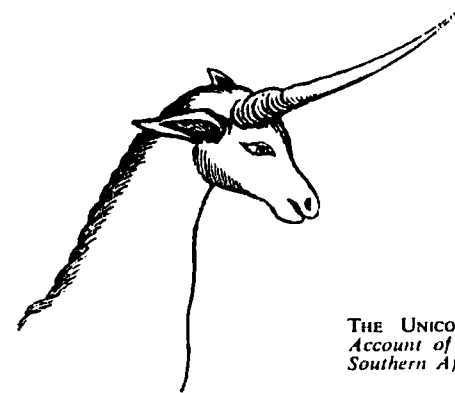
The unicorn on maps and rocks

The unicorn as a constellation appears on the most magnificent of all decorative maps—those of the heavens published by the famous Dutch cartographers of the seventeenth century, when no country could touch Holland in the engraving of maps, and the house of Blaeu in Amsterdam was pre-eminent in Holland.

But much earlier than these star charts the unicorn had found its way to land maps and particularly as decoration on the African continent. The unicorn appears with a horn almost as long as its body in the region of the Upper Nile on the unique world map dated *circa* 1305 preserved in the Cathedral of Hereford in England. This is in the tradition as the many early accounts concerning Prester John who, as befitted a potentate of his stature, had numerous unicorns in his domains, particularly in those mountains of Central Africa, known as the Mountains of the Moon. The manuscript map of Africa made by the Italian Vesconte Maggioli in about 1504 and exhibited in Florence in 1954–55, shows a magnificent unicorn a little farther south standing alongside an elephant, a tortoise, and a camel. Blundeville, the Englishman who in 1594 published a lengthy description of the famous world map or planisphere of Petrus Plancius of Antwerp, made special mention of the note on the map in which the unicorn is recorded as living in Ethiopia. The text of this rare description is to be found in *Wieder's Monumenta Cartographica*, known to South Africans because it contains reproductions of the manuscript atlas by Johannes Vingboons *c.* 1660, which included the earliest Dutch views and maps of the settlement at the Cape. The Dutch who colonised the Cape sent out exploring expeditions into the interior of Southern Africa for the express purpose of finding Prester John and his treasures, no doubt, including the unicorn. This belief in the existence of the unicorn in Southern Africa was strengthened by reports from the interior of the Cape of Good Hope of drawings on rocks depicting the unicorn among known South African animals. The legend "Drawing on the Rocks of an Unicorn and other Wild beasts" occurs on the map accompanying Sir John Barrow's

Travels, being dated 1 September 1800 in the first edition, and 10 December 1805 in the second edition of this well-known item of Africa.

The legend appears in the vicinity of the Tarka Berg near the Bamboesberg in the Eastern Cape. In his *Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa* of which the first edition of the first volume was published by Cadell & Davies in 1801 and the second edition in 1806, Barrow included a line drawing (reproduced here) of the unicorn's head very similar to the European concept, but of which the author states that it is a facsimile of a drawing found on a rock (p. 313 and p. 269).



THE UNICORN FROM J. BARROW'S *An Account of Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa*, 1801, VOL. 1, PAGE 313.

Unfortunately in the drawing the body and the legs were concealed by an elephant "that stood directly before it." In 1847 Sir John Barrow in his *Autobiographical Memoir* (London, John Murray) quoted a letter from Lord Macartney from the "Castle of Good Hope" dated 24 July 1798 in which the following occurs:

"I must not forget to tell you that, from what I hear, I am almost persuaded of the existence of the unicorn, ten feet high; the horn of brown ivory, two and a half feet long, twisted, and tapering to the point, thick at the root as a man's arm, and thick as a man's finger at the end; hoofs and tail like a bullock's; a black short mane; skin like a horse's—colour white, watered with black (I have a pair of slippers, said to be made of it); very fierce; roots up trees with its horn, and feeds on the boughs; an object of worship to the inhabitants, etc. I have just put down these loose particulars, as asserted to belong to this wonderful animal. I am using my best endeavours to come to the truth of the matter, and I shall send it to you when cleared up."

Lord Macartney was Governor of the Cape at the time; Barrow was on his staff, and remained at the Cape until 1803, when he returned to England, where he became Second Secretary to the Admiralty, and, as a man of science, a Fellow of the Royal Society. He played a large part in the founding of the Royal Geographical Society, and took a great

interest in exploration. He died in 1848 aged 85 years. Barrow, as behoved a scientifically-minded man, gave much thought to the possibility of finding the unicorn in South Africa, as is evident from the following passage in the second edition of his *Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa* (London, T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1806, vol. 1, p. 275-277):

Colonel Gordon " had several occasions to see the drawings of the unicorn made by the savages; a circumstance to prove the existence of such an animal, on which he used to lay great stress. The following particulars, related to me by the persons themselves, may not perhaps be considered as entirely irrelevant to the subject. I give them as I had them; they carry with them no conviction, though they show at least how imperfect is the knowledge of the natural history of parts bordering immediately on the colony of the Cape, and that much yet remains to be discovered by an attentive traveller.

Adrian Van Yarsveld, of Camdeboo in Graaff Reynet, shot an animal a few years ago, at the point of the Bambosberg, that was entirely unknown to any of the colonists. The description he gave to me of it in writing, taken, as he said, from a memorandum made at the time, was as follows:

'The figure came nearest to that of the quacha, but of a much larger size, being five feet high and eight feet long; the ground color yellowish, with black stripes: of these were four curved ones on each side of the head, eleven of the same kind between the neck and shoulder; and three broad waved lines running longitudinally from the shoulder to the thigh; mane short and erect; ears six inches long, and striped across; tail like the quacha: on the centre of the forehead was an excrescence of a hard boney substance, covered with hair, and resembling the rudiments of a horn; the length of this with the hair was ten inches.'

About the same time, Tjardt Van der Walt, of Olifant's River in Zwellendam, in company with his brother, saw, near the same place, an animal exactly of the shape of a horse, and somewhat larger than the quacha, that had longitudinal black stripes on a light ground; it was grazing among a herd of elands. The two brothers having been some time without food, from their anxiety first to secure an eland, neglected the striped animal, intending afterwards to give chase to it; but his gait was so wonderfully swift, that, bounding towards the mountains, he was presently out of their sight.

Martinus Prinslo, of Bruyntjes Hoogté, when on a hunting excursion, saw behind the same mountain several wild horses, entirely different from either the quacha or the zebra, but they were so shy that they never could approach them sufficiently near to make minute distinctions; they appeared to be of a light cinereous color, without stripes. This, however, might be a deception of sight arising from distance, as dark stripes upon a light ground

cannot be distinguished very far; they form a shade between the two colors, and the lighter tint is predominant; as the primitive colors disposed in concentric circles on a card, and put in motion, will appear white. The black and buff zebra, even when very near it, and especially if in motion, appears of a dull bluish ash color, like the common ass. It is therefore probable that the animals described by the three different persons were of the same species. Vaillant also, who may generally be depended on, when he speaks of animals, mentions his having chased beyond the Namaaquas, day after day in vain, an Isabella colored zebra. This also, in all probability, was of the same kind as the others.

The missionary Vander Kemp mentions a streaked horse of incredible swiftness, which is called by the Hottentots *Kamma*; and he adds, that 'the *Imbo* (a nation residing north-east from Kaffer land, and separated from the sea by the *Malauni*) confirm the report of an unicorn existing in that part of the country. They represent it as a very savage animal; they are horribly afraid of it, as it sometimes overturns their kraals and destroys their houses. They say, that it has a single horn placed on the forehead, which is very long; and that it is entirely distinct from the rhinosceros, with which they are well acquainted.' Vander Kemp is a man of research, and of a different cast from the missionaries in general."

It is of course open to question whether the mere existence of drawings of the unicorn is evidence for assuming that such an animal ever lived, but Barrow argued in this manner, and offered up to five thousand rix dollars to anyone who found a living specimen.

Barrow was neither the first nor the last to be interested in rock paintings of the unicorn. The Swede, Dr. Sparrman, for example, who travelled in South Africa between the years 1772 and 1776, wrote about a drawing of a unicorn about which he had been told by a farmer, but made no claim to having seen the animal himself. He was rather of the opinion that the existence of the unicorn should not be looked upon as a fable (*A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope, etc.* London, G. G. J. & J. Robinson, 1786, vol. 2, 2nd ed., p. 147-149).

The Dutch sea captain, Cornelius de Jong, writing on 16 September 1793 (*Reizen naar de Kaap de Goede Hoop, etc.* Haarlem, Francois Bohn, 1802, Deel 1, p. 202-203), was rather sceptical about the existence of the unicorn, but stated that an old inhabitant of the Cape, Cloete, was willing to procure a unicorn if somebody would pay his expenses. De Jong mentioned the fact that drawings of the unicorn had been found in the interior, and that Hottentots had reported seeing such an animal.

The official journal of the journey undertaken by Gen. Janssens, the Governor, in 1803, as published in the fourth volume of Godé-Molsbergen's *Reizen in Zuid-Afrika in de Hollandse Tijd* (Linschoten-Vereeniging, vol. 36, p. 174) includes a reference to the unsuccessful search for rock paintings which were said to include pictures of the unicorn. The well-known Coenraad de Buys, who had lived among the inhabitants of the remote areas, was quoted as being convinced of

the existence of the unicorn. The Governor offered a reward of a new ox-wagon with twelve oxen to anyone who brought a live or dead unicorn or its skeleton to the Cape. This offer was repeated by De Mist, the Commissary-General, as reported by Dr. Henry Lichtenstein (Van Riebeeck Society, no. 10, p. 206) who accompanied the Commissary-General on his journey into the interior towards the end of 1803, immediately after Gen. Janssens had returned to the Cape. On this occasion an old Colonist named Lombard, who in 1790 had accompanied Jacob van Reenen in search of the castaways of the *Grosvenor*, said he "was not disinclined to believe in . . . (the) existence (of the unicorn) though he had never seen one himself, or knew of anyone by whom it was reported to have been seen." He based his opinion on what Barrow had written. This discussion is recorded on 14 December 1803.

The rumours concerning drawings of the unicorn on rocks persisted, and it is therefore not surprising to find the indefatigable Thomas Baines mentioning his keen interest in *Journal of Residence in Africa* (Van Riebeeck Society, No. 42) under 10 September 1849, when he saw pictures of various animals, including "a thing that by a stretch of imagination might be fancied into a unicorn" (p. 167), but Baines was not certain at all that this was a representation of the animal as it was not drawn with the usual accuracy of these drawings. He did, however, feel that "a clear delineation of a one-horned animal on one of these rocks would be a strong confirmation of the existence of such a creature, for they (the artists) give every two-horned animal two horns." Baines continually, as is only natural for an artist, kept on considering rock art, and under 11 February 1850 (Van Riebeeck Society, No. 45, p. 20) he stated: "The common opinion that their unicorn is only an imperfect representation of a two-horned animal I am inclined to hold very cheap, for however ignorant of perspective they may have been they invariably gave to every animal possessing two horns its proper complement, even though, through want of skill, they drew one behind the other instead of beside it." Again in *Explorations in South-West Africa* (London, Longmans, 1864, p. 171-172), Baines noted how he had searched the caves "on Kat River, Klipplaat, Winterberg, Tarka, and at Eildon, the residence of the poet of South Africa, Thomas Pringle," but had failed to find a unicorn delineated. Baines then continued: "And I do not hesitate to say that a representation of a one-horned animal, could I be certain that it was not defaced and rendered imperfect by time or accident, and that it was in reality drawn by Bushmen before intercourse with Europeans had made them acquainted with our traditions, would confirm me in the belief that such a creature in reality existed. The rumours among Hottentots and other tribes bordering on the colony are easily recognised as our own legends of the unicorn, the mermaid, etc., returned to us altered, and perhaps improved, by travel." This statement by Baines drew a reply from Gustavus R. Blanch at Bamangwato, which Baines recorded on 25 September 1871 in *The Northern Goldfields Diaries* (Oppenheimer Series, no. 3, p. 717-720). Blanch

questioned Baines' scepticism about the existence of the unicorn, and suggested that the animal did exist in Africa at one time, even if it had become extinct. Blanch's main reason for his belief was the reports of drawings of the unicorn in Namaqualand, Natal, the Transvaal (at Marico), and in the Colony. He queried the possibility of rumours of the unicorn being communicated over such a vast area and felt that it was unlikely that pictures such as of the British royal arms could have found their way up-country long before the European had penetrated these areas. Blanch also made much of unknown animals that could still be discovered in the unexplored vastnesses of the African continent. Baines did not change his mind and drew a gemsbok in perspective and another as a Bushman would draw it showing both horns.

Another scientific-minded traveller who searched in vain for rock art depicting the unicorn was Andrew Wyley, who came to the Cape from the Geological Survey of Ireland in 1854, became Colonial Geologist, and in the Cape Bluebook, *Notes of a Journey in two Directions across the Colony made in the Years 1857-8, with a view to determine the Character and order of the various Geological Formations*, reported how he failed to find the unicorn depicted on rock among the drawings in the Colesberg area. He quoted the Boers in the district as reporting the existence of drawings of the unicorn, but not one was he able to find (cf. *Africana Notes and News*, December 1960, p. 139-140). J. W. D. Moodie in *Scenes and Adventures as a Soldier and Settler*, 1866, p. 86-87, however, categorically stated "that drawings of some animal, resembling the *unicorn*, which is looked upon as a fabulous creation, are found in several cases, executed by the Bosjesman Hottentots, who are remarkable for possessing a great natural genius for drawing." A search through modern works on prehistoric art in South Africa has yielded no recorded picture of a one-horned animal that could be taken for the unicorn actually found *in situ* in this century.

The unicorn itself in South Africa

The earliest description of the unicorn I have found by a writer who lived at the Cape occurs in Jan Willem de Grevenbroeck's letters to an Amsterdam parson in 1695. The Latin manuscript is in the South African Library. It was translated into Dutch by J. W. G. van Oordt, published in the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Tijdschrift* in January and February 1886, and included in the fourth volume of Dr. E. C. Godée-Molsbergen's *Reizen in Zuid-Afrika in de Hollandse Tijd*, in translation in volume 36 of the publications of the Linschoten-Vereeniging, which is the Dutch counterpart of the Van Riebeeck Society. De Grevenbroeck was Secretary to the Cape Council of Policy in 1684 and became a burgher in 1694. Both Adam Tas and the Abbe de la Caille mention him. Having described what he had heard of the giraffe (which was not seen at the Cape until 28 November 1663), De Grevenbroeck goes on to say that he had heard from some people, whom he would gladly believe, that they had seen unicorns similar to a horse in shape and size.

with one horn as long and thick as a man's arm, and they stated that the unicorn is very fierce.

In 1791 Baron von Wurmb wrote from the Cape saying that he was hopeful of soon seeing a unicorn as a beast shaped like a horse with one horn on its brow, ash-grey in colour and with divided hoofs, had been found in the interior, and that people at the Cape generally believed in the unicorn (*Briefe des Heern von Wurmb und des Herrn Baron von Wolzogen auf ihren Reisen nach Afrika und Ostindien in den Jahren 1774 bis 1792*. Gotha, C. W. Ettinger, 1794, p. 412-416). The S.A. Library has a copy of this work.

Capt. Robert Percival, who spent two months at the Cape in 1796 and another two months in 1801, in *An Account of the Cape of Good Hope*, published in London by C. & R. Baldwin in 1804, made the following statement (p. 158-159): "It is positively asserted by many that the unicorn is found in the deserts of Caffraria. I often endeavoured to ascertain the much-disputed existence of this animal; my repeated inquiries however ended only in increasing my doubts of the fact, for I could never find out any person who had seen it with his own eyes, or heard it described by a person who had. The horn which is often shown as belonging to the unicorn, is that of a large and peculiar species of antelope, which I have frequently seen in India, and which in this particular case much resembles what the unicorn is described to be, having one large horn growing in the middle of his forehead. One of those horns nearly three feet long, in the possession of a gentleman at the Cape, is shown as belonging to the unicorn."

Possibly the horn seen at the Cape by Percival was that of the rhinoceros, for no less a person than Peter Kolb, who lived at the Cape for eight years, from 1703 to 1711, wrote as follows:

"The Horn of the Rhinoceros will not endure the Touch of Poison. I have often been a Witness to this. Many People of Fashion at the Cape have Cups turned out of the Rhinoceros-Horn. Some have 'em set in Silver, and Some in Gold. If Wine is pour'd into one of those Cups, it immediately rises and bubbles up as if it were boiling; and if there be Poison in it, the Cup immediately splits. If Poison be put by it-self into one of those Cups, the Cup, in an Instant, flies to Pieces. Tho' this Matter is known to Thousands of Persons, yet some Writers have affirm'd, that the Rhinoceros-Horn has no such Virtue. The Chips, made in Turning one of those Cups, are ever carefully sav'd, and returned to the Owner of the Cup; being esteem'd of great Benefit in Convulsions, Faintings and many other Illnesses." (*The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope*, translated by Medley. London. W. Innys, 1731, vol. 2, p. 104-105).

Dr. Henry Lichtenstein confirmed this statement and recounted how De Mist was shown "as a particular curiosity . . . a goblet, made of the little horn of an African rhinoceros, which, as he assured us, had the property, if a liquid poison was put into it, of changing its nature entirely by a strong fermentation, which takes off the noxious quality, so that it may be drank [*sic*] without any danger." Lichtenstein added



PLATE 1: THE UNICORN FROM C. GESNER'S *Historiae Animalium* AS REPRODUCED BY E. TOPSELL IN HIS *History of Four-footed Beasts*, 1658.



Head of Unicorn killed near the City of Graham

PLATE 2: From: J. CAMPBELL'S *Travels in South Africa*, 1822, Vol. 1, Opp. Page 294.

that he tried in vain to persuade the man how erroneous and even dangerous was such a belief but it was the universal popular creed, and not to be shaken by the mere statement of a German doctor! Anne Plumptre, who translated Lichtenstein's *Travels* in 1812, added a footnote based on a German source published in Leipzig in 1748, saying that the Malays consider the rhinoceros as the female of the unicorn, and that the Malays value the horns highly as an antidote against all sorts of poison. The note concludes with the suggestion "that this superstition was introduced into the colony of the Cape by the Malay slaves." (Van Riebeeck Society, No. 10, p. 106-107.) No wonder the search for the unicorn continued at the Cape!

Dirk Gysbert van Reenen who accompanied Gen. Janssens on the expedition mentioned above in June 1803 recorded that Coenraad de Buys accompanied the chiefs sent by Gaika to meet the Governor, and that Buys stated that the unicorn the size of the eland and black in colour was to be found beyond the Bashee River (Van Riebeeck Society, No. 18, p. 166-167). This statement by De Buys was considered important enough to be recorded by another member of the expedition, W. B. C. Paravicini di Capelli, the Governor's Aide-de-Camp (cf. Van Riebeeck Society, No. 46, p. 145-146 and p. 252) in his private journal. He, however, expressed the opinion that it was unlikely that the unknown unicorn would be found because of the generous reward offered by the Governor.

On 29 May 1811 William John Burchell wrote to his mother from Cape Town that he hoped to recoup himself for the expenses on his scientific travels, as he had been informed that a giraffe skin had sold in England for £1,500. He added, that should he be so fortunate as to discover the unicorn, which was supposed to exist in that part of Africa, he had not the least doubt of making five times the above amount. This letter is to be found in the Batchworth Press edition of *Travels in the Interior of Southern Africa*, volume 2, p. 424. On p. 55 of the same volume Burchell, however, stated categorically that he could not believe that "the unicorn, such as we see it represented, exists anywhere but in those representations, or in imagination; and many circumstances concur to render it highly probable, that the name was first intended for nothing more than a species of rhinoceros." He mentions Baron Cuvier's work on the composition of the horn of the rhinoceros, but as Burchell's second volume was first published in 1824, it antedated Cuvier's *Excursus IV* of his edition of Pliny's *Natural History* published in Paris in 1827, in which Cuvier (following in the footsteps of earlier German writers) made the point that a cloven-hoofed ruminant with a single horn could not possibly exist because of the division in its frontal bone. Although the appearance of a single horn has been achieved by manipulation in various parts of the world, Cuvier's standing among scientists was such that his suggestion that the unicorn was a fairy tale carried considerable weight. But the legend continued to show surprising vitality.

The Rev. John Campbell was sent out by the London Missionary

Society on two occasions to inspect their missions in South Africa. On the second occasion he arrived in 1819, spent most of the year 1820 travelling, and went into the Matabele country to a place he called the City of Mashow. The first volume of his second journey was published in 1822 by the London Missionary Society and includes a picture (reproduced here) labelled "Head of a Unicorn, Killed near the City of Mashow," of which Campbell is listed as artist and Clark as engraver. Let me quote the relevant text (vol. 1, p. 294-296):

"During our absence from Mashow two rhinoceroses came into the town during the night, when the inhabitants assembled and killed them both. The rhinoceroses, shot by Jager, on the preceding day, having been cut up, were brought, the one in a waggon, the other on pack-oxen. We divided one among Kossie, Munameets, and Pelangye. They brought also the head of one of them, which was different from all the others that had been killed. The common African rhinoceros has a crooked horn resembling a cock's spur, which rises about nine or ten inches above the nose and inclines backward; immediately behind this is a short thick horn; but the head they brought had a straight horn projecting three feet from the forehead, about ten inches above the tip of the nose. The projection of this great horn very much resembles that of the fanciful unicorn in the British arms.

"It has a small thick horny substance, eight inches long, immediately behind it, which can hardly be observed on the animal at the distance of a hundred yards, and seems to be designed for keeping fast that which is penetrated by the long horn; so that this species of rhinoceros must appear really like a unicorn when running in the field. The head, resembled in size a nine-gallon cask, and measured three feet from the mouth to the ear, and being much larger than that of the one with the crooked horn, and which measured eleven feet in length, the animal itself must have been still larger and more formidable. From its weight, and the position of the horn, it appears capable of overcoming any creature hitherto known. Hardly any of the natives took the smallest notice of the head, but treated it as a thing familiar to them. As the entire horn is perfectly solid, the natives, I afterwards heard, make from one horn four handles for their battle axes. Our people wounded another, which they reported to be much larger."

"The head being so weighty; and the distance to the Cape so great, it appeared necessary to cut off the under jaw and leave it behind . . .

"The animal is considered by naturalists, since the arrival of the skull in London, to be the unicorn of the ancients, and the same as that which is described in the XXXIXth chapter of the book of Job. The part of the head brought to London, may be seen at the Missionary Museum; and, for such as may not have the opportunity of seeing the head itself, the annexed drawing of it has been made." In spite of what the missionary says, the picture looks like a

rhinoceros, and one cannot help remembering *The Recollections of William Finaughty, Elephant Hunter, 1864-1875* (Cape Town, Balkema, 1957, p. 60) where he tells of how he showed a rhinoceros horn measuring 3 feet 10½ inches to a man as a fine specimen of a unicorn horn. The editor, E. C. Tabler, cannot resist (p. 64) suggesting that possibly the man hoaxed by Finaughty was Gustavus R. Blanch who, as we have seen, wrote to Baines in defence of the existence of the unicorn. Various cases are on record in which credulous South African travellers and explorers were hoaxed when they had visions of great riches or scientific renown because they thought they were on the verge of acquiring the famed unicorn. Nathaniel Isaacs in his *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa* (i.e. Natal) tells the following story against himself: He had heard that a chief possessed an animal with one horn, with a flowing mane, and so Isaacs made every effort to acquire the animal. At great inconvenience to himself, he travelled a great distance to the kraal only to find that the "wonderful production of nature from which (he) was to derive fame and renown," turned out to be a he goat with the loss of one of its horns! This occurred in December 1825 and February 1826, but Isaacs's *Travels* was not published until 1836 by Edward Churton (v. 1, p. 79, 87-88). One can but wonder whether the story, "The Professor's search for the Unicorn" in Major-Gen. A. W. Drayson's *Tales at the Outspan; or Adventures in the Wild Regions of Southern Africa*, published in London by Saunders, Otley & Co., in 1865, was based on Isaacs's real experience, or was it a tale actually told round camp fires in South Africa? For Drayson's story in which the unicorn turns out to be a wildebeest with only one horn, is similar to that told by Thomas Baines in his *Journal of Residence in Africa*, vol. 2, p. 66 of a unicorn "much like a buffalo, of a blue slate colour, with feet like an ox, and . . . one crooked horn and one straight one" . . . which turned out to be a blue wildebeest. This was in April 1850.

The story of the unicorn engaged the serious attention of various learned men until quite late in the nineteenth century. Dr. Andrew Smith who led the first scientific expedition into the Southern Transvaal in 1834-1836 in his *Illustrations of the Zoology of South Africa*, published by Smith Elder & Co. of London in five magnificent volumes in 1849, in writing about the rhinoceros speculated on an unknown species of animal with one horn. A later scientist, Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911) who visited South West Africa, and whose *The Narrative of an Explorer in Tropical South Africa* was published in 1853 by John Murray, is even less certain that the unicorn was a mythical creature as is evident from the following passage (p. 283):

"The Bushmen, without any leading question or previous talk upon the subject, mentioned the unicorn. I cross-questioned them thoroughly, but they persisted in describing a one-horned animal, something like a gemsbok in shape and size, whose horn was in the middle of its forehead, and pointed forwards. The horn was in shape like a gemsbok's, but shorter. They spoke of the animal

as though they knew of it, but were not at all familiar with it. It will indeed be strange if, after all, the creature has a real existence. There are recent travellers in the north of tropical Africa who have heard of it there, and believe in it, and there is surely plenty of room to find something new in the vast belt of *terra incognita* that lies in this continent."

Charles John Andersson, who accompanied Francis Galton on a journey of exploration in the Ovambo country, also recorded the resemblance between the unicorn and the gemsbok: "When both horns are perfect, and one has a side view of the animal, they appear as one and the same, from which circumstance many believe the gemsbok to be the unicorn of Scripture." This passage occurs on page 281 of Andersson's *Lake Ngami*, of the second edition of which published in 1856 by Hurst and Blackett of London, C. Struik of Cape Town has just issued a reprint.

The association of the unicorn with the oryx (or gemsbok) rather than the rhinoceros goes back to Pliny and Aristotle and was propounded by Andrew Steedman in *Wanderings and Adventures in the Interior of Southern Africa*, London, Longman, 1835 (vol. 2, p. 119-123) as well as by Sir William Cornwallis Harris in chapter 9 of his *Portraits of the Game and Wild Animals of Southern Africa*, published in 1840, by W. Pickering of London.

Harris's very fine plate of the gemsbok certainly is an argument in favour of this animal as the prototype of the unicorn. Gordon Cumming in *Five Years of a Hunter's Life, etc.* (New York, Harper 1850, vol. 1, p. 93) also supports the oryx or gemsbok theory. But J. G. Millais in his *Breath from the Veldt* published in 1895 by Henry Sotheran of London, is convinced that the sable antelope is a closer likeness to the mythical animal even than the oryx. The older museums almost to our own day preserved unicorns' horns—usually a rhinoceros horn or the tooth of a narwhal, or, occasionally, the tusk of an elephant. Of particular interest to South Africans is the one at St. Denis in Paris, presented by André Thevet. He had obtained it from the King of Monomotapa, whose country was reported to abound in unicorns, and with whom by tradition Thevet went unicorn hunting in Southern Africa where Monomotapa was thought to be. But this is all the stuff of myth and folk tradition, for the traveller himself was sceptical about the unicorn and himself mentions seeing the horn at St. Denis.

The famous and authoritative *The Athenaeum* on 22 December 1860 reviewed the *Romance of Natural History* by P. H. Gosse, and stated categorically that "the unicorn cannot . . . be pronounced a fable . . ." (p. 875). On 16 August 1862 (p. 212) this journal published a letter from Dr. W. B. Baikie (then travelling in Central Africa) which referred to the review just noted. Dr. Baikie, who obviously was not "altogether sceptical" of the existence of the unicorn, made the point that in the unexplored parts of Africa "this much-talked-of, strange one-horned animal" may be among the "numerous zoological curiosities as yet unknown to the man of science."

In these articles and in *The Lore of the Unicorn*, by Odell Shepard (p. 286), of which a re-issue appeared in 1967, David Livingstone is said to have been a firm believer in the existence of the unicorn, and in this he once again differed from Thomas Baines, who in his *Northern Gold-fields Diaries* (Oppenheimer Series, No. 3, p. 610-611), tells the following typical story under the date 16 June 1870:

"Last night, among other subjects of discussion, the probability of the unicorn's existence was brought forward. I coincided with the general opinion that the man who should catch one alive, or even bring a well-preserved skin and skeleton, or even so much of the skull as to be indubitable proof, would make his fortune, but I also expressed my disbelief of its existence and, as usual among the Dutch, the Bible was referred to. I remarked that the passages referring to the strength of the unicorn (or eenhoorn in Dutch, i.e. one horn) might be applied to the one-horned rhinoceros, and my friends then turned to the illustrations, in one of which Adam and Eve were represented standing by the forbidden tree with various animals around them, including a veritable and orthodox unicorn, while in the picture of the ark a pair of unicorns were duly marshalled, entering with the other beasts, and it was specially noted that they had short tails like those of docked horses a few years ago. I pointed out to them that these pictures were drawn by an artist in Holland comparatively a few years back, and were by no means equal in antiquity with the text, and they admitted this. But in some Dutch families the prints are considered fully coequal and an Englishman who ventured to doubt the fact of the Devil having horns, hoofs and a formidable barbed tail was triumphantly referred by the good huisvrouw to the picture of the temptation of Job, where Satan was represented with all his orthodox accessories. The usual tales of 'eenhorns' having been seen in the Drakensbergs were recounted, but our belief in these vanishes as the localities are explored."

Many of the essays, including that on the unicorn, which first appeared in the volume called *Toen en Thans: Mededeelingen en Beschouwingen omtrent de twee Republieken in Zuid-Afrika*, door Een Hollander, published by Jacques Dusseau of Cape Town with a preface dated "Johannesburg 1898," were reissued in English in a volume entitled *Empires of the Veld: being Fragments of Unwritten History of the two late Boer Republics, etc.*, by K. J. de Kok, for over forty years a resident in the late Orange Free State, published by J. C. Juta in 1904. The following quotation on the unicorn from this early surveyor speaks for itself.

"The majority of white inhabitants in South Africa held, and possibly hold to the present day, that such an animal used to exist, as its fac-simile is to be seen on the English national coat-of-arms. A popular legend has it that the Crown once offered £40,000 for a living specimen. I never saw this confirmed in print, perhaps owing to the irregularity of the *Government Gazette* coming to hand in the early days.

" In 1860, the Natal public discussed the feasibility of hunting up the said animal. I was there at the time, and remembered very well the pros and cons on the subject.

The arguments in favour were:—

1. Sketches of the unicorn are to be found in many caves and on rocks in South Africa, especially in the Cape Colony, together with pictures of other living and known animals, drawn by Bushmen.
2. A Zulu in the service of Mr. A. Osborn, a Natal Colonist, told his employer that he, in company with five other kafirs, had explored the plateau of the Drakensberg proper, where they had come to a swamp of the extent of one day's travelling, and there and then found six animals of dark-brown colour about the size of a blesbok, having a long tail, with a long, straight horn on the head. They proved to be of a very ferocious nature, as they attacked at once, with the result that his five mates were killed, and he only survived by scaling a rock which luckily happened to be within reach.
3. A Basuto in the service of Daniel Bezuidenhout, then living in the district of Bethlehem (who died in 1894), had offered to show his master (for a cow and calf as remuneration) a kind of animal on the Drakensberg, which he described as the Zulu had done, adding that it was so fierce as to attack its own shadow! The said Bezuidenhout, who visited Natal every year for trading purposes, had communicated these particulars.
4. As no white man had ever explored the Drakensberg plateau between the sources of the Tugela and Cornetspruit, where the Zulu referred to had located the said swamp, it is just possible that the unicorn thrives there, prevented by its natural shyness from migrating to lower and less lonesome pastures.

The opponents argued as follows:—

1. Supposing the animal existed at one time in South Africa, why has nobody ever found a petrified carcass or even a single bone, as is the case with all other species?
2. None of the black tribes have a name for it in their language.
3. That it is not extinct, like the dodo, mastodon, or mammoth, which have all left evidences of their existence, but is a mere popular fiction like the satyr and the dragon.
4. That the pictures to be found in Bushmen's caves are unsuccessful profile sketches of the rhinoceros.

As the enterprise was not a very costly affair, those in favour of it might have persevered, and taken shares in a Natal Unicorn Company (limited), but for the hostile attitude at that time of the Paramount Chief, Moshesh. The country to be explored, though only occupied by a few Bushmen, was undoubtedly within his domain. It was not approachable from the Natal side, as passes through the Drakensberg were not known at that time. The gap

through the mountains by which the Griqua Chief, Adam Kok, managed to enter Griqualand East, was only discovered at a later period. Hence, the only possible road was up the Namagazi (Elands River) and through Weedsie's Hoek. From there Basuto guides would have been indispensable; but, considering the unfriendly feeling of their Chief and the known dread of the tribe for a few Bushmen still to be found on the mountains, the Natalians despaired of procuring a specimen. For these reasons the plan was abandoned."

Whether the company in Natal was ever established, has not been ascertained, but speculation about the existence of the unicorn went on in South Africa, even as late as 31 May 1910, the date when J. H. M. Kock signed the preface to the second edition of his *Roemrijke Rei van de Zuid-Afrikaansche Reisbeschrijvers en hunne Reizen; of, De Kaap als een Nieuw Land*, issued by H.A.U.M., in 1912 in Cape Town.

In 1956 Dr. S. H. Pellissier published a biography of his grandfather, J. P. Pellissier of Bethulie (Van Schaik) in which he recorded the fact that on 5 February 1824 Carel Hendrik Kruger petitioned Lord Charles Somerset to be allowed to hunt the unicorn, because some Koranas had reported some animals larger than horses some bearing one horn on the forehead. Kruger in his petition expressed the opinion that these rumours might concern the much sought-after unicorn.

And still the legend goes on. Regimental histories are generally considered as serious works recounting the contribution of individual regiments to military history. While these works are extremely valuable sources of South African history, it is a joy and delight to be able to track down the unicorn even here. In the histories of both the Ninth Queen's Royal Lancers and the 4th Hussars issued by Gale and Polden of Aldershot in 1939 and 1959 respectively, the tale is told of an official military enquiry into the cause of a stampede by the horses of these units in camp at Hout Kraal on 2 September 1908. The following passage is from p. 228 E. W. Sheppard's history of the Ninth Queen's Royal Lancers:

" 'Just as it was growing dusk,' writes an eye-witness, 'the horses threw up their heads, drew all the picketing pegs, and stampeded. In going they took with them the larger half of the 4th Hussars, who were lying alongside of them. The results were disastrous, because they charged the South African railway line, which lay in their way and which is protected by high wire fencing. There were some with broken legs and others with such severe cuts and lacerations that they had to be destroyed, and it was days before parties sent out on to the veldt had collected and brought them all in.' "

At the court of Enquiry appointed to investigate the incident, the men gave some curious answers—such as that a dust devil upset the horses, and that a unicorn ran among the horses, and set them off. Years afterwards a far less romantic cause was discovered. A Ninth Lancer stated that he had been working in the cookhouse and had

chopped the head off a turkey. The decapitated bird had run among the horses and frightened them! This is indeed an unromantic explanation of the unicorn among the horses!

I have ranged very far from thousands of years before Christ to almost our own day; from the courts of Darius and Artaxerxes to South Africa from the fantasy of Lewis Carroll to the military enquiry of the Ninth Lancers; from the Bible to a nursery rhyme, from prehistoric art to modern heraldry, from paper-making to numismatics, from astronomy to medicine and everywhere I have found the unicorn in all its splendour as a living legend. And this search has been carried on in South African libraries sometimes among rare and forgotten old tomes, sometimes among modern and popular books, but always there was the sense of the mysterious, of man's creative imagination, and of wonder, which, in the words of Hendrik Willem van Loon, is the beginning of all true wisdom.

A. H. S.

SOME GRAHAMSTOWN LINKS WITH EARLY KIMBERLEY

BY T. ST. VINCENT BUSS

WHEN MR. ROBERT SOUTHEY, the Colonial Secretary, laid the second diamond found in Griqualand West on the table of the House of Assembly in the latter part of 1869 and said: "Gentlemen, this is the rock on which the future success of South Africa will be built,"¹ he himself hardly realized the tremendous impact the diamond discovery was to have on the economic structure of the Cape Colony in particular, and on South Africa in general. R. W. Murray (Senior) had said in his *South African Reminiscences* (Cape Town, Juta, p. 104, 106) that "there is no event recorded in all the strange and eventful history of South Africa . . . which caused more excitement, or has been of such permanent value—not to the Cape Colony only, but to the whole of South Africa—as the discovery of diamonds . . . and then, when the whole country was enveloped in a darkness that was felt, and men groped about in despair, the light came from a quarter little known and not a bit understood".

It is well-known today why the discovery of diamonds, initially at the River Diggings on the Vaal, caused so much excitement throughout the country. As the late eighteen-sixties wore on, the country was sinking deeper and deeper into a depression, and the economy was slowly grinding to a halt. In the Cape there was a

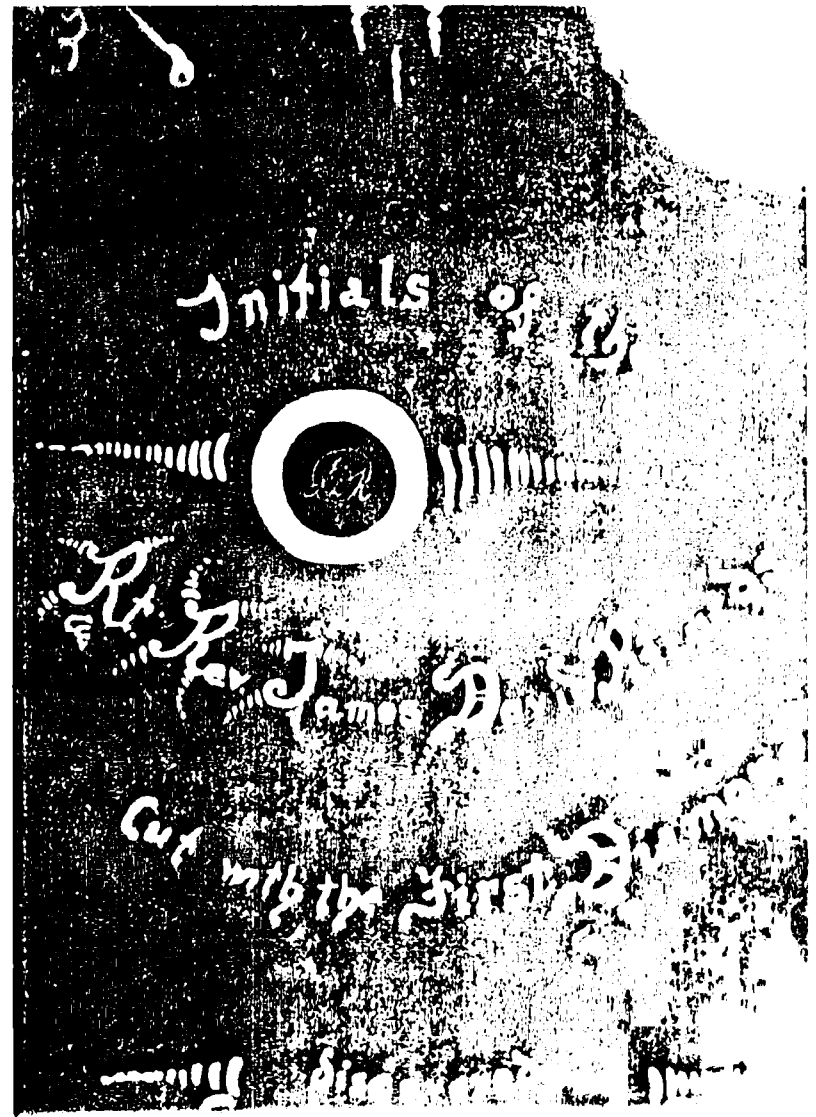


PLATE 3: REV. J. D. RICARDS'S INITIALS ARE IN THE CENTRE.
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