The Gordon Manuscripts and Atlas

In June 1964, after having been lost for over 150 years, the journals and papers of Colonel Robert Jacob Gordon were rediscovered in the county archives of Staffordshire, England. How they arrived there is a fascinating, though poignant, story.

Building and expanding on earlier research by writers such as Forbes and Barnard, the Dutch scholar L. C. Rookmaaker has added substantially to our knowledge of the history of the Gordon Collection (meaning the drawings and maps, as well as the manuscripts) through his uncovering of Mrs Gordon's correspondence with one John Pinkerton. These papers which, as Rookmaaker modestly puts it, had been 'overlooked' until now,[1] have provided the crucial key to understanding how documents of such significance in their day could have failed to find recognition for so long.

The following pages trace first the historical progress of the complete collection, and thereafter the separate histories of the Atlas (meaning the drawings, maps and charts) and the manuscripts.

In 1797 Gordon's widow sailed from the Cape to England on her way back to her native Switzerland. In London she was delayed by customs formalities and enlisted the help of a certain Captain Philip Gidley King (later, governor of New South Wales) whom she had known at the Cape.[2] King, in turn, wrote two letters to Sir Joseph Banks, president of the Royal Society, asking for further assistance. They are both dated 27 May 1797 and contain some interesting information:

> The number of the charts is *Ninety Five*, & upwards of *600 Drawings* of Natural History, & Views in Caffraria & other parts of Africa. It is Mrs Gordon's wish to withdraw these two boxes from the Custom house to her Lodging: her words are these – 'The Charts, Manuscripts & Drawings are arranged in some measure by the deceased for publication. He had during his life been solicited on the part of the Emperor & Stadtholder, as well as many other men of Science, to publish them during his life, this he declined, & has left them for the advantage of his family. – Had circumstances allowed of her presenting them to the Stadtholder in *Holland*, that was her intention, but as she observes, the Cape now being in the possession of the English, & as the charts convey the greatest information, which as she says are by no means known, she has thought it her duty to admit them to your inspection; and will be extremely thankful, if it is not intruding too much on your goodness, to procure her an order for their delivery from the Custom house . . . .

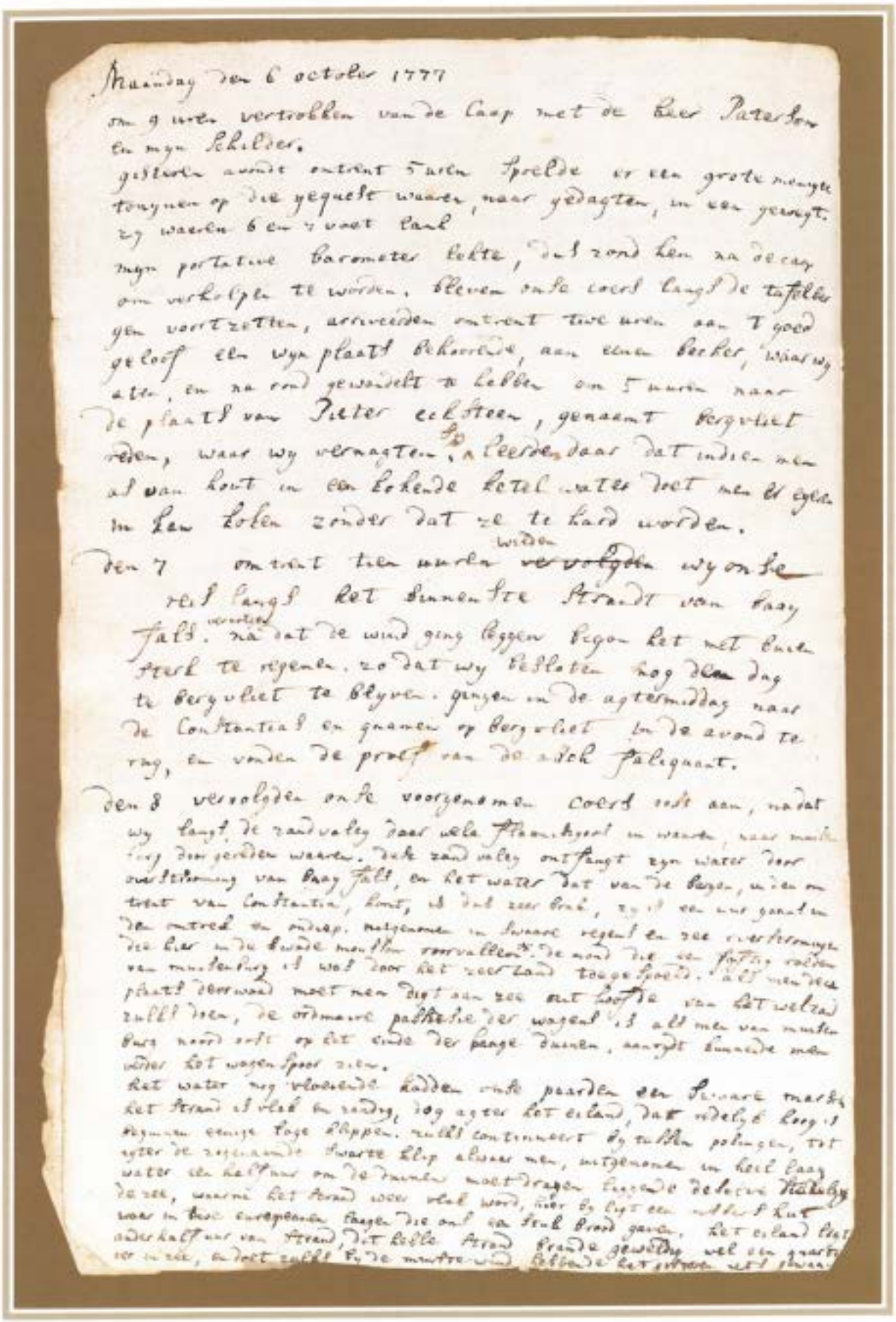
In the second letter further intriguing details emerge. There is, King writes,

> a manuscript wrote in Dutch. There are also a few bundles of family papers. The second box contains a very full & large Book, in which are arranged upwards of 400 drawings of Natural History, appropriated to the Charts and Views. The Charts and Natural History Mrs Gordon informs me were all designed by her own husband, who drew every outline, and had them finished under his own eye.

It seems certain that the collection remained in England when Mrs Gordon returned to Switzerland. From a third letter written by King to Sir Joseph Banks, dated 7 October 1797, it is clear that guardianship of the collection had passed to Captain Edward Riou, a notable sea captain, who had met Gordon at the Cape in 1789-90.[3] In this letter reference is made to a meeting with the secretary of the Treasury, George Rose, who represented the British Government in the matter of the proposed purchase of the collection. The letter states that 'after much conversation [with George Rose], the result was that Riou was to write to Mrs G as from himself, and to ask her what she valued the Charts &c. at, and that if the sum was anyways reasonable, Government would make the purchase'.

It appears that nothing came of this potential transaction, and when Riou died in 1801 it seems that the collection went back to Mrs Gordon.

The next mention of the collection comes in a letter from Mrs Gordon to the John Pinkerton mentioned earlier. Pinkerton was born in Edinburgh in 1758 and was well known as a writer, editor and belletrist of the period. His most celebrated work was probably the 'eccentric but very clever' *Letters on Literature*, published under the pseudonym of Robert Heron. This earned the praise of Horace Walpole, but it is worth recording that Edward Gibbon and Bishop Percy also thought highly of Pinkerton. Nevertheless, he appears to have been the archetypical eighteenth-century hack, putting out book after book on subjects as diverse as ancient Scottish poetry (some of which he composed himself), medals, rocks and, in particular, a compilation in seventeen volumes known as the *General Collection of Voyages and Travels* (1807 to 1814). This interest in travel may explain why he wrote to Mrs Gordon on 25 May 1803.[4] We do not have a copy of his letter but we know of its existence from Mrs Gordon's reply to Pinkerton on 3 June 1803. From her letter, translated here from the French sometime before 1830 and contained in the book *The Literary Correspondence of John Pinkerton Esq.*, one can infer that Pinkerton had shown interest in the publication of the Gordon Collection. It is an interesting document, calling for comment – and for more than one reason. Here it is in full:



1. *The opening page of Gordon's journal for the second journey*

MRS. GORDON TO MR. PINKERTON.
Province of Leman, at Sarras in Switzerland,
June 3rd, 1803.

Your letter of the 25th May claims my confidence, which I am still more willing to give to a gentleman who is a native of Scotland: it was to that country that my late husband belonged; and to the last hour of his life he always cherished feelings of warm attachment towards it. I may still further add that our best friends are in England, and that I have always entertained a hope that I might eventually have to treat with an Englishman for a work which is deserving the attention and support of the nation.

My husband, Colonel Gordon, was a man who was generally known, and had an extensive correspondence with literary men in all countries: I am aware that appearances are against what I have the honor to state to you, but the fact itself is unquestionable; and if I should ever have the good fortune to make your personal acquaintance, I will explain to you the circumstances that have caused me to adopt my present line of conduct.

If you will give yourself the trouble again to read my prospectus, you will see that the journals are written in Dutch; and it is my opinion that they would not fill more than a single quarto volume. The bulk, I am aware, promises much more; but it is swelled by numerous maps and the explanation of them, as well as by a great variety of drawings, some of them representing the interior of the country, others of plants and animals of all kinds. No statement which I could make would enable you to form an idea of the extent of the labor: to judge of it adequately, you must see it with your own eyes. I should be delighted to have the honor of receiving you in Switzerland; but, if it should suit you better to look over my collections at Paris, I would willingly make the journey, and bring with me all my papers, provided you feel there is a reasonable expectation of our coming to terms. In this important respect I am willing to place the most entire confidence in your character. Should your answer be favourable, I may arrive at Paris before the end of the present month.[5]

Mrs Gordon's letter does more than merely respond to Pinkerton's enquiry. It also confirms much of what we know about her husband's ambiguous loyalties. She affirms in the first paragraph that he 'belonged' to Scotland and she emphasizes that 'our best friends are in England'. Of course, this is by way of flattering Pinkerton, since we can be sure that she was still eager to see the collection published. But the second paragraph is also interesting. Does it allude to the disgrace of Gordon's suicide, or is it merely to assure Pinkerton that the collection is important and well known? Either or both interpretations could be placed on this passage.

It is clear from the concluding paragraph that Mrs Gordon had some kind of 'prospectus' in circulation which, presumably, Pinkerton had read. This could indicate that some editing had been done on the collection though, if this is so, it is not evident from the present state of the manuscripts.

It seems likely that Pinkerton and Mrs Gordon did meet in Paris – on 28 August 1803. Certainly, according to the editor of *The Literary Correspondence of John Pinkerton Esq.*, Pinkerton 'was zealous in his endeavours to serve Mrs Gordon'. On 20 April 1804, writing from a Paris address, Pinkerton drafted a letter to an unspecified English publisher, giving details of the collection consistent with those given above. It is also stated, by this same editor, that several leading English publishers had declined to take the collection because 'Mr Barrow's excellent work on the same subject had just made its appearance so that Colonel Gordon's was in a great degree superseded; and it was feared the publication would be of too expensive a nature to afford much chance of remuneration; nor were the times favourable for large speculations'.[6]

However, Pinkerton's draft also hints at a 'French bookseller' involved in a 'translation'. But this arrangement can, it seems, be dropped, for as the letter concludes:

... in case you purchase the work, you may arrange matters with her for the French translation. In all respects she is a religious and most respectable character, and too wealthy to stoop to any duplicity: so you may rest assured that if you purchase this work no other edition will be thought of, and even the French translation left to your discretion.

I suppose £600 for one, or £1 200 for two volumes, would be a fair price. Less than £600 for one would not be accepted, as the booksellers here offer a corresponding value, and with less trouble.

I beg your answer as soon as possible.[7]

The next letter from Mrs Gordon on 27 April 1804 says nothing of a possible English publisher but refers directly to a French 'bookseller' – presumably the one cited in the draft letter. The import is that negotiations are at a fairly advanced stage.

Mrs Gordon starts the letter by declaring her great diffidence 'in speaking of matters outside my sphere'.[8] She emphasizes her confidence in Pinkerton, explicitly granting him '*carte blanche*'. However, she then proceeds to make detailed objections to the terms that, presumably, he has submitted for her approval.

Firstly, the 'bookseller' wants to print too many copies of the book: 'three thousand in octavo, and three hundred in quarto'. She fears it will take too much time to sell all these copies 'so that it will be long before we can look for a second edition'. Secondly, she objects to the deferred terms of payment the bookseller wants, as well as the 'small sums into which it is intended to divide' the payments. Shrewdly, she states that she cannot see how 'money coming in such a manner should be laid out to advantage'. She is also fearful that Pinkerton may have left Paris when the time comes for a new edition, thus depriving her of 'anyone to look to my interest, and to see that the bookseller does what he ought'. But that is not all: she does not want twenty free copies of the book, only ten in quarto, so that the amount of the rest should be added to the first payment. And why, she demands, will she only receive 'an allowance' for a translation into English? She feels she should 'claim the same privilege . . . in German or any other language'. She then adds: 'I am persuaded you

will see it appear very soon in German; for I know that many inquiries have been made after it beyond the Rhine, and particularly at Berlin.' Her final quibble on this matter is the difficulty of selling 'the manuscript and drawings'. They will have lost their value once publication has taken place, since every one will be able to 'satisfy their curiosity at a small cost' simply by reading the book.

There is not much that Mrs Gordon has overlooked. Indeed, she seems quite convinced that the transaction will go ahead, notwithstanding her objections. There is a sad irony in her confidence when she speaks of her delight that Pinkerton has arranged to have the book published in Paris: '. . . for you will have the opportunity of superintending every thing personally'. As we shall see later, the agreement was not concluded due, possibly, to her inflexibility at this point.

Two more matters conclude the letter. The first concerns the portrait of her husband, which she is sending to have copied in Paris because she cannot find a painter to do this in Switzerland. Her anxiety is almost obsessive, movingly so:

> But, my dear Sir, I cannot trust to you this, my greatest treasure in the world, without intreating you to take care that it comes to no harm in your possession, and without earnestly begging that you will never allow it to go out of your house, and will cause the artist whom you employ to work upon it in your presence. You will receive it by the Geneva diligence; and as soon as you do so, I hope you will favor me with the news of its safe arrival. No pains have been spared on my part to pack it carefully. When copied, I will beg the favor of you to replace it in the box in which it travels to Paris, and to allow it to remain under your roof till I meet with some friend who will bring it back with him to Switzerland.

The last matter of any importance in the letter concerns the fact that 'There is now at Paris a German gentleman, Mr Frederick Schlegel, eminently versed in the literature of that country, to which he devotes his time, who would probably be glad to be employed in translating the work into German'.

Mrs Gordon was evidently well informed. This 'German gentleman' was undoubtedly Friederich von Schlegel (1772-1829), the eminent writer and critic, 'the originator of many of the philosophical ideas that inspired the early German Romantic movement'. He was in Paris at this time, studying Sanskrit for his work on comparative Indo-Germanic linguistics. The fact that he never did make this translation must be added to the list of misfortunes which have steadily dogged the Gordon Collection.[9]

It appears, anyway, that this whole transaction came to nought, though how and why this happened is not on record.

The next move in the saga of the collection is provided by the editor of *The Literary Correspondence of John Pinkerton Esq.*:

> At the close of 1804, the manuscripts were offered to the French Government, with whom Madame Gordon endeavoured to stipulate that one of her sons, then an ensign in the army, should be made a lieutenant-colonel, and the other, who was serving in the navy as a lieutenant, should be promoted to the rank of post-captain. But Bonaparte's officers were not so formed. Denon took a kind interest in the affair: there is a letter of his, stating that he had recommended the purchase to the emperor, but without success: and that he advised Mr. Pinkerton to lay them before the minister of war, to the papers of whose office, in the geographical department, they would form an important accession.[10]

No one can fault John Pinkerton for his assiduity, or, indeed, his ingenuity in trying to help Mrs Gordon. The fact that he could enlist the aid of Denon, Napoleon's art advisor and director-general of museums, also indicates how influential he was. There is evidence too that she appreciated his zeal. On 26 March 1805 she signed a document giving him a power of attorney to

> negotiate with London booksellers for the publication of journeys made in Africa by her husband Colonel Gordon . . . and to sell, for the highest price he could obtain, the maps, drawings and papers of which she has a catalogue received from his hand . . . and which she shall keep for him according to the agreement executed in Paris on 28 August 1803.[11]

The last letter from Mrs Gordon contained in *The Literary Correspondence of John Pinkerton Esq.* is dated 19 April 1806. She begins by regretting the fact that Pinkerton had 'not even yet been able to do anything with the papers; and it grieves me that I did not conclude the treaty which you had set on foot with the Parisian bookseller before you left that city'.

Responding to a suggestion, apparently made by Pinkerton, that she wait another year, her tone becomes more than a little brusque:

> The booksellers, you tell me, already throw cold water upon my work; and surely I cannot with any reason expect that the allowing of it to add twelve months to its age will obtain it any accession of favor in their eyes. It were indeed strange if either with them or the public it acquired a value then which it has not now . . . . I therefore intreat you, my dear Sir, to use your utmost endeavours to bring these matters to a conclusion as speedily as possible.

Evidently, Pinkerton had also suggested the possibility of putting the 'papers' up to auction. She presumes, however, that this would not take place until the work was published 'when their value would be materially increased'. This contradicts her opinion, mentioned earlier, that their value would be diminished if they were published first. But she now makes an interesting statement which is also somewhat baffling: 'I have still to learn from you what progress is made in the printing, or even if it is yet begun; and this is a point on which I am very anxious to be informed.'

We have, of course, no means of knowing to what this mention of printing refers. However, it is likely that at this

point there was a plan to print some part of the collection, probably the travel journals. How this would tie in with the presumably different subject of 'publication' is a further matter on which we can only speculate today. Another possibility is that the 'printing' was to form part of Pinkerton's *General Collection of Voyages and Travels* which he was busy with at the time, the first volumes of which began to appear in 1807.

Concluding her letter, Mrs Gordon returns to the subject of auctioning the papers:

I feel, indeed, an almost unconquerable repugnance to the idea of bringing these valuable memorials of my husband's labors and abilities to auction; but I will, nevertheless, not withhold my consent, if you find that nothing better can be done . . . we shall thus, at least, settle the matter speedily, which will necessarily be to the advantage of us both. Indeed, there is nothing I so much deprecate as delay.[12]

This letter inspired Pinkerton to once again approach the British government by responding to a letter from William ('Weathercock') Windham, who was at the time secretary of state for war and the colonies.[13] In this capacity he was responsible for the Cape, which the British had just reoccupied. It is clear, though, that it was Pinkerton who had initiated the correspondence with a 'little memoir' which he refers to in his letter. (This is possibly the 'prospectus' mentioned earlier by Mrs Gordon.) Pinkerton's letter, in full, follows:

2. Homoglossum watsonium

Clement's Inn, no 7, May 14, 1806. Sir – I was duly honoured with your letter of the 27th March with regard to the papers, maps, and drawings of Colonel Gordon, formerly commandant of the Cape of Good Hope, in which you are so good as to say you shall at a future opportunity take the opinion of competent judges how far they might be proper objects to be purchased at the national expense. I am well aware, with the public at large, of the multitude of your avocations, and have not therefore wished to press the matter; but having just received an earnest letter from Mrs Gordon in Switzerland accusing me of unnecessary delay, I hope you will pardon me taking this liberty. I have myself some skill in geography, and if I had not thought these papers of great importance to this commercial country, and the interest of its oriental colonies, I should not have taken charge of them. I suppose that Mr Faden or Mr Arrowsmith the geographers would readily inspect them, and give a just and candid report. I have no doubt that the acquisition would be of lasting advantage, and be esteemed honorable to an enlightened administration who should order it to be made. But on this subject I must refer to the little memoir which I had the honour to send you and remain with the greatest respect &c. signed John Pinkerton.[14]

But despite this plea, nothing came of this eloquent attempt to sell the collection. No more letters from Mrs Gordon are preserved in *The Literary Correspondence of John Pinkerton Esq.*; however, the eventual sale is recorded, some four years later, in the same work. In a letter from the Marchioness of Stafford, dated 30 March 1810, we read:

I beg to express my thanks to you for the offer of the Gordon collection of drawings, &c. &c. Though I do not particularly collect drawings of that kind, yet the moderate sum you mention, of one hundred guineas, induces me to avail myself of this, provided you continue disposed to part with it; and I shall be glad if you will have the goodness to direct Mr. Christie to let it be sent here; as I shall be glad to look at it, and will willingly give that money.[15]

The marchioness was Elizabeth Leveson Gower, wife of the 2nd Marquis of Stafford. It is said that around the year 1803 the marquis, 'a leviathan of wealth', began to devote himself 'to the patronage of art, probably under the influence of his wife, herself an artist in water colours of considerable skill'. She was also 'Countess of Sutherland in her own right and proprietress of the greatest part of Sutherland'. In 1833 her husband was 'raised to the Dukedom . . . and selected the title Duke of Sutherland'.[16]

It is, I believe, reasonable to assume that what the marchioness bought was the entire Gordon Collection: the manuscripts as well as the 'drawings, &c. &c.'. There is,

3. *Probably Cape dwarf chameleons* (Bradypodion pumilium)

however, no record that anyone took an interest in either the maps and drawings or the papers during the next one hundred years. Perhaps that is an exaggeration. Someone did write in one of the bound volumes of bird drawings the following observation: 'A collection made by Colonel Gordon of Scotch family settled at the Cape & highly esteemed by the Dutch Government. It was intended to be sold at a public auction but was bought by the Marquis of Stafford about 1802.'[17] As we now know, the information is wrong in at least two respects, so it can be assumed that it was added some time after the collection was bought, when the actual dates and facts were not accurately known.

It was only in 1913, when the library of Stafford House was put up for auction, that the collection re-emerged. The Sotheby's catalogue for the sale on 30 October 1913 reads: '[Lot] Nr. 445. A collection of 387 very clear original coloured drawings of the Quadrupeds . . . mounted and bound, in 4 vol. half red morocco.'[18] From the number and description given here, it is evident that the maps, charts and landscape drawings were not included in the sale. The London booksellers, Maggs Bros, were the buyers, paying £690 for the four volumes. However, they must have been told of the missing items because when the collection was put up for sale in 1914, there were six not four volumes, the additional two being the maps and other drawings.

The price, for what was then known as the Gordon Atlas, was £1 250 and was paid by a Dutch bookseller, Martinus Nijhof of The Hague. Subsequently, the Dutch Government and a group of citizens, under the chairmanship of Professor Godée Molsbergen, took over the purchase and presented the collection to the print section of the Rijks Museum, where it rests today, duly honoured and preserved.[19]

The Gordon papers (the manuscripts of his travel journals, correspondence and related material) were not even mentioned as being part of the Stafford House library. That such papers had once existed seems to have been forgotten. However, it may be that when the sale of the library took place, some home had to be found for them. Whether they were lent to the county archives in Stafford at this time is not known, but that is where the papers were discovered in 1964 by the chief archivist, Pretoria, Dr A. J. Kieser, who was in Britain on 'a busman's holiday'. While visiting the Stafford Archives, as a 'purely routine enquiry, Dr Kieser asked whether there were any old Dutch manuscripts in the archives. "Yes," said the Stafford archivist, "there are, but they have never been translated as no one here knows High Dutch." To Dr Kieser's amazement he was handed Robert Gordon's original journals – written during his travels into the interior . . . .'[20]

In April 1979, under the title 'Valuable autographs and manuscripts, the property of the Duchess of Sutherland's settlements', the papers were put on sale by Christie's of London. They were bought by Mr H. F. Oppenheimer for his Brenthurst Library in Johannesburg and that is where they are now lodged.

In conclusion, one can only speculate how our perception of southern Africa in the eighteenth century would have been affected had Gordon's journals been published in Paris during 1804-5. Indeed, it is not just a view of history that is in question. Gordon's observations of the interior tribes, the fauna and flora, the topography of the country, as well as his charts and maps, would all have had far-reaching effects on the ideas and knowledge of succeeding generations. Gordon's name would have stood at the front of all the travellers and writers of the period, because his journeys were, undoubtedly, the most remarkable and well documented of the time. There is one final irony: had Friederich von Schlegel then brought out a German edition, Gordon's accomplishments would have been spread even more widely and even more decisively.

The Translation of Gordon's Papers

Incorporated in this biography are translations which I have made from Gordon's four travel journals and other miscellaneous papers. Apart from a photocopy of the journals, which was lent to me, I also consulted photocopies of the Gordon papers in the Pretoria and Cape Archives. In addition, I was given access to the original manuscripts in the Brenthurst Library, Johannesburg, which enabled me to decipher some passages that were faint or illegible in the copies.

Whenever I have needed to quote from Gordon's original Dutch, French or English, I have aimed to transcribe his words exactly, however eccentric the spelling, however haphazard the punctuation. Indeed, his style is steadfastly erratic. He seldom bothered to use capital letters, either at the start of a sentence or for place or personal names. Indeed, often the spelling of a name, let alone an ordinary word, will differ when used twice in the same sentence. My transcriptions endeavour to reproduce these variants exactly.

Concerning the translations in general, however, I have felt that some uniformity would be desirable, since I would not be quoting the original text. Thus, in order to have a reference that was, to some extent, constant for place names, I have generally adopted the spelling used in Gordon's 'great map' (Map 3 of the Gordon Atlas in the Rijks Museum).

The names of people have presented a separate problem. In most instances the first version given by Gordon has been used, but where a name recurs frequently the commonest version has been adopted. Complete uniformity, however, is almost impossible, so I beg the reader's indulgence in this matter, pleading, at the very least, that some flavour of the original is retained when variant spellings occur.

Nevertheless, though Gordon's handwriting was not neat or handsome, though he wrote all over the margins and jumped pages in continuing a sentence, it is astonishing how little of what he wrote is illegible. His handwriting remained as clear, decisive and vigorous as the man himself.

A vexing issue in translating a work of this nature is the question of anachronisms. Words like *veld*, *outspan*, *inspan*, *vlei* or *krantz* were not in use in English at the time Gordon wrote. On the whole, therefore I have tried to follow the terms used by Paterson, Gordon's contemporary, in translating words such as these. Consistency here is again difficult since each journal varies, if only slightly, in style and approach. The aim to ensure consistency was there, however. In turns of phrase I have tried to use locutions that are neither aggressively modern nor whimsically archaic.

It will be noted that in the translations the word 'Caffer' is used instead of 'Kaffir'. To have abandoned this word entirely would have been historically inaccurate. Today, however, the term 'Kaffir' is offensive. It seemed, therefore, a happy compromise to use the spelling Gordon himself used in the Dutch, i.e. Caffer, thus preserving the historical nomenclature but creating a distance from the modern form of the word. Similarly, in translating 'wilden' it may seem more correct to use the word 'savages' rather than my choice of 'wild people', but since 'wilden' is almost always applied to the 'Bushmen', and because Gordon manifestly had a real sympathy for these people, I have chosen to use the latter term, keeping in this way an etymological link between the Dutch and English.

Again, the decision to use 'Bushmen' and 'Hottentot', with or without inverted commas, was also a difficult one. My reason for retaining these terms was that, in the first place, they were the words Gordon used in Dutch, i.e. 'Bosjesmans' and 'Hottentotten', and secondly, having reviewed the current controversy surrounding the words San and Khoi, it seemed better to keep the historical link with Gordon's terms than to use the words most commonly employed today. Indeed, Gordon was well aware of what these people called themselves. In a draft letter of 1779, addressed to his friend and mentor in the Netherlands, the Greffier Hendrik Fagel, Gordon wrote: '. . . as far as I know Hottentots call themselves Quoi Queuna. However, in dialect . . . some say Queina or Eina for Queuna. Literally, this means person people; Queuna being the plural of Quoi-person.' A few lines later he cites the word 'Saaneina' for 'Bushmen'.[1]

Perhaps the last word on this subject of nomenclature should be left to M.L. Wilson of the South African Museum. Concluding a trenchant and comprehensive article, he writes:

> . . . the choice of terms such as 'Hottentot' or 'Khoikhoi' or 'Bushman' or 'San' should be dictated by the context or individual preference. To those who see derogatory, racist or sexist connotations in the use of any of the names (although 'San' definitely does seem to be derogatory), the words of the motto of the British Order of the Garter apply: *Honi soit qui mal y pense*, shamed be he who evil thinks.[2]

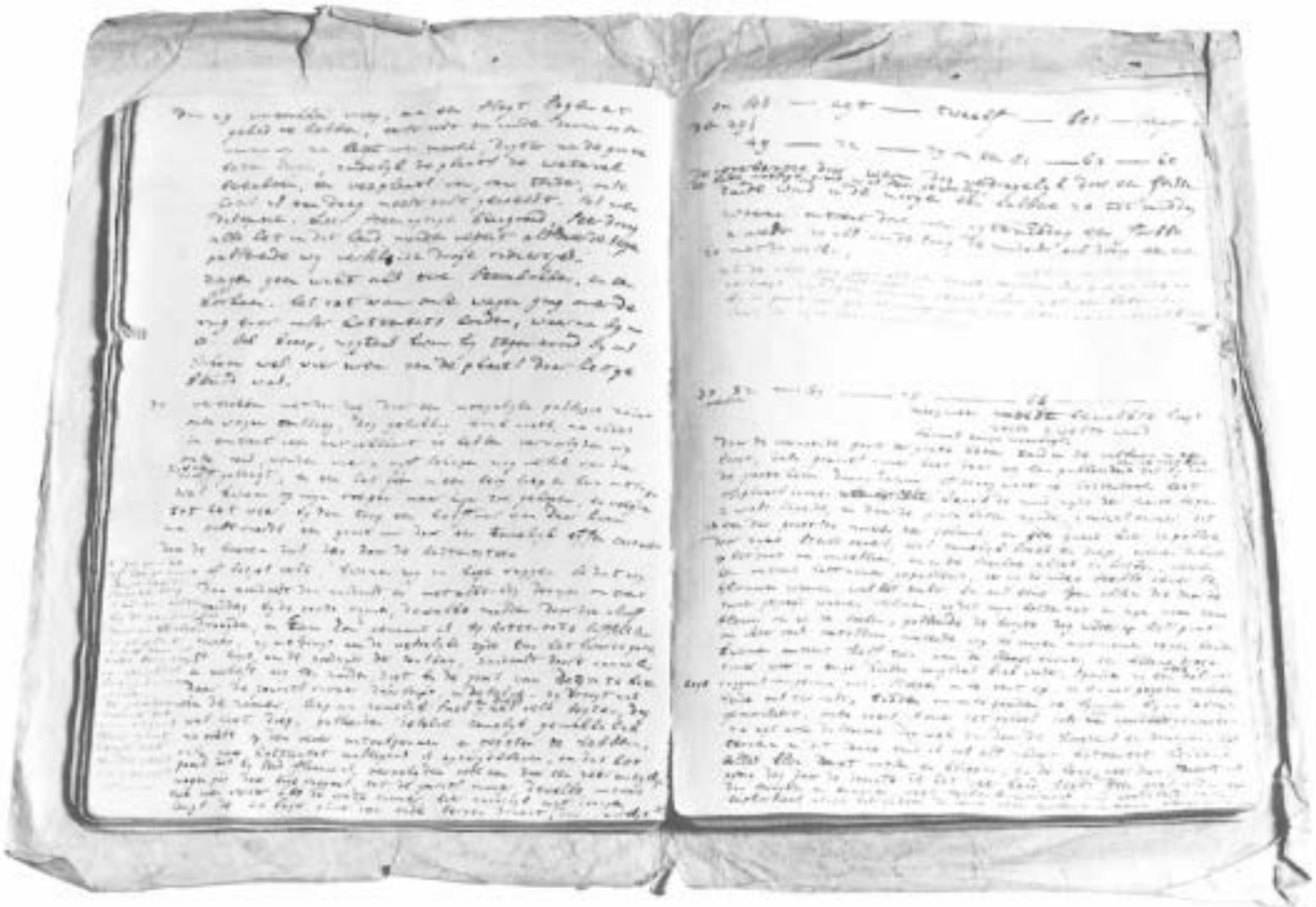
Gordon's own manner of expression in the journals is rough, even clumsy in places, and often monotonous with its meteorological and cartographical repetitions. No attempt has been made to render the style more elegant. The journals, in particular, were kept for information and primarily must be seen and read as such. (One

can imagine, for example, Gordon turning to them when he advised Le Vaillant how to proceed with his travels.) However, they would have emerged in a very different form had Gordon gone on to write a book from them – which was almost certainly his intention. Indeed, several of Gordon's contemporaries refer to the fact that he intended 'to give to the world, from his own hand, a history of his travels'. In particular, it is sadly ironic to read the words of the Dutch naval officer, Rear-Admiral Stavorinus, who had met Gordon in 1778:

> It is to be hoped that the death of colonel Gordon will not deprive the world of the invaluable results of his researches; and that, in whatever hands his papers may be, they will not be consigned to oblivion, or withheld from the public, who might justly form great expectations from his long residence at the Cape, his frequent journies up the country, and his well-known zeal for the promotion of knowledge.[3]

Finally, in considering the nature of the texts, and therefore the nature of the translations, it must be remembered that Gordon was writing his journals in the veld, under harsh conditions and whenever the occasion presented itself – which most probably was at night with poor illumination. This alone – the physical act of writing – was a remarkable feat considering the distances he covered, the people and places he had to see, the often strenuous demands of mapping, as well as the need to hunt game for food and to reconnoitre a path for the wagon. He was, of course, aided in these tasks by his servants and companions. Nevertheless, it is clear from the narrative that he never shirked these duties and responsibilities. His pragmatic zeal, his daily regimen of writing in the field and his dedication to accuracy can only be admired by posterity.

4. *One of the six notebooks in which Gordon recorded his remarkable travels.*



CHAPTER FOUR

THE THIRD JOURNEY: AN AMBITIOUS PLAN THWARTED

(AUGUST 1778 – JANUARY 1779)

With Van Plettenberg to the Geekoei river; Van Plettenberg's Beacon; agreement with the Xhosa; Gordon falls ill; the Histoire Naturelle rhinoceros anatomized; the Bokkeveld; the Roggeveld; the north-western Cape; contact with the 'Bushmen'; return to Cape Town

A little less than six months after the completion of his second journey, Gordon again set out for the Eastern Cape – this time travelling in the company of the governor, Joachim van Plettenberg. But before turning to the record of this journey, it is worth noting an event that took place during the brief interval between the two expeditions.

In either March or April 1778 Gordon met the Dutch rear-admiral J. S. Stavorinus and told him of his discovery of the Orange River.[1] Many of the details recorded by Stavorinus of this conversation with Gordon correspond closely to the journal of the second journey, so it is likely that Gordon either showed him the journal or read from it while the rear-admiral took notes. This may not appear to be particularly remarkable or worthy of note, but the fact that the record of this meeting was only published twenty years later, is; for it is possible that Gordon told very few people of his discovery. We know that he told Paterson because his friend was also to record the discovery in his *Narrative* of 1790, twelve years after the event. Further consideration of this matter will be given later.

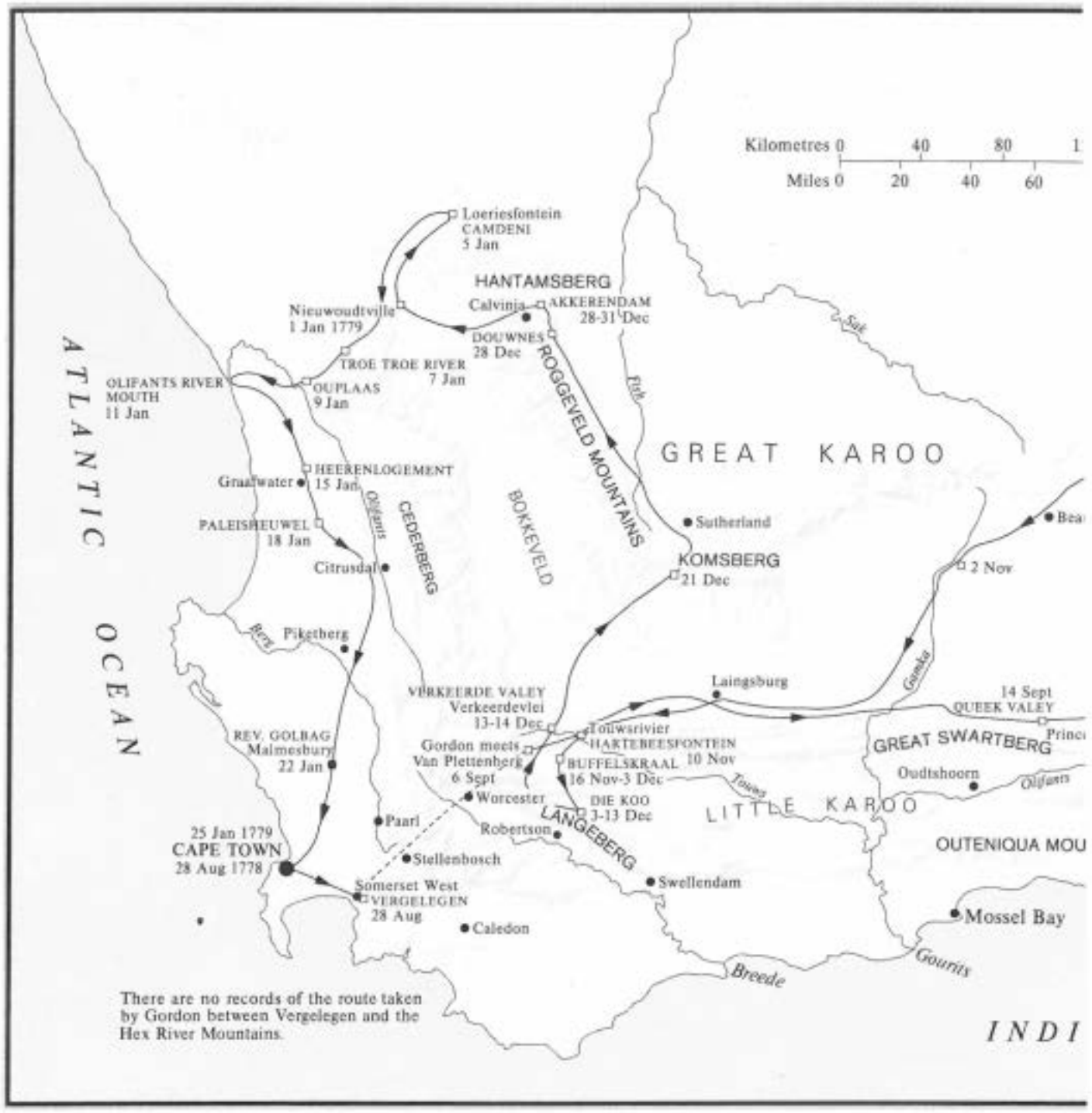
Gordon started his next journey on 28 August 1778. For some reason he went to stay once more at Vergelegen. In the manuscript the first page records the title, the dates of the journey, the usual details of weather and temperature, and the bare fact that he arrived at the farm in the dark. On the next page, however, crammed in above the following entry, is the curious fact that his servant could not rouse him and that he eventually woke at one o'clock. He also says he went to sleep at four in the morning. Does this mean that his host, De Waal, entertained him rather well? It would be nice to think that this was so, thus relieving the picture of the almost unmitigated austerity displayed by Gordon in this and all the following journals.[2]

Presumably he spent the next ten days or so at Vergelegen, but there are no entries in the journal for this period. Van Plettenberg and his retinue left Cape Town on 3 September 1778, and we know that Gordon only joined the party on 6 September as it travelled through the Hex River Mountains. We owe this information to the account of Van Plettenberg's journey which was kept by Olof Godlieb de Wet, a Company official.[3] Gordon's journal only resumes on 18 September when the party had reached the Traka River, about eighty kilometres east of present-day Prince Albert.

On the whole, this journal is terser and more factual than the previous one. It abounds in compass bearings and details of rivers and mountains, essential information for map-making. Perhaps the presence of the governor acted as some kind of restraint on Gordon. There is a further gap from 22-27 September in the opening pages of the journal. Again, this hiatus is unusual in Gordon's journal-keeping. Generally each day is meticulously recorded. He had, of course, passed this way on his previous journey, but he gives no indication why he took up his narrative once more when the party left the farm De Vrede, some twenty kilometres west of where Graaff-Reinet stands today. It will be recalled that it was from here that Gordon had set forth to 'make peace' with the 'Bushmen' the previous November, and it is clear that the governor's party now followed very much the same path north that he had taken then.

To give something of the flavour of this third journey, at least in its earlier parts, here is the entire entry for the day 30 September 1778. (The 'last farm' referred to in this extract is in the 'Kraane Valey' where Gordon had been on 15 November the previous year. It lies forty-odd kilometres west of Middelberg in the vicinity of the place now known as The Willows.)

Last night standing water was frozen into ½ inch of ice, and it was white everywhere with a clear sky and a southerly wind which blew briskly. Otherwise it would have frozen harder here. It began to get coldest in the morning, about two hours before daybreak. Half an hour before dawn the thermometer stood at 30 deg. and at sunrise at 32 deg. Left at half past six. We have got a Chinese or Bushman called Carel who used to live at a certain Van der Walt's. He is meant to accompany me into the interior. The Gov-



Map 3 *Gordon's third journey: to the Zeekoei River with Governor Van Plettenberg and thereafter with his own party to the west coast.*

ernor and I rode ahead on horseback and taking my previous course, we arrived after two and a half hours at Stephanus Smit's the last farm. We saw some bush pigs[4] (sanglier d'Afrique), bubalis[5] and springbok. On our left we passed three streams which come into the Plettenberg River from the Sneeuwberg. At Burger's, on the 17th last, three thousand sheep were smothered and killed by the great snow which lay 3 feet deep. 5 to 600 were still lying there in his kraal. Barometer at Smit's: 25–3. Thermometer midday 63 deg. afternoon 73 deg. sunset 63 deg. Clear weather. Fresh S.E. wind. Departed N.E. by N. and after four hours ride came to a spring overgrown with reed. It had good water in it and we made camp. We saw some gnus,[6] springbok and bontebok, but these do not have as much white as those at the Cape; however they are the same animal. Barometer 25–4: therefore has dropped almost not at all. The country is drier than last year, it being also two months earlier. The ridges still all lie in the same direction, namely S. Easterly and N.W.: but sometimes N. Easterly and S.W. We called this place Van Heijden's Fontein after Captain-Lieutenant Van Heijden. Course today four miles N.E. by N.

Captain-Lieutenant Van Heijden was an officer in the governor's retinue and he was not the only member of the party to have a geographical feature named after him.

Gordon himself was modestly assigned a brack rivulet in his name. The Seacow, or Zeekoei River of today, had already been named the Plettenbergs River on Gordon's first visit and it was to this site that the party made its way. Apparently, one of their objectives was to shoot hippopotamus and on 3 October an appropriate slaughter took place. One can sense in the entry for that day that Gordon found this wholesale massacre as distasteful now as he had the year before: 'so many,' he writes, 'that we were weary of shooting: many were killed'.

The spring at their camp was named after the accompanying surgeon, receiving thus the name of Seit's Fontein. On the map,[7] however, the name is given as 'Seit's of Dronken font'. But how this second whimsical appellation came about, the journal does not relate. Perhaps there was some celebration after the killing of the animals. Or perhaps the drinking had to do with the erection of 'a stone in commemoration of the Governor's visit' – in other words, the object known as Van Plettenberg's Beacon.

The erection of this beacon brings us to another enigma. Why was it placed here at all? This question has been thoroughly explored by Professor Forbes in *Pioneer Travellers in South Africa*. Briefly stated, however, the problem is this: the beacon was meant to mark the northernmost boundary of the Colony in these parts, so why was it placed in this remote spot and not at the natural boundary, the Orange River, which was only fifty-odd kilometres to the north-east?

It was at this point that Gordon had been forced to turn back on his previous journey. But he had struck the Orange subsequently and not so far to the west, less than 100 kilometres. So Gordon must have known how close they were to the river. Apart from Gordon, there were other members of the party – farmers – who knew of the existence of the river, which was hardly more than a day's ride away.

It has been posited, therefore, that Gordon did not want the governor to visit the river. According to Professor Forbes, this may have been because Gordon wished to preserve the name for his Prince, fearing that Van Plettenberg would call it after himself.[8] This is certainly feasible, knowing, as we do, how loyal Gordon was to the House of Orange. However, Gordon never admitted this in writing. Indeed, in a draft letter to Hendrik Fagel,[9] composed shortly after his return from this journey, Gordon stated that the reason they did not follow the river north to the Orange was because the governor had allowed only ten days for this part of the expedition. There was therefore no time to go to the 'Great River'. He also added that the burghers comprising the escort were frightened of the 'Bushmen' and were in a hurry to return south.

The journal entry for 5 October 1778 would appear to confirm the governor's haste to return. Gordon writes:

> Departed, going back on our old course. We unyoked a while at Schuijlhoek and at sunset arrived at Gordon's River (or Brack River) and there we camped. All these rivulets run into the Plettenbergs River. Thermometer 37 deg., rose at its hottest to 73 deg. and dropped to 57 deg. after sunset. We took the skin of a hippopotamus bull with us. I saw Mercury before sunrise; it was very beautiful. We saw some of the aforementioned game but did not hunt as his Excellency the Governor would like to be back over the Sneeuwberg within the next four days. Fresh S.E. wind. Fine weather.

As we have seen, one of Gordon's main aims the previous year had been to negotiate some kind of peace with the 'Bushmen' in this area. It was almost certainly why Van Plettenberg was also here at this time. No contact was made, however, and the party decided to retrace its steps, Gordon riding ahead to De Beer's farm, De Vrede.

24. *The governor's hippopotamus hunt:*
'. . . we were weary of shooting: so many were killed'.

Following Gordon, the governor had more excitement to add to the hippopotamus hunt. Three male lions had been spotted:

> His Excellency the Governor and his company also saw them [the lions] hunting gnus. Some of the company fired several shots at them from 4 to 500 paces. Two ran away but one kept turning back after each shot with its tail high. It lay down but then got up and walked away again. They considered this lion to be very ferocious so they left it alone.

After a short break of three days Gordon was again on his way, this time travelling east, with the governor once more following him at a more leisurely pace. As he says, he followed the same course he had taken on his previous journey, and on 15 October he reached his immediate destination, Willem Prinsloo's farm – now the site of Somerset East.

The object of this visit was to negotiate once more with the Xhosa tribesmen, but this time with the authority of the governor's presence. The frontier area was very unsettled. The 'Bushmen', the Xhosa and the colonists were all fighting for the same territory, hence Gordon's terse notes that 'the farmers of the Sneeuwberg and from this part fled before the Bushmen'. There was also the individual complaint of 'a certain Joubert' whom the 'caffers wanted to murder'. The whole entry for this day, 15 October, is worth looking at closely, for it illustrates in its tantalizing way so many of the facets of Gordon himself and how he presents himself in his journal:

> We left east for Prinsloo, but in a turn going round the Bos Berg. From Bruintjes Hoogte measured the angle of the Sneeuwberg from Lottering W. Half N. De Beer W.N.W. Good weather today. Soft west wind. Arrived at Prinsloo before noon. Therm. 67 deg. to 84 and dropping to 78 deg. We heard from the farmers that there were some thousand Caffers in the mountains, waiting to fight us. Jacob Joubert also came and complained greatly. I had doubts about the case and I rode alone to the Caffers. (Asked a man called Durand, who went with me to the Caffers last year, whether he would go with me again, but he declined). I came upon them only two hours from here; they were under the leadership of Chief Coba. In the beginning he remained lying on the ground and appeared suspicious. But when I asked him if he no longer knew his brother, Gordon, he jumped up happily and gave me his hand in a friendly way. I proposed that he should come with me to our great Chief which he accepted; 39 of his people also accepted. They did not want to take their assegais with them.

The first sentence tells us the direction he took on leaving Bruintjieshoogte for Prinsloo's. But he does not simply ride 'east'. He must record that he made a 'turn going round the Bos Berg'. He then remembers that he took certain compass bearings on the Sneeuberg from Bruin-

tjieshoogte and duly records these. Then he observes that the weather is good and that there is a 'soft west wind'. The temperatures at morning, noon and evening are noted, and without any break in the progression of his writing he tells us that the farmers report that there are those 'Caffers in the mountains waiting to fight us'. The matter of Jacob Joubert who 'complained greatly' now follows.[10] It is a fact, and is simply recorded as such. The sentence that ensues, however, is Gordon at his most enigmatic: 'I had doubts about the case and I rode alone to the Caffers.' He does not record why he has these doubts, or indeed what the case is beyond the fact that it concerns Joubert's complaint. But what are we to make of the second half of the sentence 'and I rode alone to the Caffers'? We must imagine this extraordinary man hearing out some dubious story from a farmer and then riding off into the mountains to confront a large gathering of angry tribesmen.

What is astonishing is that both matters – the complaint and the confrontation – are given equal weight in the sentence. In the original Dutch this juxtaposition of the trivial and dramatic is even more marked. This is because the parenthesis about Durand's declining to accompany him is clumsily inserted into the body of the main sentence, thus further diminishing the dramatic aspect of his riding alone into the mountains. Furthermore, he in no way places any emphasis on the fact that he meets Chief Coba, the leader he had befriended the previous year. It is only in the remaining few sentences of this entry that the scene suddenly springs vividly to life – and this happens almost by chance as it were, because Gordon actually allows us to see what he is recording: Coba does not rise when Gordon approaches. Initially suspicious, the chief continues to lie on the ground. Only when Gordon refers to himself as Coba's 'brother' does he respond and jump up happily to greet him. The confrontation ends cheerfully and they agree to go with Gordon to meet 'our great Chief', Van Plettenberg.

This whole entry demonstrates the curious quirks of Gordon's style – the way facts crowd upon facts with only the slightest hint of his own opinion intruding. ('I had doubts about the case.') Above all, we can see how often in Gordon's narrative the momentous and trivial are presented as equivalent. This demonstrates either an amazing sang-froid or an almost total indifference to the value of words. It could be argued that in a journal a man has a right to express himself as he wishes, and that had Gordon decided to write and publish a book of his travels the niceties of style and emphasis would have been present. That may be, but the very fact that this is a journal – in effect an *aide-mémoire* only – allows us to see how his mind worked when not constrained by formal demands.

Once more there are no entries for a couple of days, namely 16 and 17 October. We know, however, from De Wet's records that Gordon brought Coba and twenty-eight of his men to Prinsloo's farm on 15 October (Gordon says that thirty-nine 'accepted' the invitation but some may have dropped out on the way). The meeting with the governor was cordial and De Wet states that the Xhosa showed great trust and affection for Gordon who discoursed with them in their own tongue. They sang and danced to entertain the governor and were treated to tobacco and arrack. The next two days (missing from Gordon's journal) were spent visiting the tribespeople, observing their ceremonies and discussing their withdrawal to the eastern side of the Great Fish River. This they promised to do once they had brought in their crops.

The party moved south alongside the Great Fish on 18 October, and on 19 October Gordon took leave of the governor, riding west to Bruintjieshoogte where he spent that night. He says nothing here of what his intention was. According to De Wet he left to return to the Camdeboo in order to pursue his journey to the north and north-west. But De Wet also omits to say why Gordon is making this journey. This matter will be addressed shortly.

On 21 October we find Gordon back at De Vrede. Again we have a series of disparate observations and notes, haphazardly recorded and juxtaposed without regard for any order or symmetry. It is curious that so 'scientific' a mind could be so random. At times, entries such as the one below evoke an eerie feeling that Gordon is anticipating the stream-of-consciousness mode of writing pioneered by the novelists Joyce and Woolf, where mundane and significant moments mingle in the prose just as they tend to do in real life:

> Arrived at De Beer's. Good weather. Thermometer 59 deg.–80 deg. dropping to 63 deg. Soft west wind. I was not at all well. Just as we arrived a Hottentot woman sang a song of welcome for her son, who leads the team of oxen for our wagon. (It does happen that children are cast out, but not generally, and not in every tribe. It is only done for reasons of hunger or great affliction. Otherwise most Hottentots are very fond of their children).

Here are the first signs that Gordon was falling ill, and from later entries it seems that he had contracted dysentery. However, he still has time to remark on the mother singing to her son and then to comment on the custom that aroused some interest among the travellers of the time, namely that 'Hottentots' abandoned their children in times of need. Conceding that it did happen occasionally (who gave him this information?), he is nevertheless quick to remark that 'most Hottentots are very fond of their children'. It often seems, in these odd comments, that he is attempting to correct current prejudices about the indigenous inhabitants of the country. It is typical that he should try to do this by noting the facts as he observed them and not by indulging in fanciful or sentimental speculation. The practice of abandoning the old (instead of children) is clearly linked to this passage and is discussed later.[11]

From the entry for 25 October a reasonably clear idea of Gordon's plans begins to emerge:

> Clear weather, cool. A little wind from S.E. Last night it froze white. Thermom. was on freezing point. I am getting worse rather than better and have no medicines. As two of my best Hottentots, Iteki and Platje, are also sick, I resolved to pursue

my intended journey north no further but to survey the land west of here and then, if I get better, to act according to circumstances.

We have got a female gerbo here which is pregnant and tame already. Took an accurate latitude here and got 32 deg–5 min; error 25 deg. N.W. The vineyard, which already had young grapes, was totally ruined by the frost last night. At about 10 o'clock in the morning the leaves were already withered by the sun. This is late frost and unusual.

It is in the entry of 27 October 1778, as he left De Vrede, that we finally hear, with greater exactness, just where Gordon was intending to go. This is also where we have the first mention that he had a boat with him:

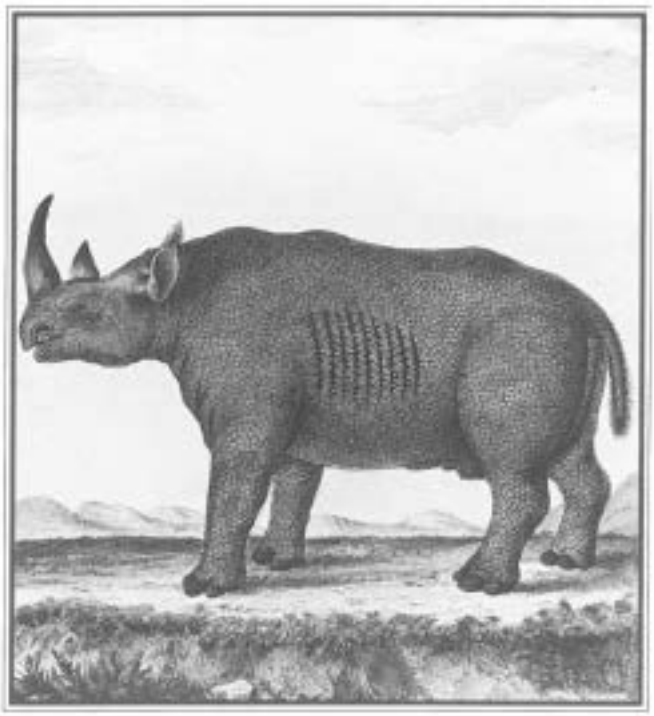
Left with the greatest regret in the world, seeing that I had brought my boat and other supplies to this point. But, having no medicines, and not knowing if I might become sicker, already so far away, I decided that my health and that of my people would not allow me to set forth on my intended journey over the Orange, north and then further west.

Thus illness prevented him from making this journey. 'North' would have taken him back to the Orange, probably close to the debouchment of the Zeekoei into the 'Great River'; while 'west' would have taken him to the mouth of the Orange. Presumably he would then have returned south to Cape Town either along the coast or inland. This would have been a journey unprecedented in the annals of eighteenth-century travel – a matter of thousands, not hundreds, of kilometres if the round journey from and back to Cape Town is considered. Ill though he was, he nevertheless left the De Beers, 'his friendly host, his wife and family', on the same day 'in order to survey the land west of here and then, if I get better, to act according to circumstances'. There is a note of great sadness in his words as he leaves De Vrede 'with the greatest regret in the world'. He had obviously planned this expedition with high hopes and great care, even to the extent of bringing a boat, though it seems to argue a lack of foresight that he had brought no medicines.

Gordon's course west took him past the site of present-day Aberdeen and, as usual in this journal, there is a multitude of compass bearings which testify to his plans to survey the land he was travelling through. He records and travels on despite ill-health, taking frequent readings on his barometer and, as on 2 November, using his astrolabe to ascertain longitude. It is on this same day that he describes the shooting of a rhinoceros bull near the source of the Gamka or Leeuwen River.

This morning just as I was adjusting my instruments, a rhinoceros came close to our wagons but as soon as it caught our scent it turned away. Two of my Hottentots tried to shoot it but after sniffing the ground twice it trotted off fast. We saw three hunters go after it. It went up wind and they rode after it, almost alongside it, without it seeing them. At last from the high place where I had gone I saw powder flashes and shortly afterwards

25. *The* Histoire Naturelle *black rhinoceros.*



young Mr. Viljoen, J. Jacob Kruger, and Dolf Bronkhorst came up. They told us they had shot a rhinoceros bull. Viljoen had given him the mortal shot at 118 paces. However, when it fell after walking a short distance, they did not trust it, for they consider it to be one of the most ferocious of animals, so they fired another four shots at it. We rode over to it. I made a drawing of it, and wrote a description of this wonderful animal. I came back late in the evening. I left my Hottentots to skin the animal in the morning. It had already begun to swell up. It is of medium size but nevertheless an adult animal.

This animal was almost certainly the one that Gordon described in detail to Professor Allamand – the one in fact that appears in the *Supplément* to *Histoire Naturelle*.[12] This is borne out by Gordon's remark in the journal that on 3 November, despite the fact that the bull's body was fast deteriorating, they were trying 'to preserve the skin as a specimen'. Professor Allamand acknowledged that he had received the drawing, description and skin from Gordon and was using them for the basis of his article. Interestingly, he ascribed the shooting of the rhinoceros to Gordon himself, claiming that Gordon had shot it at a distance of 118 paces 'close to the source of the River Gamka or River of the Lions'. It would seem that Gordon indulged in a mild but unimportant deception in claiming he shot it himself. Nevertheless, he quoted the same distance for the shot.

The good professor also poured scorn on the writer Kolb who stated as a fact that if poison was poured into a rhinoceros horn it would crack open. Allamand, that true man of science, confessed, 'almost with shame', how he had experimented by pouring wine into a rhinoceros-horn cup and then adding a strong dose of arsenic: '. . . the

horn received not the slightest crack,' he dryly remarked.

Still unwell, but meticulously recording day by day, Gordon continues his journey, south-west down the Gamka River and then more westerly towards present-day Laingsburg. It was in this vicinity, on 12 November 1778, that he made some rough notes in the journal concerning the gestures and words of a 'Chinese-Bushman'. We can infer that one of his aims in making this journey was to try to make contact once more with these people. The message he gets – on this occasion at least – is hostile: 'They say we are evil, and come in the night like wolves and have hair like lions.' This poetic phrase contrasts most sharply with the surrounding compass bearings and latitude calculations of Gordon's text. It is likely, however, that Gordon recorded those words not because they contained picturesque images but because they were what were spoken at the time and because he wanted a true reflection of their attitudes.

His route continued in very much the same direction and location as the national road today, until he reached Hartebeestfontein, a farm in the area of present-day Touws River. He then diverged slightly from the course along the modern road to reach the farm of Wouter de Vos, Buffelskraal, at the head of the Hex River Valley, on 16 November. Swellengrebel had stayed there barely two years before and had remarked upon its comfort. It is likely that Gordon regarded this hospitable farm as a haven to make for until his recovery, because the next day he 'sent a man on horseback to the Cape for some medicine'.

Clearly weakened by his condition, Gordon continues to write up his journal but the entries are short. On 22 November he remarks that he is still feeling unwell; yet even illness does not deter his scientific curiosity, and he sends Schoemaker (mentioned here for the first time in the journal) and two of his 'Hottentot' servants up 'the mountain' (almost certainly the Matroosberg) to record the temperatures of the snow that had recently fallen. It must have been a hard day for his servants and the artist, though if Schoemaker complained it is not on record here. Apart from the temperatures, a barometer reading was taken. Gordon's notes also contain fairly technical details about rock formations, so it can be assumed that the artist did his work well.

The entries continue to be brief and mainly concerned with the weather. Even on 30 November Gordon writes: 'Still not at all well. Have bad diarrhoea.' Then, with the new month, his health suddenly begins to improve and he starts to make plans to continue his journey. Here is his entry in full for 1 December 1778:

> Fine warm weather. Calm in the morning; at midday a fresh west wind, somewhat cloudy. Thermometer 65 deg –80 deg –70 deg.
>
> Am much better. We are making ready to go into the country once more. The Sak River, Vis and Riet Rivers run into the Great River.
>
> Namaquas always milk at noon. They hold their hands high before drinking milk. Many have the first joint of their fingers cut off (like Bushmen). One seldom sees small children with the first joint of their little finger. Sometimes two joints of the middle finger are missing. They say they do this for a sickness. Most of the Great Namaquas have one testicle cut out.
>
> In the evening Captain de Lille, the Botanist Paterson and Van Reenen came from the Cape to visit me. They had heard of my illness.

Gordon's remarks for this day convey the usual mixture of facts and information. (The subject of testicle excision, first mentioned here, is pursued in much greater detail on Gordon's following journey.) It can be assumed that his servant had returned from Cape Town with the medicines before the arrival of his friends, for although Gordon was still not better on the 30th, he was 'much better' the following day and confident that he was now fit enough to continue his journey. He postponed his departure – planned for the next day – apparently to enjoy the company of his friends.

It is perhaps appropriate to consider here some curious contemporary speculation concerning Gordon's journey from De Vrede to Buffelskraal. It is contained in a letter written by Hendrik Cloete, a well-known burgher at the Cape, to the younger Swellengrebel in the Netherlands.[13] The letter is headed 'Kaapsche Nouvelles (Cape News) 19.3.1778 – 15.2.1779' and the passage concerning Gordon starts from the time he parted from Van Plettenberg:

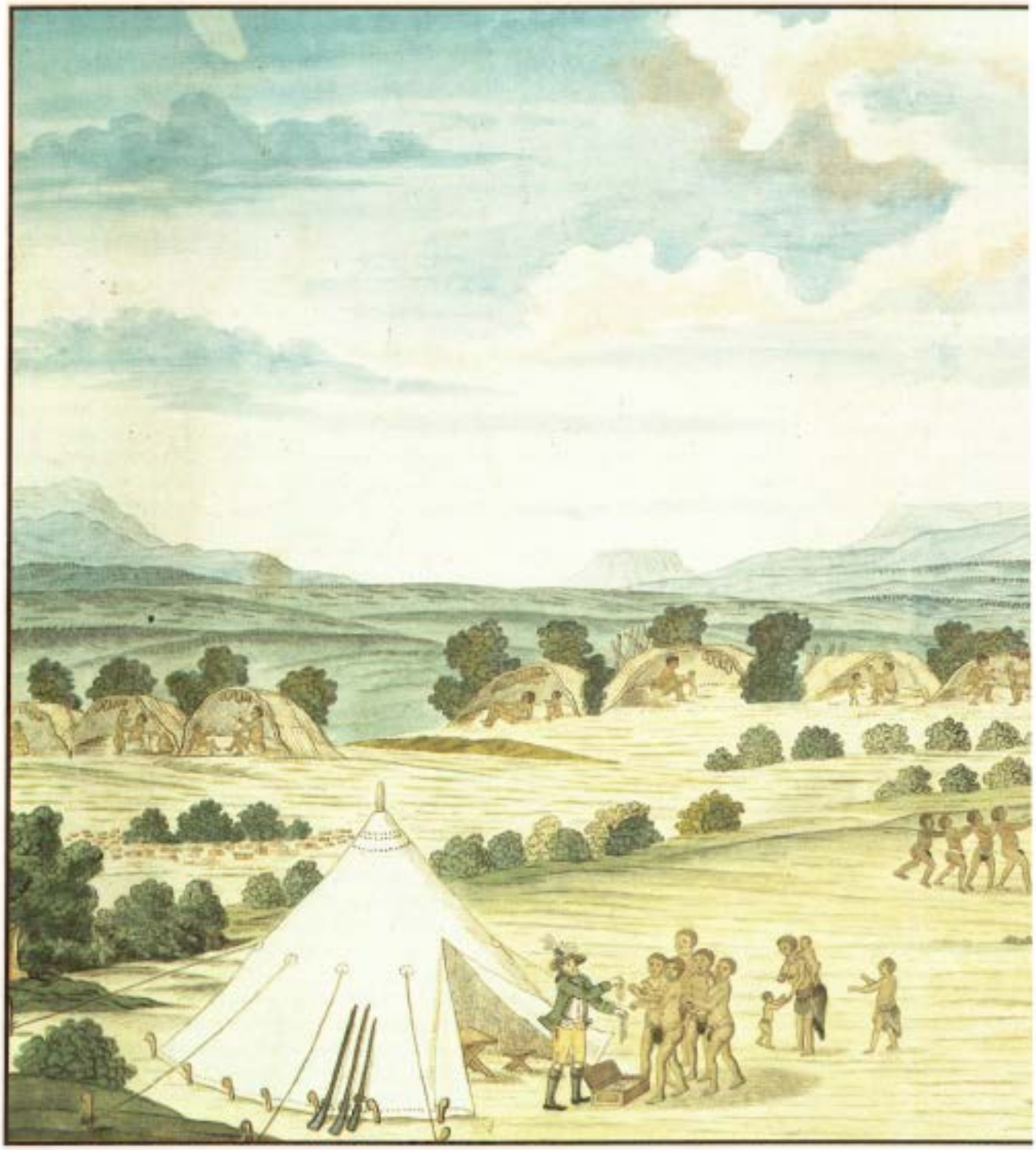
> Gordon took his leave [of the Governor] and returned to the farm of De Beer, intending to return across the Great River to the North. Two sons of De Beer, two Van der Walts and three others had promised to accompany him, but De Beer, no longer being Veld Commandant, retracted his promise and Gordon had to give up his plans. He pretended to be sick and returned to the Hex River, where he secretly arranged for fresh supplies to be sent to him and departed for the Hantam and the Sak River returning via the Kamiesberge across the Olifants River to the Cape.
>
> The painter Schumacher, well known to you, spent some time with Gordon on this trip, but not being satisfied with the way he was treated, he left by agreement.

The passage is perplexing. It is far from clear why Gordon should have 'pretended to be sick' or why he should have sent for supplies 'secretly'. Furthermore, if Schoemaker (Schumacher) left his service, Gordon certainly does not mention it – a startling omission. Finally, the visit of De Lille (an officer in the garrison), Paterson (a conspicuous foreigner), and Van Reenen (a prominent burgher) hardly justifies Cloete's allegation of secrecy. However, perhaps one fact might be of interest concerning the identification of the paintings and drawings made on the rest of this trip. If Schoemaker had left, then they could only have been made by Gordon.

On 3 December Gordon set off for 'De Ko', while his friends returned to the Cape. 'Die Koo' is still a regional name for an area approximately fifteen kilometres north of Robertson, and 'Conradie's farm, Harmonie' is still marked there on the topographical sheet for Worcester, 3319. It is situated between the Langeberge and the Kooberg.

It was, he says, an 'excellent place to complete my triangulation' – in other words, to continue with his map-making activities. The highest point on the Kooberg, on the same topographical sheet, is marked as 1 089 metres, so we can speculate that it was from somewhere near this site that he made his observations. Indeed, the entries from 3 to 11 December contain a great many compass bearings and remarks on the topography of the area.

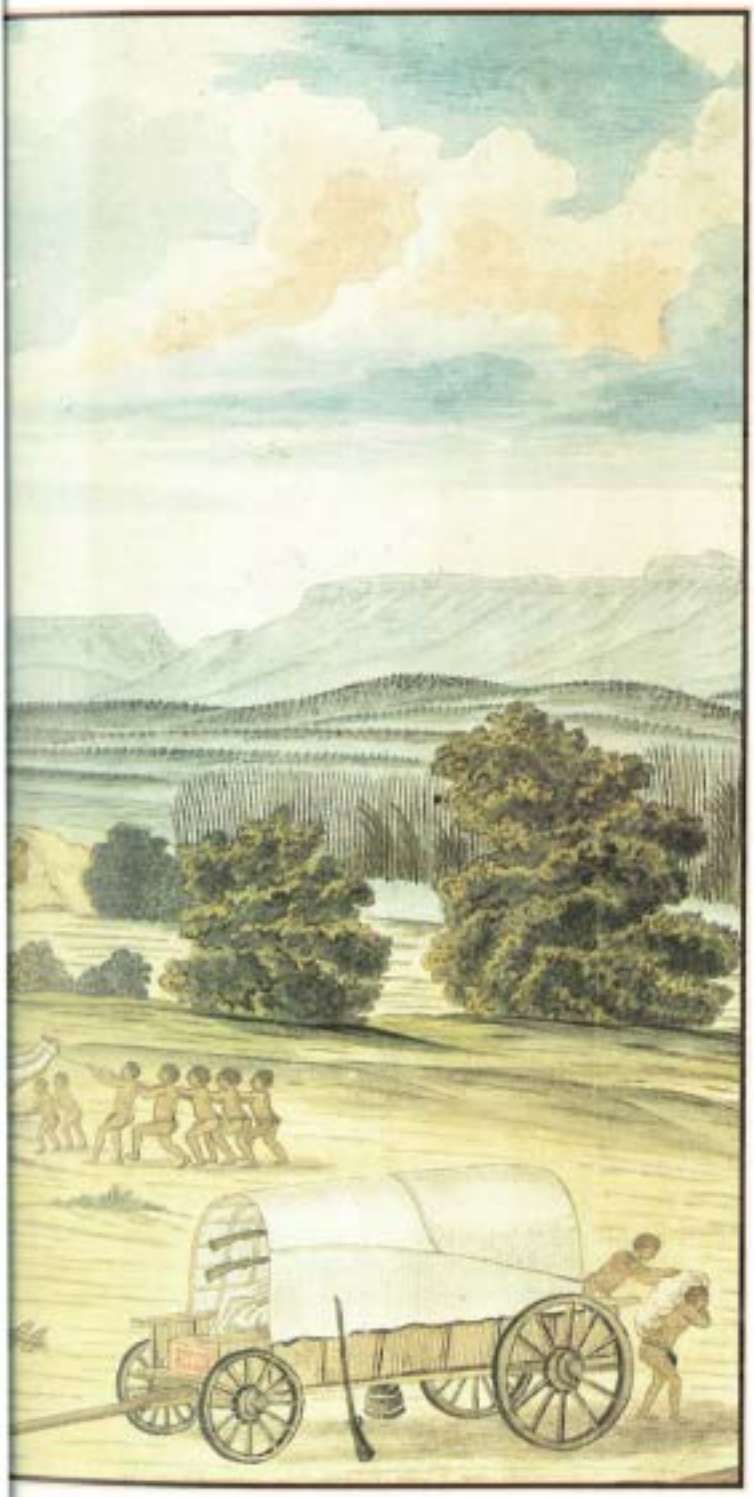
While there, he also visited two mineral baths, which are surely those just north of Ashton, some twenty kilometres east. However, of far more interest to us today is the account which follows of an 'old Hottentot sorcerer'. It reveals a genuine curiosity as to how the practice of sorcery was conducted, coupled with an amused scepticism at the superstitions of the participants. Even in the privacy of his journal Gordon appears to maintain his 'scientific' principles, but at the same time there is nothing malicious in his scorn. Indeed, he displays a certain degree of pride in the fact that he had been allowed to wit-



26. *Gordon at the 'Bushman kraal of Chiefs Gronjam and Doerop, with their way of offering peace'.*

ness the event, as his host, Gideon Joubert, had never been granted the privilege. The ceremony took place on 8 December 1778:

Saw an old Hottentot sorcerer who did not want to acknowledge what he was, making *goudeni*. He sometimes strikes fully grown Hottentots and they do not dare to defend themselves. He was frightened of me. The others did not dare to refuse him, whatever he demanded of them. In the evening I saw him, in their own manner, doctoring and practising his sorcery on a sick boy. He did this after refusing many times and mostly because he was frightened of me, for I had let him see the sun through a smoked glass. He thought that I would bewitch him. He ordered the youth to come naked to his hut in the twilight. My Hottentot, Iteki, was also frightened of him and he sat by the fire showing great attention, alongside the sorcerer's wife and a young Hottentot girl. I had a candle lighted in order to see better, whereupon he went and sat by the youth who had a pain in his foot. He rubbed the thighs and the leg, and, holding the foot to his head, he roared and snorted like a lion and a tiger. Then he held his hand to the head and the heart of the boy, and did this several times. Then sneezing three or four times, he opened his hand showing some insects, like beetles, which he said he had pulled out of the leg. Having smeared some mutton fat on the leg he rubbed the rest over himself. After this he took some roots (from thorn and mimosa trees) which were hollow and tied together and filled with stones that rattled inside. Then he began his sorcerer's song, all the time sitting, but twisting his body continually and striking the bundles on the ground, often singing furiously and shaking his head while his wife accompanied him, clapping her hands all the time. We could not understand him, even Iteki was not able to; he said it was Bushman sorcerer's language. When he broke off, sweating, I asked him several questions but all I could get out of him was that *touqua* (God) had taught him this in a dream. Joubert said that he must have been very frightened of me to have practised sorcery in my presence, since they say it never goes well if there is a white skin present and that they would never practise sorcery in front of him. The whole time I kept a most serious demeanour though often I could hardly stop myself from bursting into laughter at his cures and the terror of my Hottentot. They say that they have jackals and other animals in their service, that these take messages to other sorcerers for them. Bought his magic rattle for a tinderbox.



On 13 December Gordon returned north to stay with the widow Jacobs at Verkeerdevlei. This is the stretch of water some twelve kilometres west of Touws River. It was presumably another of those havens, hospitable places where travellers knew they would receive a measure of comfort. (Van Plettenberg and his entourage, including Gordon, had stopped at this same place on their outward journey east in September.)

Gordon was not there to rest, however, as may be seen from the next day's entry with its long list of compass bearings and other geographical observations. On the following day he was off on his travels again, this time north to the Roggeveld, the Hantam, and thereafter southwards to the Olifants River and home to Cape Town.

As his records show, he first returned to De Straat (near present-day Touws River), and then made his way in a north-easterly direction up the 'Namgas Riviertje' to 'Pinar's stock farm'. (Today the river is known as the Pienaarskloof River – a name perhaps derived from this same earlier Pienaar.) It then took him another day to reach Smitswinkel, near the river of the same name, before entering the Klein Roggeveld.

It was at this point that Gordon rode ahead, doubtless to scout the road before them. When he returned to the camp he found 'all in confusion because the drink had

been badly guarded'. But this does not seem to shake his equanimity or provoke his anger, as his next sentence concerns the source of a stream.

In an eloquent passage discussing this journey, Professor Forbes has pointed out how many of the farms marked on Gordon's map bear the same names today.[14] Gordon's progress into the Roggeveld can in fact be traced by names such as De Fortuin, Brand Fortuin, Brand Valeij, Bonne Esperance, Standvastifheid and Oranje Fonteijn. Obviously such reliable pointers enable historians to track a traveller's route with far greater confidence, as well as supporting the argument against the haphazard changing of place-names.

By 21 December Gordon had ascended the Komsberg, making many barometric observations and compass bearings en route. He was having trouble with his wagon, and this recurred as he travelled north into the Groot Roggeveld on Christmas Day 1778. It appears that to Gordon it was a day like any other day, for the journal contains the usual careful description of the course taken, compass bearings and notes on the state of the weather. He also notes that on the 'Aape Berg' (Monkey Mountain) there are 'N.B. no monkeys'.

On 28 December Gordon left the Roggeveld at Downes – another place which bears the same name today – to make his way to Adriaan van Zyl's farm, Akkerendam, at the foot of the Hantamsberg, just north of present-day Calvinia. As usual, he omits to record that before leaving the uplands of the Roggeveld a fine drawing was made of the area from the vicinity of Downes, looking back to the mountains he had just left.[15]

Why these impressive works – whether made by Gordon or Schoemaker – are seldom referred to in the journal deserves some consideration. It may be because they were regarded as routine records, where accuracy in conveying the look of a place was more important than artistic merit. Sometimes the need to get the 'look' of a place was taken beyond mere accuracy. Many of the drawings in the Gordon Atlas are composite – that is to say, the most impressive features of a landscape were included even if their topographical relationship to one another had to be distorted to do so. If making drawings was a routine for most travellers, as it was, then it is understandable that they are seldom referred to in the narrative. One further point that bears mention is that it need come as no surprise that a military man, such as Gordon, could draw so well. Accurate sketching would play an important role in his duties and form part of normal military intelligence techniques, such as the drawing of fortifications and so forth.

Somewhat uncharacteristically, Gordon spent 29 and 30 December resting at Akkerendam, but he did not stay to celebrate New Year there and on the 31st we find him at his 'Soet Waterfontein' – probably the Soetwater which is just north of the road between Calvinia and Nieuwoudtville and about halfway between the two towns. He was travelling along the Oorlogskloof River – which he calls the 'Douwnes' – and reached the Bokkeveld a little south of Nieuwoudtville on New Year's Day 1779. Here we have his notes about the 'Bushmen' leaders he hoped to meet in the next few days, to which end he travelled on to 'a farm belonging to Mrs Ryk'. This has been identified by Professor Forbes as 'Swellengrebelsfontein on the northern parts of the Bokkeveld', though this is not absolutely clear from the journal.

On 4 January Gordon records that he was visited by the 'Bushman Chief Doerop'. Significantly, he reminds Gordon of Chief Ruiter whom he had met in January 1778 near the Sundays River. The relevant passage reads: 'In the morning the Bushman Chief Doerop and one of his tribe came to fetch me. He was very like Chief Reuter. He spoke very well and had a good physiognomy. Had a long talk with him. Departed travelling further N.E. and after a seven-hour journey reached the Bushmen on the Camdeni.' (It may be recalled that Gordon had also had a 'long conference' with Chief Ruiter – or Reuter as he calls him here – who was of mixed 'Hottentot'-Xhosa origins.)

Gordon's journey to the Camdeni (or Kamdanie as it is called now) is not marked on Map 3 of the Gordon Atlas, but there is a well-known and interesting drawing made at the time that has a subscript which partly translates as 'the view of the Bushman kraal of Chiefs Gronjam and Doeroep, with their way of offering peace which I made with them on 5 January 1779 at Camdeni Spring'.[16]

The site of this ceremony was in the vicinity of what is now Loeriesfontein and the Kamdanie River. (The source of the Kamdanie lies just north of Loeriesfontein.) Although the journal tells us nothing of the peace-offering, the drawing depicts a dead ox lying with its feet in the air and surrounded by small figures. Gordon is also shown at the entrance to his tent handing out gifts from a case at his feet, while other figures remove a sack from the back of his wagon (see illustration 26).

In none of the entries for the days when he made contact with the 'Bushmen' does Gordon say that he was there to make peace. Only the drawing mentions this indirectly. Nonetheless, we know from his previous expedition that this was his clear intention, and we can assume that he was under orders from the governor to perform this mission which ties in with the peace-making undertaken with the Xhosa earlier.

From a few remarks made on 5 January we can see that he was trying to sort out the identity of the various tribes about which he had been told. The distinction between 'Hottentot' and 'Bushmen' had never been very clear, but his mention of the Briqua is significant for it is the first time the name occurs in his journal: 'The Ein Eip people,' he writes, 'are bastard Namaquas. The Nou Eik are different Bushmen. The Briqua are still another kind of people. They are Caffers who own cattle, sheep and large goats. N.B. These Bushmen repeat the last words of those who are speaking to them: many at the same time.' As we shall see from the ensuing journal he had a great desire to visit these 'Caffers who own cattle sheep and large goats'.

The most interesting journal entry is that of 6 January:

27. *The Heerenlogement as depicted by Le Vaillant, whose name can still be seen inscribed on a wall of the cave.*

I was very much amused by the Bushmen who are good people. Saw an old woman performing sorcery. From her son's body she snorted forth a devil (evil spirit) which she said she could see and it was like a cobra. The snorting made her nose bleed. She walked away drunkenly with the evil spirit. One of them held her under the arms. Quickly she was given a stick which she used to walk on her own. She also beat the ground with it. She snorted once more upon her son's nose. She rubbed his belly with buchu. At the same time some of the women sitting there were smoking buchu through the nose.

This passage about the sorcerer undoubtedly portrays a trance state as defined and described by Professor Lewis-Williams and others.[17] The snorting forth of the 'devil', the nasal trance blood, the walking away 'drunkenly with the evil spirit' all testify to this. Gordon's amusement is therefore somewhat ironic, since he was not really aware of what he was witnessing. His statement, however, that they were 'good people' needs some qualification. It is not a mere commonplace – bland if not patronizing. Its significance only becomes apparent when the prevalent contemporary opinion concerning these people is taken into consideration: they were detested, and were hunted down and killed like vermin by both the colonists and the Xhosa. Seen in this light, Gordon's remark is astonishing. It is obvious that he really liked them. If he found their customs and superstitions amusing, this is understandable, given his 'scientific' approach and cast of mind. However, what emerges most forcefully from this and his earlier encounter at Die Koo with the 'sorcerer' – indeed from his attitude to the Xhosa as well – is that Gordon was a rational and civilized man. He was humane but never sentimental – in essence, a true exemplar of most of the qualities admired in eighteenth-century Europe. He was, after all, a son of the Age of Reason and the Age of Enlightenment. Indeed, this remark from his journal echoes his sentiments about the 'Hottentots' which he had communicated to Diderot in 1774. But in Africa at this time there were few men who felt as Gordon did.

He rode back to Mrs Ryk's on the evening of 6 January, and the next day set off on a journey of sixteen hours to bring him to the Troe Troe River in the vicinity of present-day Van Rhynsdorp. After spending the whole of the following day there – no doubt to rest the oxen – on 9 January they crossed the Olifants River and 'made camp at Van Zyl's on the southern side of the river'. This site has been positively identified as Ouplaas, about seven kilometres W.N.W. of Klawer.[18] (It and its owner, Pieter van Zyl, figured in the writings of several travellers of the time.)

The next day was spent travelling to the mouth of the Olifants River and 11 January in exploring the area. Returning to Van Zyl's, Gordon continued his journey south and by 15 January he had arrived at the Heerenlogement, which can be translated as 'The Gentlemen's Lodgings'.[19] As Gordon says, it was just a cave, but it was also a well-known halting-place for travellers who appreciated the fresh springwater. Many wrote their names on the walls of this cave: typically Le Vaillant did and, as typically, Gordon did not.

What remained of Gordon's journey need not detain us long. He was at the Langvlei River for a day, then at his 'Swartbaaskraal', which appears to be Swartboskraal today. On 18 January 1779, in this vicinity, he records that he 'climbed about in the mountain in order to see the so-called drawings and strange characters which I had been told of and found this to be a false report. The characters were some scratches and the drawings were worse than those of the Bushmen, but the hollow rock looked like the entrance to a great church . . . .' This mountain, with its unimpressive 'scratches', was almost certainly the place known as Paleisheuwel today. He then continued his journey by well-beaten roads to the Piketberg region, where he stayed with a Gerrit Smit whose farm, Drooge Rijst Kloof, still bears the Afrikaans form of this name.

By 22 January he had reached the 'Reverend Golbag in the Swartland', which is where Malmesbury is situated today. On 25 January 1779 Gordon rode back into Cape Town. His journey had lasted just under five months.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FOURTH JOURNEY: TO THE MOUTH OF THE ORANGE RIVER (JUNE – AUGUST 1779)

A rendezvous with Pienaar the hunter and Paterson; through Namaqualand to Ellenboogfontein; a meeting with Wikar; contact with the Namaquas; the mouth of the Orange River; encounters with the Strandlopers; Gordon's first elephant

Very little is known of how Gordon occupied himself for the next five months of his life. Presumably there were military duties to perform at the Castle; but more to our purpose, in April 1779, shortly after his return, he wrote a long letter to his patron and friend, Hendrik Fagel.[1] It testifies – if further testimony were needed – to Gordon's steadfast diligence and exceptional powers of observation. It contains descriptions of his travels and his views on the state of the Colony, as well as detailed particulars of his ethnological, zoological, geographical, geological and military interests. It makes abundantly clear that Gordon's principal objective was to become a zealous expert on his new country, and in this connection he talks of accomplishing 'one more journey . . . before I can arrange everything into a correct order'. This would seem to argue that he saw his journeys as part of some specific design.

Indeed, if one follows the route taken in Gordon's second, third and fourth journeys, an overall plan becomes apparent: he was tracing the boundaries of the Cape Province as we know it today, excluding only the area east of the Fish River that is now mostly taken up by Ciskei and Transkei.

As we have seen, on his third journey (August 1778-January 1779) he did not accomplish what he had set out to do: namely, to follow the course of the Orange River from the site of present-day Colesberg to the mouth, and from there presumably make his way back to Cape Town via the west coast. Had he succeeded he would have completed a rough circuit of the Colony, alluded to above as the 'overall plan'. Sickness, unfortunately, prevented him from doing this on his third journey, which is why he told Fagel he needed 'one more journey'.

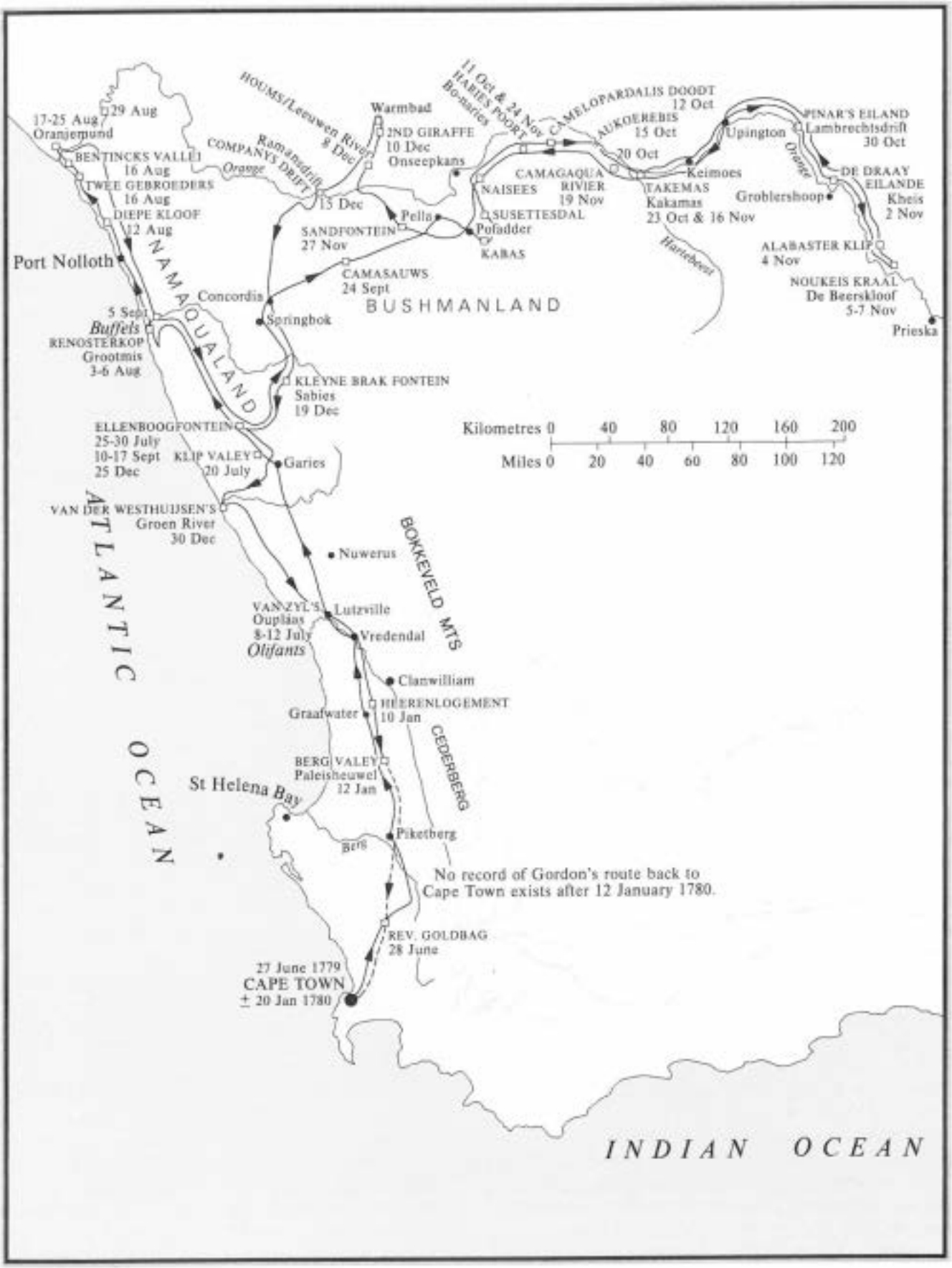
If we accept that Gordon had this plan ('to arrange everything in a correct order'), then his fourth journey can be seen as having a specific end in view. He was seeking to achieve what his previous venture had failed to do – to complete his round journey – but this time by travelling from Cape Town up the west coast to the mouth of the Orange, then proceeding roughly east along the course of the river all the way to present-day Colesberg. In other words, Gordon would seek to complete his circuit the other way round.

Whether we accept this idea of an overall plan depends very much on how we assess the workings of Gordon's mind. He does not spell it out for us. Yet we know sufficient about his nature, his hardihood and his sense of purpose to at least allow that it is a strong possibility. Whatever our assessment, however, we cannot deny the evidence of the journeys and what he did in fact accomplish.

Gordon's fourth journey – which deserves close examination on a map in order to fully appreciate its daring and originality – must be considered his crowning achievement in the field of exploration. In terms of distance travelled he went further than he had ever been before, and although he had suffered a measure of hardship on his earlier travels, physically and mentally this venture was to be far more testing than any of his previous expeditions.

He was almost certainly the first European to see the mouth of the Orange from inland and to reach as far upstream along the Orange as he did. He was certainly the first to record these specific visits and to do so in a way that can be described as 'scientific'.[2] No less remarkable and no less useful to the store of contemporary knowledge were his drawings and descriptions of little-known and little-understood animals, such as the African elephant, rhinoceros and hippopotamus – to name but a few. His most notable feat in the field of zoology, though, was his encounter with the giraffe, which will be considered more fully later in this account.

The journal of the fourth journey also contains a great deal more physical description, as opposed to technical recording, than the previous journals. This applies not only to animals and geographical features but also to the people Gordon encountered, whether they were white pastoralists or Korana tribesmen. The names of his dogs, his servants and of the people who accompanied him



Map 4. *Gordon's fourth journey: to the mouth of the Orange River and west along its course towards present-day Prieska.*

appear more frequently too this time, and it is details such as these which make this journal a far more personal record – though this aspect should not be overemphasized; it is hardly an intimate account. Nonetheless, he takes time to record how he cooked and ate an ostrich egg, and it is interesting to know that he carried a microscope with him and that he 'made merry' on the banks of the Olifants River on 11 July 1779.

The entries in the journal tend to be of greater length than before and this is particularly marked in comparison to the previous journal (of the third journey). There is also a feeling that there is more time, more space to enlarge on subjects that he finds of interest. For instance, his encounter with the 'Strandlopers' on 20 August 1779 is over 2 000 words long, or three closely written folio pages in the original manuscript. Of course, the entry is of this length because the subject and manner of the discovery of these people fascinated the writer. But consider how long it would have taken to write those three folio pages of absorbed description, probably by candlelight and using a goose-quill pen.

Turning now to the journal itself, it will again be our task to try to see how much of Gordon's personality is revealed in this document, once more examining diverse quotations from the text. Even the title, subtitle and first sentence can tell us something:

> Journal of the Fourth Journey of Captain R.J. Gordon in the Southern Part of Africa.
>
> Started on 27th June 1779 from the Cape of Good Hope.
>
> The thermometer observations are taken at sunrise; again at the greatest heat of the day, which is generally in the afternoon about two o'clock; and finally at sunset.

These opening words are interesting, not for any intrinsic value, but because they show how important Gordon considered these observations to be. With this traveller, the 'scientific' always takes precedence over the personal, and although this can be frustrating for the general reader, in the light of what we have observed in the two previous journals, at least it can be said that Gordon is consistent.

Accompanied by some friends from the garrison and by his young servant Koerikei, Gordon set forth on 27 June 1779.[3] He was making for the Reverend Goldbag's house where he had stayed in January of this same year, at the end of his previous journey. (As previously noted, this was located in the area where Malmesbury is today.) He states that he has two wagons, one of which carries his boat. What he does not say is that the artist Schoemaker is also accompanying him. In fact it is some time before this is revealed. As we have observed from the previous journals, Gordon's attitude to Schoemaker seems to have been a compound of indifference and irritation, and, true to form, at this point in the journal he does not consider the man's presence worth mentioning.

While at the Reverend Goldbag's (or Goldbach as it is usually spelt) Gordon notes that he is running a temperature and that he 'had been feverish for some time at the Cape'. No other symptoms are mentioned, but the question of Gordon's health will recur again in this journal. One can only speculate that the illness he suffered from in November of the previous year was still dogging him, though after a few days he does record that he was beginning to feel better.

Taking leave of his military companions and the Reverend Goldbag, Gordon then followed much the same track as that of his previous journey, visiting the same farms and mentioning the same names as he made his way northwards. However, on his arrival at the Olifants River on 8 July 1779, we learn that he has been joined by a further travelling companion, a certain 'Pinar'. This was certainly no chance arrangement or encounter. The man who was now joining Gordon was the well-known hunter, trader and farmer Pieter Pienaar. To some, such as Le Vaillant, he was not so much well known as infamous. By all accounts he was a rough-and-ready individual – the sort of personality any sparsely colonized frontier will produce; but whatever his moral 'attributes', his talents in hunting and survival must have been sorely needed and welcomed by Gordon.

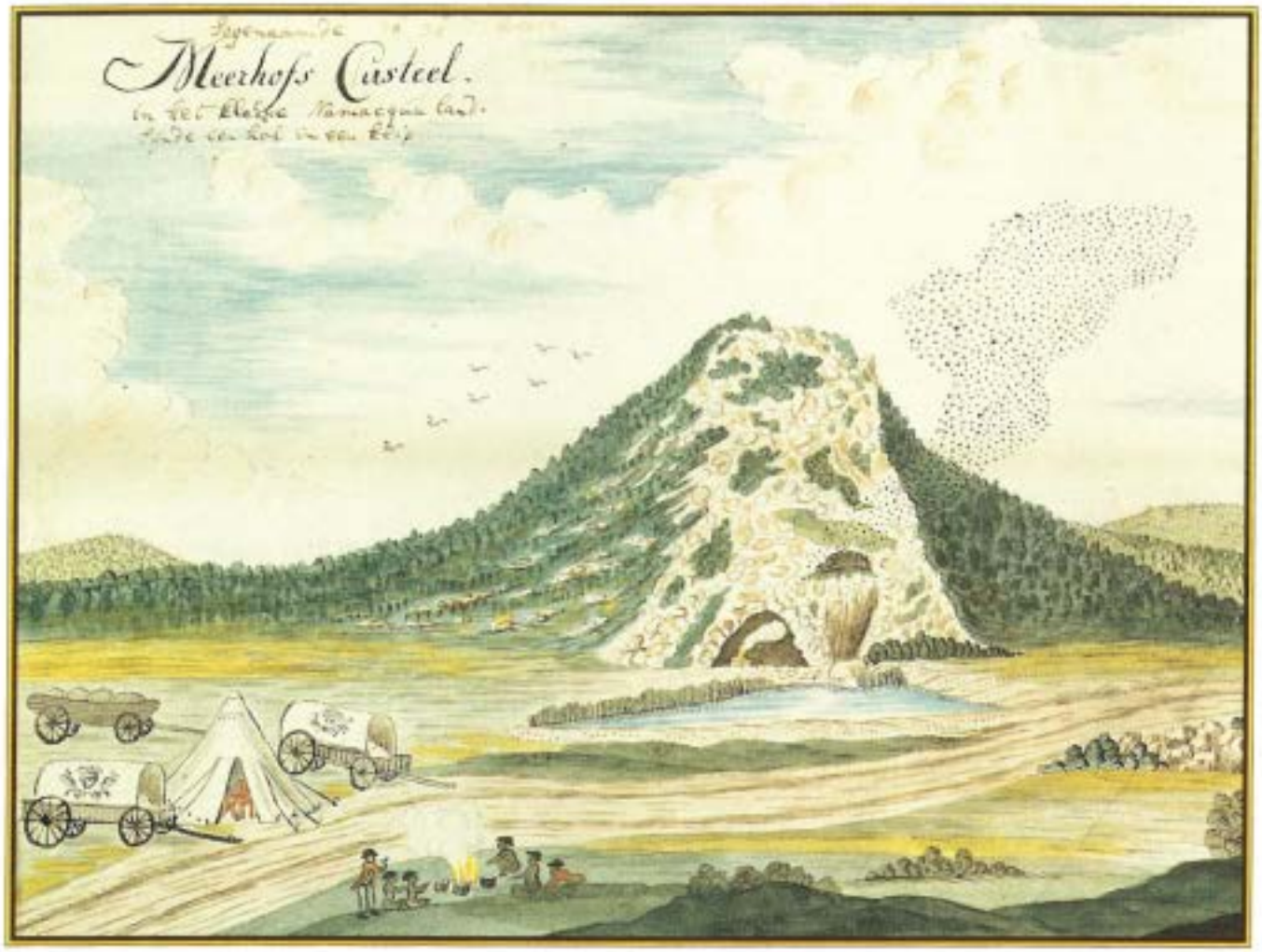
Gordon's journal entry leaves no doubt that the meeting with Pienaar on the Olifants River had been planned, as had the rendezvous with Paterson and Sebastiaan van Reenen: 'After riding for seven and a half hours reached Van Zyl's on the Olifants River, here I found my travelling companion Pinar, a burgher from Rodesandland, as well as the botanist Mr. Paterson, who wants to accompany a certain Van Reenen to the Orange River. But they are first riding to the Bokke Veld.'

It is also clear from Paterson's journal that the meeting was not haphazard. However, Paterson adds that 'as he [Gordon] was going a different course we appointed to meet in the Small Nemiquas Land and then to keep company together along the shore of the Atlantic Ocean as far as we could possibly come to the northward'.[4]

The next stage of Gordon's journey – to Ellenboogfontein in the Kamiesberg, the farm of Hermanus Engelbrecht – took place without undue excitement. It was a journey of approximately thirteen days and Gordon, clearly with plenty of time at his disposal, observed and discussed a fine variety of subjects on his way. Setting out on 12 July he passes a casual remark that 'The greatest unpleasantness about travelling in this country is this unavoidable overturning of the oxwagons'. Interestingly, it is a fact not generally recorded by other travellers.

A day later he had these complex observations to make about the topography of the countryside, plainly echoing Buffon's theories on the formation of the earth:[5]

> This is a very poor region. The longer I observe the more strongly it strikes me that all the angles or tips of these hills fit into each other, but with this peculiarity: every two hundred paces the hills lie in such a way that there are four gaps in them, one East, one West, one South and one North. But all the tops fit between each other in whatever direction they may be: That is to say the gaps in the hills lying East and West have tops or



29. *'Meerhof's Casteel' where Simon van der Stel chiselled his initials on a rock. The cloud of dots is a swarm of bees.*

rather roots in the North and South and the roots lying North and South have angles in the East and West. This region, consisting entirely of such hills, is the same in all directions. Thus though I am sure this area was once covered by water this particular phenomenon could not have been caused by this, i.e. not by normal currents, because one cannot logically suppose that two currents could flow in opposite directions so close to each other.

Continuing in this vein a little longer, he then turns to a curious description of the common 'dassie', or rock hyrax:

Shot a bergrot [mountain rat] today which is wrongly called a dasje in this country.[6] It has the teeth of a rat, and a tail which is not visible but which can just be felt. It has four toes in front, the smallest of which is hardly visible, and three behind. The shape of its back foot is very like that of a human being. It lives on herbs and on grass and is good eating. It has four teats. Pelt brown and soft. It is said that they have the *écoulement périodique*.[7] This may well explain the oily crust which is known as dasje's piss.

The next day Gordon visited Meerhof's Casteel where he came upon the traces of an earlier visitor:

Pinar went hunting yesterday morning. Has not yet returned. He came back in the afternoon but had seen nothing. Much elephant dung around here. Left in the afternoon and arrived at Meerhof's Casteel after riding for five hours N.W. It is a rocky cavity 15 ft deep, 24 ft wide and 12 ft high. It is made of *Cos*, white with pieces of quartz in it.[8] The elephants come here to scratch themselves. Looking at the opening there is a spring on the right-hand side. It has quite good but rather brackish water, but not in abundance. Although this used to be a stock farm belonging to a man called Warnek it has now been abandoned. Opposite this rock, on the other side of this shallow basin among low hills, there is a similar but smaller cave on the left-hand side as one enters the cavity. On a rock, faintly chiselled, are the letters *de: E.H:S:V:de:S. A.S.* 1684. The 16 is hard to make out. This must be the Honourable Simon van der Stel, probably the son of Adriaan, who was the Governor anno 1684 and who travelled to the Koper Bergen.[9]

Travelling on northwards, Gordon remarks on 19 July that he has been looking for 'the cattle post of a certain Van der Westhuizen' but that he could not find him. The next day he finds the farm and records meeting an audacious woman, Van der Westhuizen's wife, who was of French Huguenot descent, as the text makes clear:

At daybreak heard the bleating of stock and half an hour ahead

of us found the farm, which is the first on the way from the Oliphants River to here. Sent there for some milk. The wife was alone with only her children at home. They come here in the rainy season when there is grass. They had one room, a round hut built of sticks and covered with mats and without a chair or table. There was no bread to be had here. The husband was ploughing on his lower farm beside the river. Stayed here. Pinar rode over to him . . . the wife of the house is quite a heroine and can shoot well. Her mother's name is Guilliaume, from France, but her father is an Amsterdamer called Engelbrecht. She hates the French deeply. She told us that she had once fired at a lion and that it nearly leapt on her after the shot but, it being almost dark, she escaped to a hut. The lion pursuing her into their Hottentot shepherd's hut jumped with its front paws into the fire and burning itself sprang back again. Just before this a Hottentot had shot it in the paw with a poisoned arrow. This caused its death the next day.

This woman, born Claudina Engelbrecht, was the sister of Hermanus Engelbrecht, whose farm Gordon was making for. She is certainly the same 'widow Van der Westhuizen' of the farm known as Klipvlei and who was described by the missionary John Campbell in 1813. In his account too she appears to have been a lady of spirit, telling Campbell that she had travelled together with François le Vaillant to the Cape and had 'given him a good drubbing with a sambuck . . . for speaking improperly of her daughters'. The missionary added: 'She is a tall and still strong woman, though in her 75th year.' Understandably, no mention of this alleged sjambok-beating from the lady appears in Le Vaillant's account![10]

A few days later, on 24 July, Gordon's interest in the customs and practices of the 'Hottentots' is aroused by an encounter with a man in the foothills of the Kamiesberg. He is described as one of the 'Kleine Namaquas', meaning that he lived south of the Orange. ('The Groote Namaquas' were the tribes that lived north of the river.)

One of the Kleine Namaquas has the knucklebone of a small buck on his right hand. It was tied on to him by the kind of sorcerer they call *kai ouw* or *Garap* at Wiltschut's kraal. A hole had been worked through it. The *Garap* had dreamed that Canseep would become sick. He therefore went to him and made *camie* for him, which means to make lucky and did it so well that the danger was warded off. This is a different ceremony from *dro* when a man is 'made' or 'made different'. It is when pissing by the old hottentots is regarded as fitting (not at their weddings as has been said).[11] He wears it round his hand until it drops off. He then sticks it down a mouse hole, believing it would be unlucky for him if someone were to find his knucklebone (it is the same kind our children use when they play knucklebones). At these ceremonies they slaughter something or other which they eat and finish, all together. While making *dro* they have to carry the peritoneum round their necks.

The next day, referring once more to Simon van der Stel's expedition of 1685, Gordon describes the mountain known today as Vyemonds se Berg:

It is certainly the mountain of 'The forty eight days' ride', although I make it higher than Table Mountain. Perhaps van der Stel said 'the mountain range 48 days' ride from the Cape' because in the beginning of the Colony they were not able to ride so far in one day because of the roads. Although I have now been travelling for nearly four weeks, an East Indiaman with a good wind could easily sail this distance in twenty-four hours.

The quotation here is from the Jesuit missionary and scientist, Father Guy Tachard, who had met Simon van der Stel at the Cape in 1685 and 1686 while travelling to and from China and Siam. Gordon had certainly read the account of his stay at the Cape, contained in Tachard's book

30. *Ellenboogfontein near present-day Kamieskroon – a haven to Gordon and many other travellers.*

31. *Tribespeople of Namaqualand.*
Note that these faces have been duplicated in illustration 42.

Voyage de Siam which was published in 1689. We know this because Gordon alludes to the book and 'the 48 days' ride' in an inscription to be found on his 'great map' (no. 3 in the Gordon Atlas).

Eventually, on 25 July 1779, Gordon arrived at his first real 'base' on this journey. It was the farm Ellenboogfontein belonging to Hermanus Engelbrecht, situated 'six kilometres W.S.W. of Kamieskroon and one kilometre S.S.W. of the present farmstead of Ellenboogfontein', according to Professor Forbes.[12]

Paterson had rejoined Gordon on 23 July and they had travelled together to the farm which was another of those havens mentioned by traveller after traveller. A few years later Le Vaillant was to write of this place: 'I received many real proofs of friendship, and experienced some degree of pleasure. We drank punch, we had music, and the greater part of every night was spent in dancing.'[13] Neither Gordon nor Paterson mentioned such festivities, but both of them made drawings of the farm which was to become their base for the next part of the journey.

Of Hermanus Engelbrecht Gordon writes: 'He has a Christian wife, crops, and lives in a walled house.' The fact that the wife was Christian almost certainly meant that she was white. (As we shall see from a later entry in the journal concerning the farmers of this area, this was somewhat unusual.[14])

At Ellenboogfontein Gordon was again subject to a high fever. This had been brought on by a septic wound when 'something poisonous' had stung him in his right leg on the night of 22 July. He treated it, he tells us, by placing beeswax 'on the swelling where I was bitten, having bathed it there in warm vinegar first'. His entry on 26 July records the 'high fever' but also adds 'my leg is drawing well and is somewhat better'. On the 27th he mentions putting a plaster on the leg, saying laconically 'I was better'. He also tells us that he rode for four hours that same day, so perhaps it is not surprising that in his entry for the 28th he remarks: 'Had a fever yesterday and today.' However, no further mention is made of the illness other than on the 30th when he writes finally that he is 'much better'.

The only point to be made here is that the painful, septic leg and the high temperature did nothing to stop Gordon from engaging vigorously in a wide range of activities during this period at Ellenboogfontein, as his journal well testifies. On 26 July, for example, we have this entry:

> Engelbrecht took me in his horsecart to the Lange Klip where my wagons were. Took two hours. Found here a runaway Swede called *Vicar* who was a year with the Namaquas. He claims to be the cousin of Merchant Hasselgreen of Amsterdam. He was formerly a schoolmaster in the Swart- and Sneeuwberg. Ran away from the Cape seven years ago but has now got a pardon. He was thirty days' journey up the right bank of the river. His account is on the reverse side. He had the skin of a female giraffe with him.

Found Mr. Paterson here again and we ate together.

Originally stationed at the Cape as a clerk to the Dutch East India Company's hospital, Wikar (the usual spelling) had incurred heavy gambling debts. According to E. E. Mossop, the editor of the English translation of Wikar's account (of which there are several versions[15]), 'Overcome by shame and desperate, he deserted the Company's service on April 4th, 1774' and fled to the Orange, admitting later that he had not anticipated 'all the peril and wretchedness I must encounter during the 4 years and 6 months I remained undetected'.[16] After writing a petition to the governor, Wikar was eventually pardoned and it was on his journey back to the Cape that Gordon, with great good fortune, encountered him.

Gordon took immediate advantage of this meeting to question Wikar on the tribes and topography of the country he intended exploring, as did Paterson. The English translation of the account has this to say of the occasion:

'Mr Gordon came . . . the following day . . . to see my curiosities and to get information about some matters which might be useful to that gentleman on the journey he had begun. I did all in my power in my simple way to be of service to this gentleman.'[17]

As will be seen during the course of this journey, Gordon made thorough use of Wikar's written and spoken accounts.

Despite continued fever, Gordon persisted in visiting various Namaqua settlements around Ellenboogfontein, recording what he saw with manifest interest and pleasure. On the same day that he met Wikar he wrote:

Again heard a tale from one Chief Cupido, saying that the evil spirits are angry with the Kleine Namaquas and that the Hare has said that they must die and stay dead and that he has told a lie about this. Therefore he must summon the *gowaaps* of certain spirits in order that they should come over the sea together, with all their livestock and animals. For this reason they have a strong feeling of hate for the Hare.

At their *Cami* or good-fortune-making neither children nor woman join in the eating.

Cupido had some knucklebones around his right hand and his right leg.

It is interesting to find that this same 'tale', or a version of it, was recorded in 1875, and again as late as 1971.[18]

The next day he was off again:

I went to Chief Wiltschut's kraal with the Chief. The kraal lay a quarter of an hour off the road. It consisted of nine straw – or rather mat – huts. There were about fifty men, women and children. Observed that those who had the most children had not more than four and that each man had only one wife. Saw two women from the Groote Namaqua Land. Married here. Each had the first joint of the right-hand little finger cut off. They said that their parents had done this when they were still young – for beauty. But when this took place there was a slaughtering: therefore a ceremony. They said that this was not done by everyone. Some said it was done because they were ill, as a way of bloodletting.'[19]

On 29 July Gordon had a musical interlude:

Enquired about the Amaquas but was told that the Kleine-Namaquas and the Amaquas are the same; that there are, apart from Wiltschut, four more chiefs and that this whole tribe consists of about four hundred men, women and children. None of these people cut out a testicle or a finger-joint.[20] Heard however from a Groote Namaqua that some of his people did do this, sometimes because of illness. Another said: so that they can run faster. These Namaquas make long pipes from reed or thorn-tree bark, and then block it at one end so that only one note is produced when they blow in from the top. Each has a longer or shorter pipe thus producing a different note. Then they form themselves into a circle and each in turn blows his note, like threshers or smiths, and it goes very pleasantly. They maintain a sort of melody while dancing, or rather bending very low (which is their manner of dancing) while stamping on the beat and turning, while others, just as with the Caffers jump around them singing and clapping hands all the while. They pour milk into their flutes to keep them moist and sound. The tone comes out mostly as a minor third (which sounds much like a quarter tone) but there is little diversity.

Also saw a *goura* which was as tall as I was, and in the place of a bird's feather quill at the top, as with the other Hottentots, it had a thinly scraped cattle horn.[21] They make a sound on this which, though softer, is just like the noise one gets on a second attempt at learning the french horn.

On 30 July 1779, feeling 'much better', Gordon set off on his journey to the mouth of the Orange. One wagon, 'under the supervision of my trusty Hottentot Iteki', was sent due north; in other words, it went on the road that had been taken by other travellers to the river and which was relatively well known. Gordon rode west and north-west to the seashore.

A curious and revealing episode completes the entry for this day. Once more it concerns the ineptitude of Paterson. Apparently some sort of challenge was involved concerning Gordon's high-spirited horse 'Snel'. Inevitably it is Paterson who falls into a ditch, luckily not hurting himself. But why does Gordon always tell these odd stories about the Scot? So often, when Paterson is mentioned, he is made to look a fool.

Gordon left without Paterson and his party, though he does not say so. The agreement, according to Paterson, was to travel separately. Characteristically, Gordon says nothing of the dangers ahead. Thus, in order to get some idea of the situation awaiting the travellers, it is worth quoting from Paterson's account.

We were much advised by the natives not to proceed, that we had an uninhabited desert to pass where there was neither man nor beast to be seen and great scarcity of water and hardly a blade of grass to support our cattle. We however resolved to go as far as possible so we agreed one to go a few days before the other and if possible to meet at the mouth of the Great River.

Accordingly, Captain Gordon parted with us and proceeded on his intended journey entirely without a guide, all the natives refusing to accompany us.[22]

Guide or no guide, on 31 July, the second day out, Gordon in fact becomes positively lyrical for a few lines before returning to his usual sober narrative mode:

We found it warmer at first and the country on all sides blazed with flowers, the most beautiful colours in the world: yellow oxalis, orange arctotis, red, yellow and bluish-purple mesembryanthemums etc. There were many Kokerbooms (agave) in bloom here. (There were three kinds of geranium). We called this place the Floraas- or Bloeme Kloof. After a seven and a half hour journey came to a spring but a Hottentot said it was not the Kooks Fontein which we were trying to reach. He was mistaken however. We therefore went on travelling for a further seven hours along an uneven track and beside a dry rivulet. Eventually we found a fairly good supply of water and so we made camp. Shot a hare and my dog caught a porcupine, all the dogs getting themselves badly wounded from its quills. Because our servants complained of hunger, I called this place Honger Kloof. We slaughtered a sheep for them. Everywhere sandy, poor karoo-country. Brack water as well.

It was no accident, of course, that Gordon was able to provide mutton for his servants at Honger Kloof. All expeditions into the interior had domestic stock travelling with the wagons. As we know from these journals, as well as other accounts before and after Gordon, game was by no means always available for the pot.

The first week's travelling to the vicinity of Grootmis (Gordon's 'Renoster kop') passed without any untoward incidents or undue hardship. Gordon, however, is indefatigably active and meticulous in writing down his observations in the journal. Early on he mentions his fears that, without his guidance, the wagons would overturn. At the same time the horses get lost, but this does not prevent him noting that he 'Caught an animal that looks like a field mouse. Called it an elephant mouse because it had a long, very flexible trunk or snout'.[23] Later, with the rising of the moon, two 'Hottentots' are sent to track the horses and we are told that Pienaar and his servants are off hunting elephants. From this entry, and from many other similar ones occurring throughout the journal, it is evident that Pienaar's main role was to provide meat for the party. This would have freed Gordon to concentrate more vigorously on his scientific activities and explains – at least in part – why he was able to make longer and more detailed journal entries.

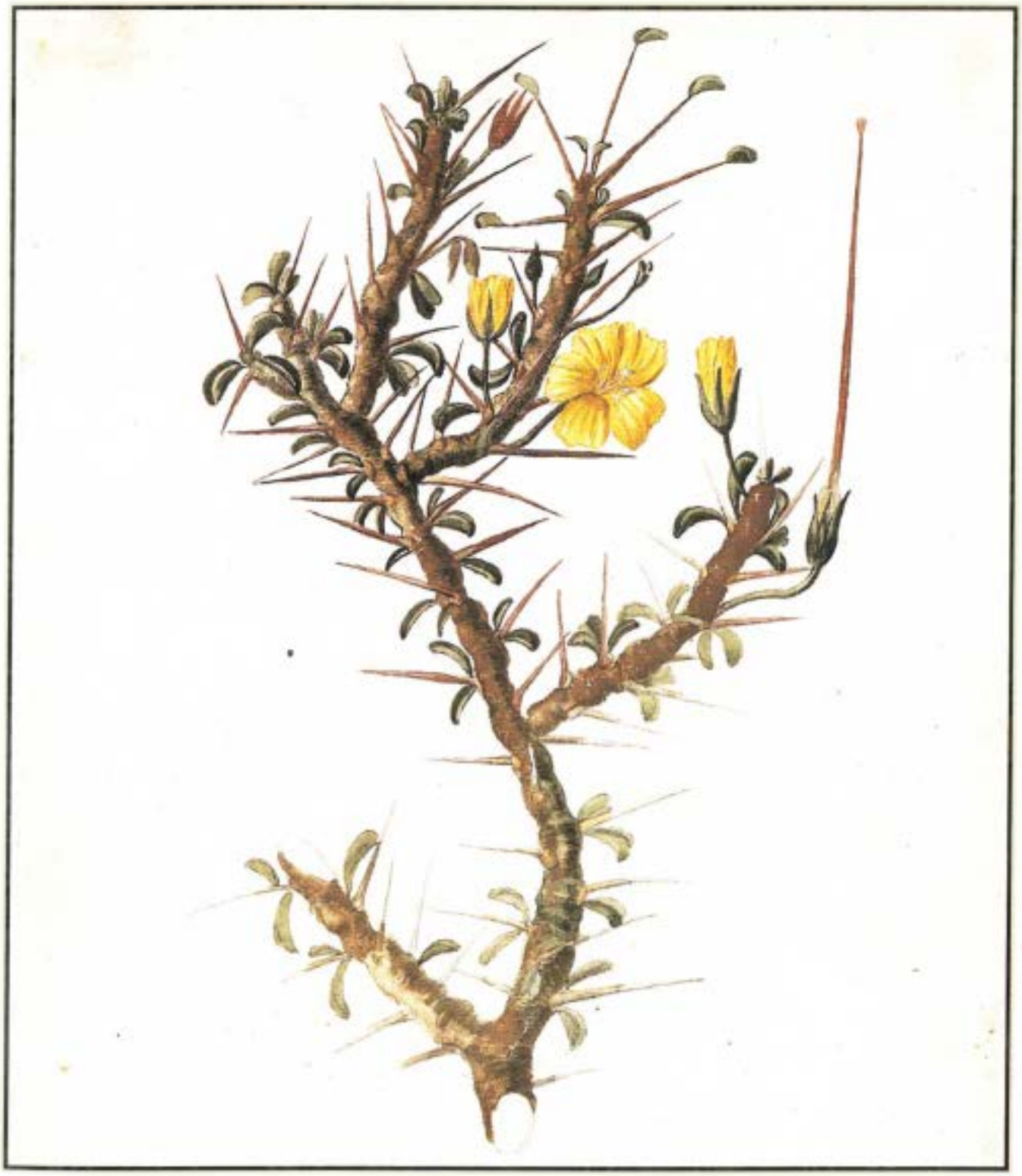
On 3 August they came to the 'Groote Sand River (called the Kouwsie)' – now named the Buffels River – but, he records dourly, 'All water in these parts barely quenches one's thirst' because it is 'sweet' but 'brack'. He comments too on the presence of lions. And still interested in the geology of the area, he continues to make his familiar observations based on Buffon. The shells fascinate him too:

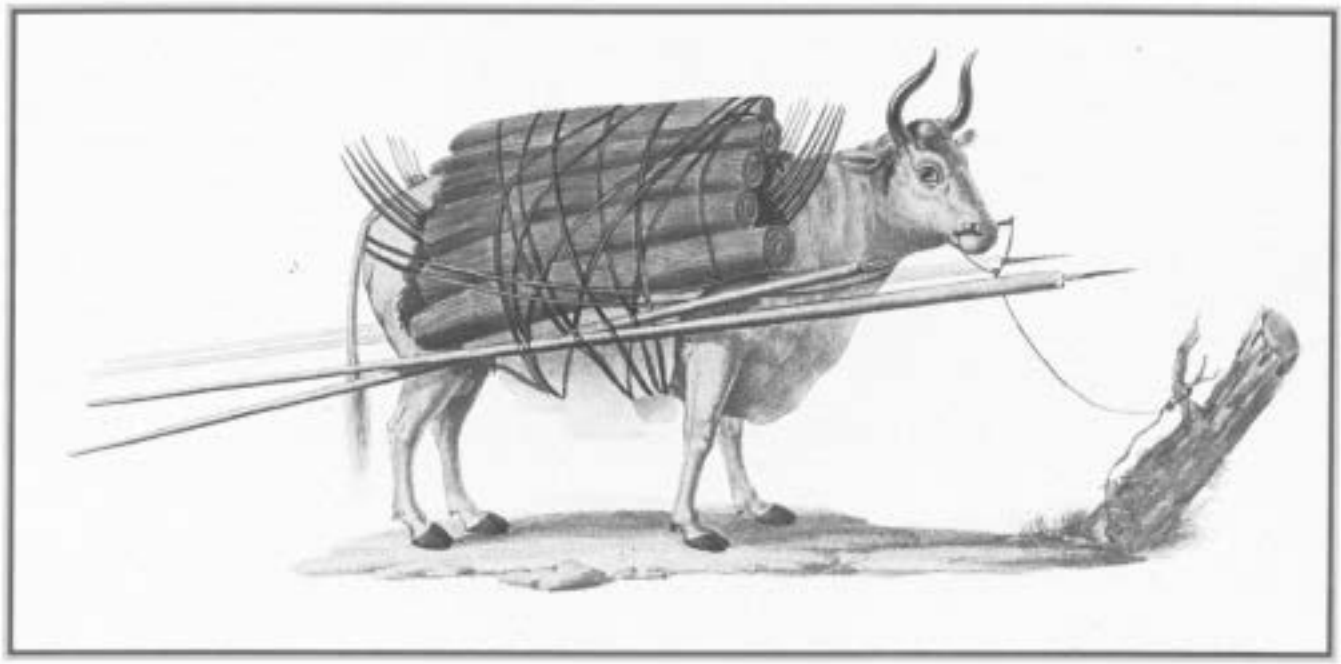
After an hour's ride heard the sea in the west. Rode down the river and found Pinar and his servants on a rise and saw the sea hardly an hour's ride away from me. Found many shells on these ridges and though some appeared to be sea-wrack many of them seemed to have been brought here by people or baboons. Also heard that shore-Hottentots had spent some time here.[24] They eat only whale or shellfish. There were also big heaps of shells, too recent to have been left over from the time when the sea was here. Found whitish, chalky soil and salty, white earth and the rock is now beginning to lie in strata. Many of these very brittle and sandy, and although they lean to the N.W. their angles fit into one another. Found the loose stones very hard; much pebble and quartz in same so that if one strikes them they sound like an anvil. Because it was getting late, returned to the wagons which were in camp a good hour from the shore.

Above, 32, Carpobrotus sauerae *(also known as 'Hottentot fig') and right*, 33, Sarcocaulon l'heritieri *(often referred to as 'Bushman's candles').*

One of our Hottentots found a dead elephant cow and calf. He brought the tusks along, each of which weighed about twelve pounds. Saw many elephant tracks and the slides where they descend from higher places, slipping down on their heels. N.B. the front teeth of eland etc., are loose. Found the river water better here than higher up.

On 6 August he again meets up with Paterson near the site of present-day Grootmis/Kleinsee. Two days later he refers to abundant signs of there having been Strandlopers in the area and that they have seen jackal traps and huts made out of right whale bones as they travel 'along an elephant track, mostly N.N.W. Course always beside the sea'. But of the fact that they are finding the journey heavy going Gordon gives only the barest hint – as in his fleeting comment on their making camp 'after ten hours' difficult travelling for the oxen'. In contrast, Paterson's account is much more dramatic. He talks of 'the most barren coun-





34. *A pack-ox laden for a journey*

try I ever saw, several of our Hottentots complained and wanted much to return'.

Of such matters Gordon has nothing to say. Nevertheless, he has plenty to observe. He had written earlier of the flowers: 'mesembryanthemums and euphorbias and a beautiful kind of red ixia'. Now he turns to a wild, local inhabitant and to larks, among other matters:

A Hottentot, called Pedro by the farmers, said there was fresh water around here but we could not find it because of the dark. Shared out the little water that we had brought along in a barrel. Between these two places there was not a drop of water to be had. At the top of the *Kouwsie* mouth there is a small spring, half an hour's walk away. In the dark a hyena came close to the wagon and my dogs caught hold of it but before we could get to it with our guns it was gone.

Pedro the Hottentot has the wildest appearance one can imagine. He was utterly amazed at my spyglass, compass and watch. Van Reenen said I knew by my watch whether he had put us on the right road to water. He said that in order to see this proved he wanted to go the wrong way but when I showed him the compass and how the needle still showed our course, through deviation, he was greatly astonished.

Only one of our servants could easily converse with him. Although it is still the Hottentot language, it is a different dialect.

This is a very poor region. Found seashells everywhere, apparently brought by Hottentots. Went hunting but saw nothing except a steenbok. In the morning I heard the flutter of wings: larks as in the Cape, but none of them were singing as they do in the interior. Saw mountain swallows at the *Kouwsie*. The sea is everywhere very choppy and I can see some low rocks a few musket shots from the shore.

As the two parties made their way northwards, Gordon frequently referred to 'slow travelling' and to the 'heavy going' nature of the journey. Water was a continual problem for beast and man alike. But there were signs that other people had been on the shore ahead of them. Pedro, who seems to have been acting as some sort of guide, told them that the tracks they saw were of 'Hunting Bushmen' and that these people 'had drunk all the water'.

On the evening of 12 August Gordon wrote that the oxen 'would not move' because they had no water and had been travelling in deep sand. However, they did find water the next day at a camp which he called 'Diepe Kloof' and which has been identified as a point on the dry bed of the Holgat River, some ten kilometres inland and about thirty kilometres to the north of Port Nolloth.[25] Here they had to dig out the sand, so allowing the water to seep into the hole they had made. It was a slow process and the teams of oxen had to drink in turn, one after the other. They had had no water for fifty hours.

On the night of 14 August, still at 'Diepe Kloof', Paterson was in trouble again: 'Last night about twelve o'clock, it being my watch, they called for help from Paterson's tent. Found him nearly unconscious and very ill, but after heavy vomiting he became better. He had, against my advice, drunk too much water when hot and thirsty and then eaten a piece of very fat mutton.'

Typically, Gordon had no personal comment to make on this incident – neither a hint of pity, nor irritation, nor even humour in his account. Paterson himself, incidentally, says nothing of this overindulgence in his entry for the same day.

The parties trekked on again, though Gordon once more writes of the 'weariness' of his oxen. But they were close to the 'Great River' now. Gordon and Paterson climbed two hills which were named the 'Twee Gebroeders'[26] by Gordon, and he was able to estimate that the smaller hill was three miles from the mouth of the river. He named the 'valey' or vlei where they camped after Count Charles Bentinck of Sorgvliet.[27]

The next day, 17 August 1779, they rode up to the 'steep southern bank' of the Orange. It is worth quoting the entire entry for the day in order to once again experience this lively mind with its non-hierarchical variety of interests – a mind which, despite the momentous nature of the occasion, can pay as much attention to the habits of the ostrich as to the river itself:

Fine weather. S.E. wind. Therm. 56–74–60.
Departed at daybreak to give the horses water since they have had none for fifty hours; also to have a good drink myself. Mr. Paterson and van Reenen rode with me and as we came over the rise an ostrich sprang up and we found a nest with 34 fresh eggs. Since everything is so scarce it was a great treasure for us to find. The nest was a round place scraped in the sand, round and ten feet in diameter, raised slightly in the middle. Here in a shallow little hollow were 22 eggs where the male had been sitting. Around this bare place or circle there was another circular ridge as though dug out to the depth of a hand (thus surrounding the nest) and in this lay twelve eggs. It is said they always keep these to feed their young with when they are hatched. They say that one can find up to 84, even more in a single nest where five or six females each sit. Some say that when the female has hatched some of her eggs she goes off with the chicks and rolls the remaining eggs into the nest; and that they do not feed their young with those of other females which have been left in the nest.

Once over these rises we came upon country as hard as gravel with small, sharp, hard pebbles. They were of every kind of colour and facet also many beautiful geraniums (spinosa). Ugly, barren country everywhere, We saw some zebra and two springbok. We have seen hardly any game as large as this since leaving the Cape, though we have seen tracks. Wounded a zebra but it got away. We saw that the land rises across the river and that it has the same sandy appearance as the place where we were. Saw seven fresh lion tracks and after half an hour's ride from the wagons arrived at the river. This is the same river that I was at in December 1777 and which has its source to the North, beyond the Caffers. It was low and about four hundred paces wide, not flowing fast and with a steep southern bank. There are large sand-banks with a few small thorn and willow trees. We found elephant and lion tracks. Cooked one of our ostrich eggs. We buried the rest in the ground and left a coat on some piled up shrubs at the nest as a mark for our wagon, should it pass this way. Went a short distance up the river, letting the horses graze the meagre grass that was there.

We imagined that we could see a band of wild people so we returned to the horses, having but one gun with us. Then we rode to the place but found that our eyes had deceived us. We had sought so hard for various stones and had been staring so intently that our eyes grew dim from looking at the sand (also from the atmospheric phenomenon common in these regions). In this way we made several blunders which we had to laugh about. Because we were waiting impatiently and in vain for our wagons, not knowing whether they would make camp below or above us, rode up to the rise but saw nothing more than a herd of eland. When evening fell therefore, we decided to ride across the countryside, first to the west to look for the wagon tracks, and then at the shore to turn east and do the same thing. Mr. Paterson saw the wagons at a great distance but because we had all seen so many optical illusions this day we could not be sure until I found the tracks close beside the shore. Soon after this we found the wagons camped close to the river where it makes a large marsh one hour from the mouth. This marsh changes completely at high tide when it is one and a half hours' wide, with an island against the left bank. At ebb-tide however it runs very shallow, revealing many sand-banks and one can then go to the island on foot. So far as I can discover the sea breaks strongly at the mouth and the opening is not wide. Found many water-fowl here: pelicans, ducks, two different kinds of flamingo etc. To our astonishment we found that the water was very sweet, though ebbing and flowing strongly. It surprised me that I saw no hippopotamus and only one animal foot-print; however there is not much to graze on here.

Brought the boat to the water, hoisted the Prince's flag and we drank to the health of His Highness. We bade welcome to the river to which I gave its name in 1777. Said more concerning the welfare of the Company, and all done to the accompaniment of some shots. We have still heard nothing from Pinar and his four Hottentots from Goewaap. A stiff N.W. wind this evening. Sky overcast.

What is so baffling here is that the main episode of the day – a day of great historical importance – is given remarkably little prominence, with the actual ceremony on the river restricted to a few lines. Worse still is the clumsy and off-hand way in which Gordon describes the event. Yet it must have been a wonderful sight to see. These travellers and explorers in a small boat, drinking toasts to the Prince of Orange while the flag was hoisted above them and the strange, wide African river rolled by as evening closed in. 'All done,' says Gordon, 'to the accompaniment of some shots.' And that is that.

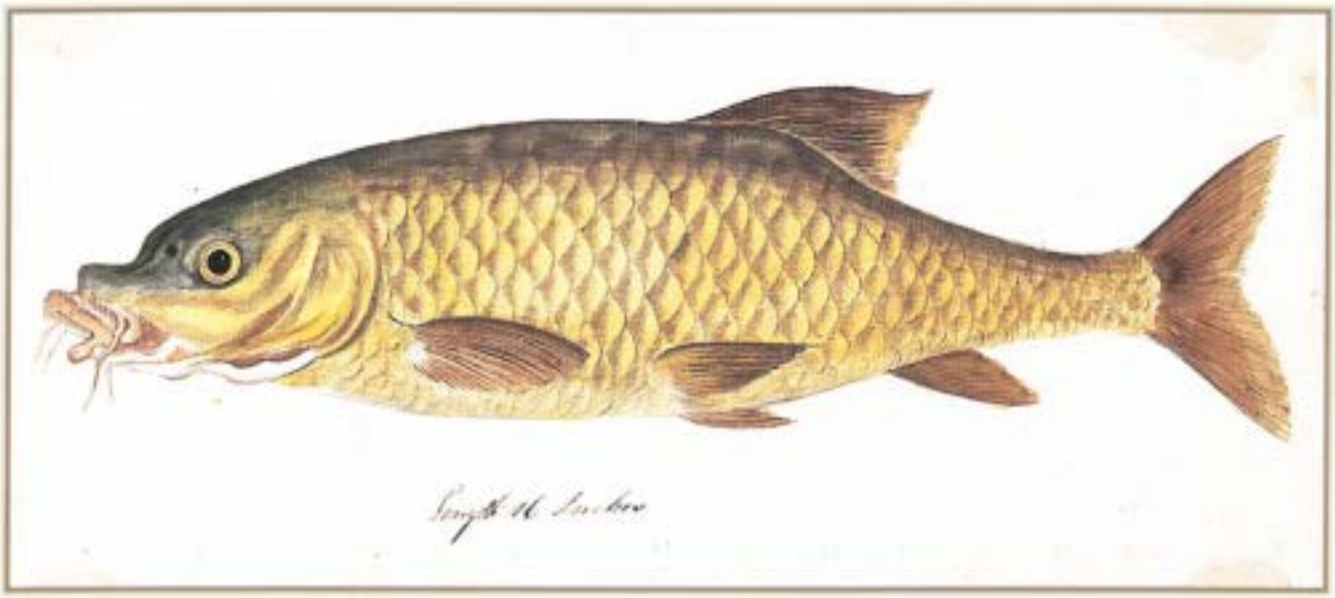
This episode is arguably the high point of Gordon's exploring career, but the drama of it must be created in our imaginations, for Gordon gives only the facts.

It is interesting to be able to compare Gordon's entry for this day with that of Paterson. On the whole, Paterson's prose is austere and matter-of-fact, but next to Gordon's his account seems positively eloquent. Paterson writes:

At ten in the forenoon we arrived at the river which seemed at once to be a new creation to us. We had been nine days before crossing a dry sultry desert where no living animal was to be seen and during which time our cattle had had no water but twice. We here unsaddled our horses and refreshed ourselves by the side of the river under the shadow of a willow which hung over the banks . . . .[28]

By contrast, Gordon scarcely alludes to the hardships that they had been through, and he certainly has no phrase like Paterson's 'new creation' to offer us.

The last entry of the day concerns Pienaar who had gone off five days earlier and had not returned. It is strange that this is Gordon's first mention of the fact and that he makes no reference to being worried about the missing hunter. He merely states that he has 'heard nothing' from him. Paterson, on the other hand, voiced his



35. *The 'moggel' or mud mullet* (Labeo umbratus) *– a common Cape fish found in river mouths.*

alarm several times in his journal, saying on 15 August: 'By this time we lost all hopes of ever seeing them.'

It is evident that the absence of Pienaar and his four Hottentots in fact caused great anxiety in the party. However, when they arrive the next day, Gordon merely records 'our joy', but Paterson is a great deal more graphic about the event: 'Mr Pinar arrived with three of the Hottentots who were dreadful to look at . . . their eyes were sunk in their heads and appeared more like dead than living ones.'[29]

The fourth 'Hottentot' servant, whom they had given up for dead, arrived the next day – 'to our great joy' says Gordon. However, it is worth noting that Gordon records refreshing the man 'with a tot and . . . food to eat'. It is from small details like this that we can see that Gordon had the welfare of these people very much at heart. It was simply not part of his personality, however, to say this in his journal.

As might be expected, once at the river, Gordon threw himself into a number of activities. Food for the party was his first concern:

> We started fishing. At first we did not seem likely to succeed because of the strong wind and turbulence of the water but on the second cast [of the net] we caught enough for all our people. This caused great rejoicing, the catch consisting of so-called harders and some barbel.[30] In his hunger, my dog Keiser swam over to the sand-bank where we were fishing and greedily ate up a live fish, surely for the first time in his life.

On 19 August he explored the mouth in his boat, ingeniously converting a wagon tent to make a sail. They did some more fishing and Gordon examined the nature of the river sand, fascinated by certain ruby-like particles which he observed under his microscope. He did not neglect to take bearings on both the Twee Gebroeders and 'the northern tip of the river mouth'. On returning to camp he 'received the good news that our Hottentots had shot a zebra and that they had found 12 ostrich eggs. So now, once more, both dogs and men had food.'

It was on 20 August, the following day, that Gordon had his first encounter with the Strandlopers. As noted earlier in the chapter, this account of their meeting is full of interest, with moments of real drama and tension created by Gordon, despite himself, through a quickening tempo in style. As this was a significant episode in the journey, the whole entry for this day now follows.

> Therm. 48–55–52. Fine weather. S.E. wind. Dew tonight. Misty in the evening and the wind at the sea was again a fresh S.W. Crossed the river to see how things looked on the other side and to see whether we could track down any people. There is a sandbank in the mouth which lies right in the way. It took us more than half an hour to cross the river because our boat kept on running aground on the sandbanks. There were eleven of us in it and we had to keep on jumping out to lift it. With our fishing net we were much too heavy for the boat, thus making our journey across dangerous. Once on the other side our people went fishing. Before this, on the sandbank in the river we made one cast and caught some harders. Mr. Paterson and I went due north into the country; a Hottentot as well as my young Koerikei came with us. It was low-lying country; the soil of clay, with a few small fleshy shrubs. Thereafter the soil at the river was entirely sand, without any water. There were low dunes on our left-hand side. (Resin is given off by Cacativas). After we had been going for an hour we came to a rain-water marsh. Beside this we found the small and large footprints of people, very fresh. We also found large, dry, washed-up trees here. Soil had been washed over these and shrubs were growing on them; this means that the river must have been very high some years back or that there was a heavy storm at sea. We followed the footprints which led to the dunes, being most curious to see these people.

We first set our course a short half hour landwards and then turned once more towards the dunes in order to get there before them. When we reached the dunes we found a well-trodden track and saw first one and then three of the wild people rising from the ground. After looking at us for a moment, they dashed off, like deer. In order to stop them I stood and waved my hat as hard as I could but they ran down the dune and along the shore. Upon this I sent my Hottentot after them, with a gun, but he could not catch up with them. We then followed the footpath which brought us right to their huts, where we found their fire burning and a puppy which, though very young, was very vicious.

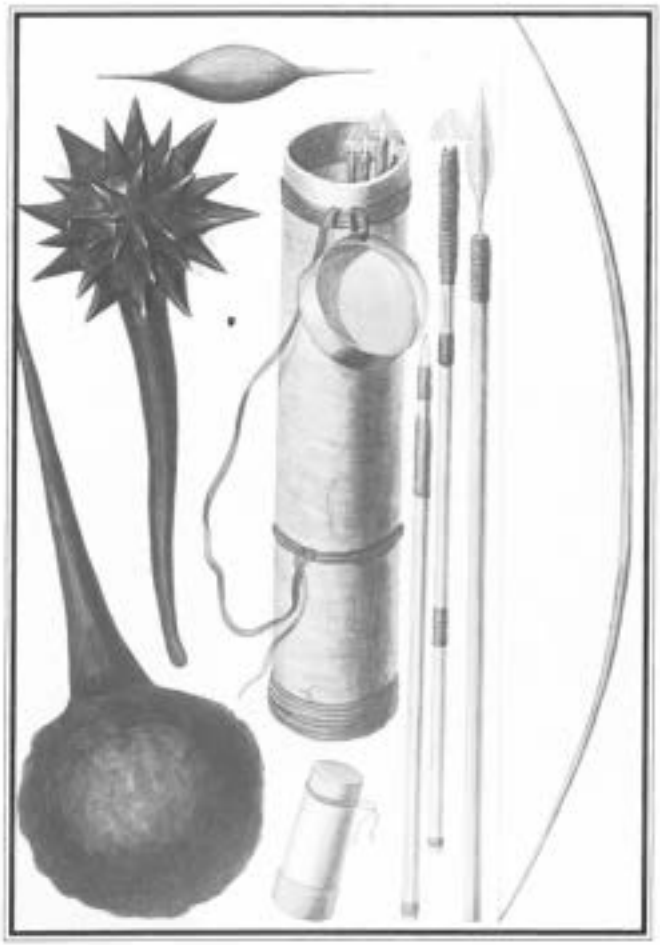
There was one large hut, different from the kind the Hottentots make, with two high doors or rather openings facing east. It was made of wood (washed-up trees, right-whale or whale ribs) and was thatched with grass and undergrowth, very warm. In same there were 9 to 10 sleeping places on which lay dassie and jackal skins. The other hut was smaller and had only one opening and had yet another place made for sitting in the daytime. They were all in a row and joined together so that one wall served for two. There were pouches made of skins hanging in the huts and horns (Canna or Cape eland) with buchu and fat and a pot made of baked earth. There were many ostrich eggshells, some empty, some filled with water in store, and the fireplace was in the middle of the hut, which was not quite high enough for a man to stand upright. They had stuck dry, washed-up trees in front of the door and on the branches were hanging pieces of raw right-whale meat which they had cut off. They broil or cook this for their food. We found two, beautifully dressed seal-skins.

We left everything in the same place and in order to get these people to come and talk decided to leave them something as a present; to place it there and to come back the following day. Having brought nothing, I cut all the copper buttons off my coat, save one, and added these to the copper tinderboxes which Mr. Paterson and the Hottentot had placed on a skin where these people were drying herbs, such as buchu, in the sun. I also left a piece of biscuit, which we had baked, next to them.

Before we decided to go, however, I ordered the Hottentot to make a fire in front of the huts so that we could first cook and eat an ostrich egg which we had brought for food. (First one makes a hole in the top, since otherwise the expanding air would make it burst open violently, then it is cooked in the shell, as though in a pot. Having done this one makes a spoon from a piece of the shell and one eats it thus in the Hottentot manner.) After we had cooked the egg and were busy eating we saw three of the wild people coming on to a dune not so very far from us. Once more I waved and sent the Hottentot to them, letting him show them that we had no gun, by throwing off his sheepskin and holding his hands high. The Hottentot was frightened to go near them so I encouraged him by loading my gun and showing that I was on the alert for the wild people; (they had bows and arrows and thick assegais, 7 to 8 feet long). He went rather reluctantly towards them and when he reached them, they all sat down. After we had spent some time waiting Paterson said he would like to accompany me to them without

36. Equus zebra *(mountain zebra) was indigenous to the Orange River region in Gordon's day.*

taking a gun; however I judged it more prudent that one of us should keep the gun because they could surprise us by coming from behind the dune. Whereupon the botanist stayed with the guns and I went up to the foot of the hill with a bottle and a jug held high in my hands. Finding that their number had grown to seven, and judging it inadvisable to go amongst these people without a gun, I sent Koerikei to them with a bottle and a jug in order to make them a present of some brandy but he came back and said they did not know what it was and did not want to drink it. Upon this I sent him with a tinderbox, a flint and a flint-stone (about which they also knew nothing) for the chief. I said that two of them should come to me without weapons seeing that I too had no weapon. While they were talking to each other, I saw some more of the wild people on a dune to my left-hand side. After Koerikei had delivered his message, two of them came down without weapons. In the meantime another, who at closer hand turned out to be a woman, was jabbering most violently on top of the dune, pointing with her hands to the river. When I saw that they had voluntarily laid down their weapons I went out to meet them and found the three men suspicious and frightened. But the women were talkative and merrier. They had a child with them that appeared to be the bastard of a slave (but later found otherwise) because his hair was curlier than the Hottentots', it was still however, woolly. But closer saw that this was from being smeared. There was also something different about his features.



37. *'Bushman' and 'Hottentot' weapons.*

These creatures had the same posture and shape as Bushmen (their dress etc.) but their teeth are short and bad. Their women too carry ostrich shells filled with water in just such nets, also wood. I counted that one of them was carrying 24 full shells on her back. Gave them the aforementioned buttons and they immediately became bolder, but they would drink no brandy even though I did so first. Gave them some tobacco which they smoked out of our Hottentots' pipes (later from a buffalo horn using water).

So we all went together to their huts and we showed them that we had left everything in order, and they were happy about this. They speak a Hottentot dialect of which our Hottentots were able to understand a fair amount. One woman showed us the belly of her husband. He had been wounded with a knife by Hottentots from the other side of the river a long time ago. That was why they distrusted people from the other side and why they had been frightened of us. Told them that they should not fear us but that they should go with us; I also said we had nothing now with us to give them. They said yes, that they had already seen us yesterday on the other side of the river and that they were utterly astonished at our boat and its sails (at first they took it for an animal). Found a piece of deal there. They said they found it on the beach, but that they had never seen a ship. One of their women was born in Kleine Namaqua Land and she had seen Dutchmen and guns before – as a result she was frightened to touch my gun.

Asked them if there was water further north or a river. They said No, and that they had always lived here and that they had gone far along the shore in search of food. But they knew of no other people, such as Bushmen, along the river. They all had very short, flat, small teeth and only one young fellow had good ones and his were rather small. Of average figure and thin. Two women had the first joint cut off their left-hand little finger. They said that this was because of 'Other Making' or *Canie* when they were ill. Gave each of them a European name which they were pleased about and they laughed. They had their wool plaited: one of them as though it was a wig in curlers – with thorn-wood pins. Some also with little pig-tails. They had a few beads and copper ear-rings which they said they had had for a long time, passed down from hand to hand.

Their chief was a young fellow, his nose frightfully disfigured by a lion. He had an uncle, a mother, a wife and children. He was called Koet, his mother is also called Koet. His father had also been the chief of this band. The people that used to live on this side of the river died out but for two women who are now here. They denied that it was through eating poisoned fish, but they said that once one of their girls had died from eating what had been washed up (they called it this 'evil spirit'). The uncle was called Hanni, the other one Cabesi, the women – Camaz, Sanga, Nauta, and Carouta. Four other of their menfolk were out hunting and some of their wives and children did not dare approach us. They had a puppy and an old bitch, black and yellow, much resembling a jackal. They showed me two beautifully dressed seal-skins. Exchanged the one for the last button that I had on the front of my coat and I cut off another from my sleeve in order to obtain a skin for Mr. Paterson.

Went along the shore to the Northern side of the mouth, followed by nine of these people. Took bearings on the shore: N.W. by N. as far as I can see. The sea is very rough for half an hour

out from the shore, though I could see no rock and the shore is completely sandy without shells. Returned to our fishermen following the right bank of the river, completely certain now that no skiff or boat could ever enter here, because the breakers are too rough and start too far out. Also, when the river is full it flows out too far. The greatest depth in the river was two and a half fathom but this did not last for long. When we reached our fishermen, who had caught a fair amount of harders, I gave the wild people some fish which they first grilled and then ate. I ordered another cast to be made so that they returned to their huts with some fish, very happy, and they promised to cross the river to us next day.

Because the party was eleven strong and had caught many fish, we started back for the camp leaving our net on the bank, the moon shining now. Mist began to come up and because we had to pass many sandbanks, the boat being heavily laden with no free-board, the crossing over was dangerous. At times we shipped water on account of the rippling of the river but guided by the fires on the bank towards which I steered we did at last, fortunately, reach our camp; but not without often going aground.

It is very hazy along the shore though the weather is fine.

Once Gordon, Paterson and their two servants had reached the deserted huts of the Strandlopers, it is interesting how much detail the journal gives us, not just about the encampment but also of such matters as 'the puppy which though very young was very vicious'. It is as though Gordon does not wish to forget or leave out anything that happened on this day.

The impulse to cut off all the copper buttons on his coat 'save one' is indeed unforgettable and reveals a spontaneity in Gordon not often found in the journals. It also shows us how very engrossed he was in getting to know this new group of people, and anxious too that they should have some present as a witness of his good faith. But it is also characteristic of Gordon that, having described this dramatic gesture, he immediately goes on to explain how they cooked an ostrich egg in its shell. This detail is also important for him and the story must wait while he discusses this matter.

He notes that once contact has been made with the Strandlopers – not without suspicion and due caution on both sides – it is the women who are 'talkative and merrier'. Gordon and his party are clearly adept at convincing the tribe of their good intentions, and all apprehension is soon forgotten.

As incident succeeds incident, and detail follows detail, it is easy to forget what an extraordinary encounter this was. For all, bar one, of the tribespeople this was their first sight of white men, and for Gordon and his party this was their first meeting with the Strandlopers – a type of people little known until then. Although Gordon does not comment directly on this aspect, his awareness of the fact is manifested in the length and detail of his entries regarding this band.

There is a drawing of these people and of their huts in Gordon's 'great map'.[31] It even shows their dogs and a dead beached whale in the background with the 'wild people' feeding off it (see page 118). He calls them 'Strand Bosjemans' or 'Sea-shore Bushmen', adding that they are 'fish-eating and Hunter-Hottentots'.

The Strandlopers continued to fascinate Gordon and it is fair to assume that he, in turn, continued to fascinate them. The following quotations show how readily they had accepted his goodwill and his generous, if circumscribed, hospitality. It will also be seen that although the 'wild people' occupied most of the journal at this juncture, neither Gordon's 'scientific' duties nor matters of zoological interest were neglected. Again, the entries for 21 and 22 August merit being quoted in their entirety.

21st August 1779.

Sky overcast, hazy weather. Wind N.W. Therm: 48–65–56. Weather clearing in the evening.

Because visibility was not good, stayed on this side. The wild people came to us. They numbered three men, four women and one child. They had gone upstream a little and crossed, the water up to their bellies, by a route known to them. I gave them some fish and tobacco and when we had had a talk about this country, they departed happy towards sunset.

Took a latitude but not accurate because of the misty weather. Got 28 deg–32 min.

Most of us had pains in our body today. We attributed this to eating a lot of fish without bread.

The Bushmen said that there were never many hippopotamus at the mouth of the river but that they were plentiful two or three days' journey upstream. Saw the wild people make fire. They had two little sticks of a light wood and thickness of a little finger and about two feet long; it grows alongside the water (of this river). The wood is very dry. They place one of these sticks on a skin or on one of their shoes made of hide, put a foot upon it to hold it still, then they push the other wood into it, and, spitting on their hands, they twirl the stick as rapidly as they can between their flattened hands. Thereupon one sees smoke issuing from the stick and afterwards fire. They always have these kinds of sticks tied to their quivers; the wood is called *Goerap*, almost the same name a white flint-stone is given.

22nd August 1779.

Therm: 50-65-53. Sky overcast. Light N.W. wind. A little drizzle in the evening.

Crossed the river, rowing for an hour and caught some harders. Mr. Paterson and I went to the Hottentots once more and there we had our midday meal of ostrich egg and a piece of grilled zebra meat we had brought; and very good it tasted, although the Dutch inhabitants will not eat it; they say it is unclean. Took a few shots at a skin with the Bushmen. Examined some of their jackal traps. Two of them accompanied us a little further inland. Low-lying, sandy country everywhere, although the sea has retreated for good. The wild people said that there was absolutely no water for as far as they had been and they said that when they went hunting they took water in shoulder bags, also in seal-bladders. We bartered for one of these and the water from it tasted very good.

We turned towards the shore. On the way a so-called horned-snake ran out in front of us.[32] I took one of the wild men's assegais and lifted up the bush under which it had crept, sitting

Previous page:
38. *The 'so-called Strandlopers' were clearly related to the other indigenous peoples of the west coast.*

there hissing. As I lifted, it struck the blade of the assegai. I hit and killed it and took it with me. It was about a foot long, with two small fleshy knobs just visible above the eyes which were split like cats' eyes.

Because of this it is known as *hoornmannetje*, in these regions. Here one can see how wrong Kolbe was who gave it two proper horns.[33] In the upper jaw and high to the side it has two canines which bend slightly inwards below; it has no incisors. In addition it has six upper molars on each side. No canines or incisors below but also six side-teeth on each side (much like a fish) slightly crooked and bent backwards. It is said to be very poisonous. Its colour is grey and it is flecked. Its tail ends in a sharp point. We saw another longer thin snake but we could not catch it.

We reached the sea and found that the shore was the same as the day before yesterday, not a single rock though the sea broke heavily. The wild people said that the shore had this same feature for as far as they had been along it; no rivers and no rocks so that they had to cross the river at low tide to get shell fish. They said that it was their footprints we had seen at the Kouwsie River and that they had also killed an eland then. Returned to their huts, gave them some tobacco and drew the picture of their huts.

Returned, crossing the river in the afternoon. We sailed back with a fairly brisk N.W. wind in half an hour, and had to turn many times going through the sandbanks; even so ran aground twice.

These people with men, women and children are about 20 strong. They appear to be concerned about their children, since most of them were always away somewhere. They said: looking for food in the veld, roots, bulbs etc.

From this last entry we have a statement that seems to imply that Gordon himself 'drew the picture of their huts'. Up to this point in the journey he has not mentioned Schoemaker at all, so in all probability the drawing was made in Gordon's own hand and was not his by proxy, as it were. We cannot be certain, however, that the picture on the map, obviously made much later in Cape Town, is identical or close to the one that was made on this day. The particular problem of who drew what in the Gordon Atlas therefore remains, to a large extent, problematical.

On 23 August Gordon wrote that he had made a 'map for Pinar so that he could go up the river, it being impossible for the wagons to do this'. This is an interesting statement. Gordon could only have got the information for this map from Wikar's 'account', discussed earlier in this chapter, as well as from the Swede's crude sketch of the Orange which was attached to the account. (The sketch showed the river from its mouth to the vicinity of Koegas, 'which lies between Upington and Prieska'.[34]) The wagons were, indeed, only able to travel a day's journey upriver due to the rough terrain they encountered there, as was noted a little later in the journal.

However, before leaving to go upstream, Gordon was once more visited by the Strandlopers who were so hungry that they asked

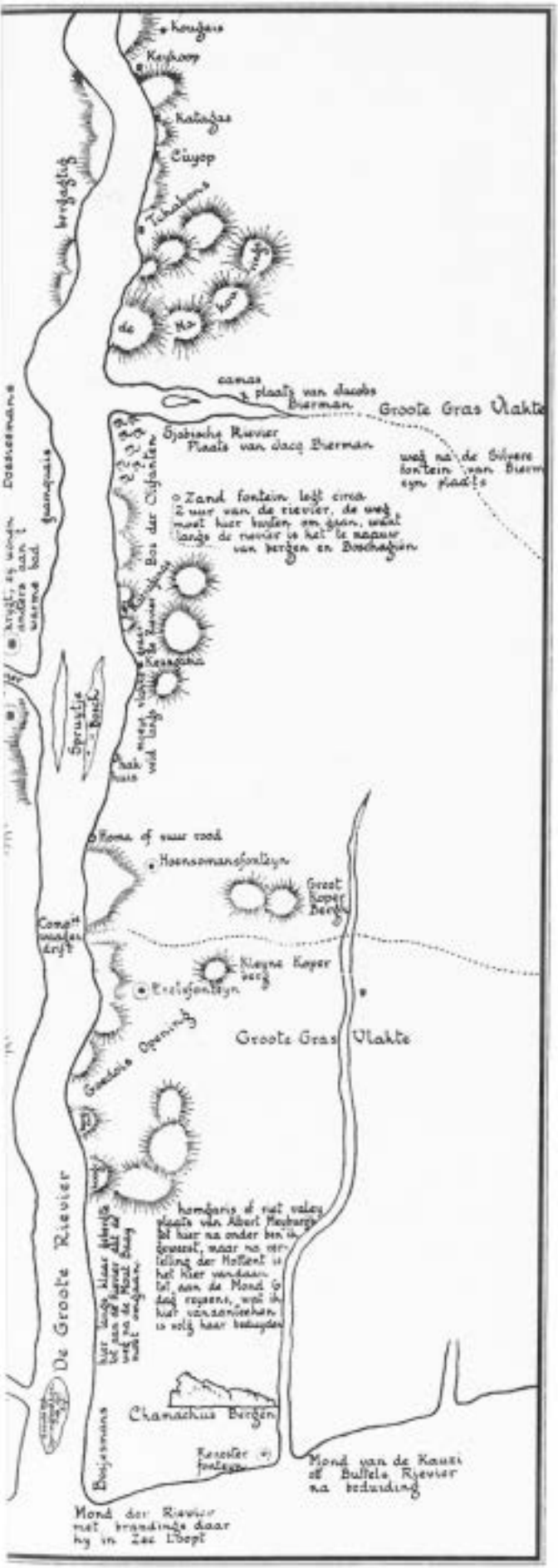
our servants for two worn-out shoes made of eland hide, whereupon they rubbed the hair off with a stone and then grilled and ate them. Gave them some fish and tobacco. One of our party who had found a dead, washed-up right whale, told them of it, whereupon they rejoiced greatly. They said they would go to it tomorrow and would not come with us up river since they were suffering the greatest hunger.

On 25 August 1779 Gordon and his party did eventually leave the mouth to journey upstream, eastward along the river. On his first day out there is a lively description of a hippopotamus:

After going upriver for three hours (to the place where we first reached it) we ate a grilled duck which we had brought with us and cooked an ostrich egg. While we were eating, a hippopotamus came to have a look at us, sticking only its nose and eyes out, but we had no gun. He did this again and again and in the same place the whole time we were eating. As he stuck his head half out in this way he did look somewhat like a horse and this could be the reason that the ancients called it a river horse. The Hottentots have told me that there is a sort of wagtail at the drift higher up the river, which, when the hippopotamus sticks its head out, flies on to it.[35] When it goes under again they fly to another head which has come up, without the animals (and there are many of them there) paying any attention. It may be that these little birds pick ticks off these animals for they are full of them. It surprised me that there are so many of these animals upriver where there are more people. They are so shy here where they are never disturbed. That there is little grazing is probably the reason why there are so few here. It is also said that they are much smaller here than they are beyond the Sneeuwberg. The wild people here did not know of the giraffe.

Though it is not mentioned in the journal, evidently Pieter Pienaar and his hunters shot an elephant on this or the previous day. Accordingly, Gordon rode along the river to where the dead animal lay. It is on this day then, 26 August, that we have his first recorded encounter with an elephant. As usual, his description, which follows here, is packed with information. It also contains a respectful, if not awed, impression of the power of the African lion:

The Hottentots told us that they had found a pride of lions by the dead elephant. My dogs chased a large band of baboons in the thickets beside the river, and most probably killed one because their muzzles were bloody when they returned but, because of the undergrowth, could find nothing. When we reached the elephant it was lying in thick undergrowth between high thorn-trees and it stank greatly. We went with our guns at the ready in case of lions. Although the Hottentots had lighted a fire at the elephant, a pride of six lions had walked through the smouldering ash so that now we saw only that there was a great deal of their black dung around and that they had eaten into the



elephant's head and eaten part of the brains, in addition to a piece of the ear, which in this animal covers the whole shoulder. Measured it as much as I could: its height in front, in a straight line was 10 feet and 2 inches (Rhineland); it was the same height behind, from above its anus (it slopes sharply away below the tail). Its length in a straight line was 12 feet 4 inches. The sole of its front foot was 18 inches in diameter. Its rear foot had a diameter 2 inches longer and was just as wide. Since it was a bull its tusks stuck out three feet, therefore a young animal. An elephant can trample down a large thorn-tree and feed itself along this river where there are still a fair amount of these. It eats the foliage and bark of the trees, especially the thorn-trees (mimosa). This greatly stunts the growth of the trees.

This elephant was hit by four or five heavy, half-tin balls before it died. Following this, a herd of elephants was here again but they went off. These thorn-trees produce a good gum which is eaten by the Hottentots.[36] On a thorn-tree which was a good seventy feet high saw an ape like those in Outeniqua Land. Today also saw some quail, turtle doves and so-called pheasant.

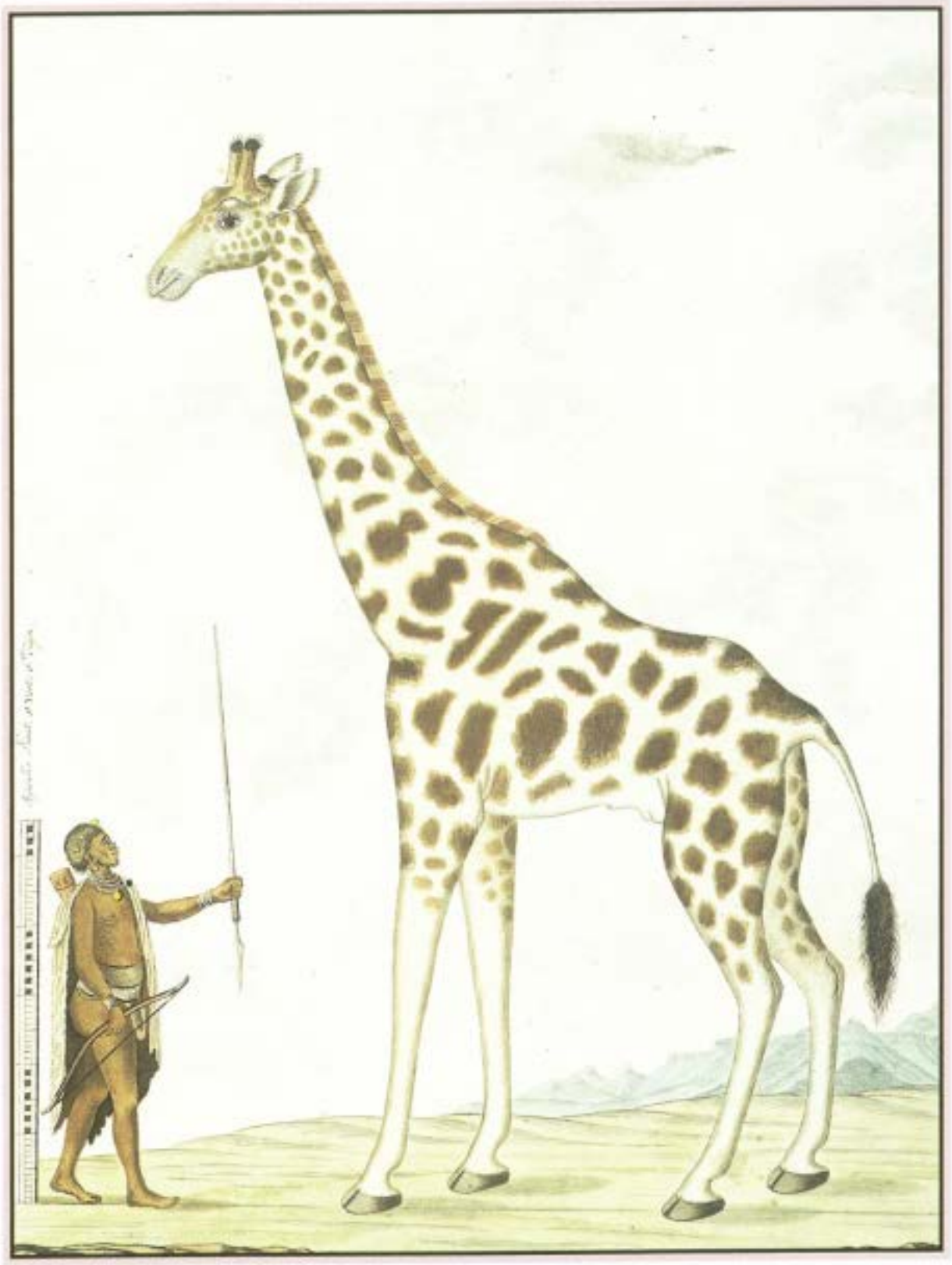
Because I had forgotten my cloak I first took bearings (though it was in the evening) and then rode back to my tent with one Hottentot. Arrived there in moonshine after three hours' riding without noticing any lions. Made one turn to the left across the range or rather the high ridge.

Our Hottentots who had not shot anything while hunting were very hungry; they went to the elephant and found its paw or lower foot still very good eating but the eight hungry men were still not able to finish it. Pinar and the two van Rhenens stayed at the elephant to forestall the lion, but this evening it got too late. The lions came roaring half an hour after I had left the elephant. Next day they found that one foot had been dragged a very long way off, showing the great strength of this animal.

Gordon also had a taste of the elephant's foot, which he found 'very good though somewhat harder than calf's foot'. On this same day Gordon again mentions the 'map' or 'sketch' that he sent to Pienaar: '. . . also a pocket-compass and some provisions. He is to go along the river to Companys Drift and wait for me there. Five Hottentots go with him. I am most sorry that I cannot be of the party. This is because my presence is needed most at the wagons.'

It is not immediately clear why Pienaar was to make this journey to what is now known as Ramans Drift. But, as we shall see, Gordon was now preparing to return to Ellenboogfontein with the wagons. In the meantime he suffered another mishap: 'Got a thorn in my finger which developed into a bad sore; it has troubled me greatly. Bad water and an irregular way of living make a bagatelle of a wound develop into something highly malignant.' In other words, Gordon was fully aware of the dangers of blood poisoning in this situation, though there was not much he could do to prevent it occurring.

Map 5. *A section of Wikar's map, copied from the original.*



39. Giraffa camelopardalis. *Something of the awe felt by Gordon and contemporary zoologists for this great quadruped is clearly evident in the tribesman's eyes.*

CHAPTER SIX

THE FOURTH JOURNEY: THE LAND OF THE CAMELOPARDS

(AUGUST – OCTOBER 1779)

Return to Ellenboogfontein; blood poisoning; back to the Orange; 'Hottentot' marriages; the first giraffe; the Augrabies Falls; tribespeople of the Orange

Unable to continue along the river bank with the wagons, Gordon's decision to return to Ellenboogfontein must have been taken on two main counts: firstly, to refurbish his party, and secondly, to use a known wagon road to reach the river higher up at Companys Drift – the rendezvous place with Pienaar.

Leaving the river on 29 August, it is revealing to see how carefully Gordon had to plan his journey. The way he presents this in the journal allows us to hear him 'thinking aloud', as it were. A vigorous moonlit zebra hunt rounds off the entry for this day:

Had the fever last night and my whole hand was swollen. Made everything ready for our return, filled our barrels with water. Because of the scarcity of water we will now have to travel back for 80 hours with the ox wagons. Also because it is impossible for a wagon to go further up river at this point – the cliffs are so steep – although not as high as one is given to believe, it will again be one degree, sixteen minutes due north before I reach the river where I want to cross. It will still take a good 58 hours' travel with the ox wagons and that in bad country where there is almost no water and what there is will be brack (not much game as well). It would take six days to where I was, a reasonable journey by wagon, with water, to the drift. (Or so I imagined then). We travelled back along the path we had previously taken with the horses and reached Bentinck's Valey where we rejoined our wagon road. We decided to travel by night since we now knew the road and where there was water and to let our stock graze during the day. Also to so arrange things that our stock will drink every second day, until we get to Kouwsie and to let them rest a day at each watering place, there being but two of these for cattle. . . .

Departed south at six o'clock in the dusk, saluting the river with a discharge of guns and with a tot of brandy. This is almost finished so that we have to share a ration of two or three tots a day. After we had been travelling for three hours and the moon had been up for about an hour there was a loud barking from the dogs. We ran to them and found some zebras, six I think. A Hottentot had shot a mare before we got there and the rest of the zebras were being harried by our dogs, in particular my Keiser and Koning. The zebras ran with open muzzles towards van Reenen and Pedro who evaded them. They ran down a hill and Kobus van Rhenen wounded one in its foreleg so that the dogs were able to pull it to the ground repeatedly. It bit several of the dogs even though it was wounded. More than once my gun which had got wet would not fire but at last among all the dogs I was able to shoot it. It was also a young mare. While this was happening we heard the remaining zebras calling their companions. I heard this sound for the first time: a grating noise as when a stone is thrown over freshly frozen ice and differing greatly from that of the kwagga. The largest mare was in a straight line 6 feet 2 inches long (Rhineland). The height in front three feet nine and a half inches; behind two inches higher. We cut off as much [flesh] as we could take and since we could not linger because we were short of water for our cattle, we travelled on, having delayed a good hour there. We made camp at four o'clock in the morning after nine hours' good travelling. We were now a half mile W.NW. of the Twee Gebroeders, at the smallest of the two, by the sea. While chasing the zebras the wound on my hand burst open and is still painful and swollen.

For the greater part of this return journey Gordon was in considerable pain from the infected sore on his hand. On 30 August he wrote: 'My hand was very painful and swollen; this is chiefly because my dog Keiser was hungry and when I was going to give him a piece of meat, he, in his haste took my hand with it. This made my young Koerikei laugh and got him a few cuffs over the ear.' This is the only time in the journals that Gordon records a reaction of this nature. Equally interesting is that he even records this trivial incident. Was he slightly uneasy about his quite justified bout of temper?

The wound continued to deteriorate and the day after the punishment of Koerikei, Gordon wrote in the journal: 'Stayed here, lying down. My hand has become so bad that I have caught a fever as well. Used a lancet to cut open the finger and found that a growth had formed. Much

blood and pus came out. I could not walk because of the great pain.'

Despite his illness, however, Gordon continued writing up his journal for the day – recording, speculating, observing:

> The abundance of big, white periwinkle shells which are found everywhere in the veld must originate from the wild people or animals who feed on them otherwise one would not find so many dead ones and so seldom the living. Their colour is somewhat grey and one sees them here and there under the euphorbia bushes, crawling suddenly into the earth.
>
> The abundance of seashells to be found here can only come from the wild people and with time will probably become covered with earth. Under the euphorbias (or what are here called melkbosjes) there is a fungus or growth like a mushroom which has a taste something like that between a potato and fish roe (because of its small seed).[1] It is not unpleasant and is eaten by the Hottentots and called *kaniep*. It also grows in the Roggeveld. We also found a small spider whose nest contained many insects. The material of this nest most resembles the little nests that the kapok bird makes.[2] Inside were threads resembling thin darning wool: they were thick and very strong. Koerikei brought me good honey which he had scooped out.

Eventually, Gordon was unable to leave until 2 September. Even then, at the end of his entry for that day, he wrote that his hand was 'still not better'. Notwithstanding this, the wagons continued to travel seven hours or more each day under punishing, parched conditions. Only on 5 September did they reach Kouwsies River, near present-day Grootmis: 'Found no spring there; drank the river-water which was sweetish-brack and hardly slaked one's thirst.[3] My supply of Orange River water came to an end today. One of my oxen collapsed. We are having a hard time of it.'

For Gordon to admit to having a hard time is unusual. Given his habitual reticence about such matters, we can assume that they were suffering greatly. Indeed Paterson, in his *Narrative*, records that on this same day, 6 September, 'Our provision began to be short; but one of the Hottentots determined, notwithstanding this circumstance, not to be deprived of his meal, contrived during the night to rob the others of their shoes, which he completely devoured'.[4]

On the same night they again broke camp and sustained an accident: 'Through the negligence of the leaders, Mr. Paterson's wagon overturned as we were travelling along the bank of the river by starlight. I was sitting up in front, there were three of us in it, and we were hardly harmed, but some boxes were broken.'

It is surely revealing that Gordon was sitting in the wagon. Most of the time, as we are given to understand from the journal, he preferred to travel on horseback or on foot. It therefore seems probable that he was using this more leisurely form of transport because his hand was still troubling him.

However, things began to improve after this and, riding ahead, Gordon reached the haven of Ellenboogfontein on 10 September. He does not mention his hand again and we can assume that by then it had nearly healed. But it is worth noting that he left Paterson and Van Reenen to come after him with the wagons. They only reached Engelbrecht's two days later. Perhaps Gordon needed this time to rest and to convalesce. Certainly it was unlike him to spend, as he did here, a whole week in one place with such little activity recorded.

Before reaching Ellenboogfontein Gordon stopped to watch the singular way in which milking was performed by certain 'Hottentots': '... I saw for the first time that after they have milked a while they grip the labia of the cow's vagina in both hands and then blow strongly into it. Shortly afterwards the cow pisses and they go on milking. They say they do this if the cow withholds its milk.'

This practice, it should be mentioned, was also recorded by earlier travellers.[5]

Once again, on 17 September, Gordon was to witness a dance by local tribespeople, this time the 'Gam or Kleine Namaquas'.

> Seven sit down in a circle close to each other. Each had a thin cylindrical tube made of thorn-tree bark with a diameter of half an inch and more; each differed in length as well; from 2 and 3 to 4 and 5 feet long. A chewed-up plug of thorn-tree bark is then pushed in, after it has been moistened with milk. After this they tune their flutes: it is often a fourth but not always. They push the plug higher or lower with a thin stick, according to the song to be played. Thus tuned, each maintains his individual tone by blowing into it from above, through the vent. Each generally produces his tone twice in succession, after that they carry on one after the other like smiths or threshers. It produces a very wild melody. Each begins by making his tone twice and at the same time stamping with his right leg putting it down slightly to the right and the left leg follows behind in the same way. Whereupon they start the same thing again, following one upon the other, all of them bending forwards so that their heads come together. (The Hottentots always bend forward in their dances, the Caffers never). And so they stamp, always to the right in the same circle until their dance is over. The women stand up at a distance of ten paces, skipping and singing 'Ho, ho, ho: ha, ha, ha!' clapping their hands and going up to the men from time to time, as if to rouse them, turning quickly back to their former place, sometimes turning once round the men and then away. When the men who are blowing are a little apart, one or two of the women go between them and then the men make as if to catch them. One of these women, going through the circle, fell upside down in such a way that we all had to laugh, and, she ran off ashamed. This was one of the prettiest Hottentot women that I have ever seen. She was almost white and although she had a Hottentot face, she had fine features.
>
> The sudden change to moist, cold weather inconvenienced us.

The latter part of this entry deserves some comment. The remarks about 'the prettiest Hottentot woman I have ever seen' seem oddly personal and thus out of keeping with Gordon's normal style. There seems to be just the slightest deviation from his habitual, empirical detachment, as though, for a moment, he was betraying some degree of sexual interest. But, as if correcting this momentary lapse,

the final sentence is abrupt, matter of fact and once more 'scientific'. The change in the weather that he records has almost become an admonition.

There is a lively drawing of a 'Hottentot' dance in the Gordon Atlas (see overleaf) which appears to be an illustration of the ceremony described in this passage. For example, the way the men are said to bend forward while playing their 'flutes' and stamping their feet is accurately portrayed in this drawing. There is even a female figure entering the circle of males – a detail that perfectly corresponds with the journal account, in which the women are said to be 'going up to the men from time to time as if to rouse them'. The drawing obviously depicts real people: each face is different, and the skirts, karosses and beads are all carefully, even affectionately, detailed. It is a charming scene and more than likely was drawn by Gordon himself.[6]

The next day, 18 September 1779, Gordon again set off for the Orange River. Paterson and his party did not join him, preferring to return to the Orange at Ramansdrift, to enter Namibia via the Houms River, and later to return to the Cape in December 1779. According to Paterson, 'he [Gordon] intended to direct his course to the eastward in search of a nation called Briquas[7] which is a sort of Cafferes'. Gordon himself makes no mention of such intentions at this point in the journal; nor does he inform us of where he is going or who is accompanying him. But the search for the 'Briquas' was not the only aim in his mind.

According to Professor Forbes there were several other considerations which must have occupied him. There was the question of whether the Orange River which he had just 'baptized' was the same river that he had struck near present-day Bethulie in December 1777. He could not be absolutely sure of this until he had reconnoitered considerably more to the east of the mouth. Furthermore, there was the information that he would have received from Wikar of a great cataract and of other rivers flowing into the 'Great River'. This he most certainly would wish to confirm, as well as see those tribes, other than the 'Briqua', that the Swedish deserter had described. He would also want to know, for military and trade reasons, how navigable the river was, and he would want to map it as accurately as possible. In short, he wanted to complete the circuit touched upon at the beginning of chapter five. Finally, there was the desire to see new animals and plants – above all the giraffes which, according to Wikar, were to be found in the vicinity of Coboopfontein, west of Pella and twenty-odd kilometres south of Onseepkans.

In 1760 a certain Jacob Coetsee Jansz had also sighted giraffes, describing them as 'a sort of camel', north of the 'Great River' and had shot two females.[8] It was his report (which Gordon had read) that had led to the official expedition in 1761-2 under the command of Hendrik Hop, captain of the Stellenbósch Burgher Militia.[9] Gordon had obviously read the account of Hop's expedition as well, which had been written up by the Company's surveyor, C.F. Brink, and indeed, to some extent, Gordon was now to follow the same track to the Orange.

It is interesting to note that the route Gordon took at the beginning of the journey followed closely what is now the main road between Kamieskroon and Springbok. For instance, Gordon's Aloes Kloof, reached on the night of 18 September, has been positively identified as joining the 'Buffels River 1 km upstream from the bridge of the national road and 9 km east of Wolwepoort'.[10] He reached the vicinity of Springbok on 22 September 1779 and there visited 'the copper mine' discovered and worked by Simon van der Stel's expedition of 1685-6. His next move was east through the area of present-day Concordia and then on to the place he called Queekfontein (today spelt Kweekfontein). Next, Gordon's course veered E.N.E. and took him in turn to Naip (his Huib or Heip on the map), then on to Komasoas, which is his Camasauws. On 26 September he reached Pieter Pienaar's stock farm, Sandfontein, which has the identical name today.

The journal entries from Ellenboogfontein to Sandfontein deserve some comment. Firstly, it is clear that Gordon had not recovered from the illness and fever that had dogged him from the very beginning of this journey. On 20 September he tersely records that he 'was not well and was feverish', yet he must have been feeling very ill indeed, for he only took the latitude of their position the next day, having been 'prevented' by 'nausea' from doing so the day before.

It is easy enough to miss or overlook these entries, and so forget how often they occurred and how uncomplaining and conscientious Gordon remained. The fact of his illness was noted – that is all. His tasks were performed, the journey continued. Every day he recorded what he observed.

The entry on 23 September 1779 is of great interest as it concerns the marriage customs of the 'Hottentots' in that part of the country. (Most of this material is taken from Wikar's account of the same ceremony.) As has already been noted, Wikar gave Gordon a copy of this account when the two met near Ellenboogfontein in July,[11] so the details had been known to anthropologists and historians for many years before the discovery of Gordon's journals. Here is the relevant passage:

> Yesterday I rode to the cattle post of a man called Beukes. There was a lot of stock there and many shiny-haired or wool sheep. This is excellent sheep country.
>
> From Groene River there are nineteen stock farms in Namaqualand. On these there are five married farmers; the rest mostly take a Hottentot woman or two, which, so I hear, they marry according to their custom. In the Hottentot marriage ceremony no pissing is used (but this they do in their 'Man-making').[12] It is the most natural way of doing things in the world. If a young man takes a liking to a young girl he seeks her company without declaring his love or speaking of anything [to do with it]; he is too shy. However, since a family usually lives together pell-mell in one hut, the young man crawls across to the girl, even if this is just for his own amusement and she is willing (which it is said hardly ever happens). He [then] goes back to his sleeping place. But when the girl is modest she stands up and goes to lie in another place, well outside the hut.

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40. *A skilfully executed painting of a 'Hottentot' dance – probably illustrating Gordon's journal entry for 17 September 1779.*

If now the young man has serious intentions he stays in the sleeping place of the young girl until full daylight so that everyone can see this. So it goes on until she consents or until he gets tired and sees that she will not have him. If she consents she continues to lie there but this seldom happens at the first proposal. Once he has got her to sleep with him he stays with her so that everybody can see this and even if the parents hear something they let nothing show, saying that it is embarrassing, even if the marriage is not to their liking. In the morning the bridegroom or man stands up and takes off the beads from around his waist and throws them on the parents' sleeping-place. If these are accepted the marriage has been concluded. But if they do not want to consent (and they almost never refuse) the daughter remains with her parents, even if she is pregnant and they live as before, without scandal. However if the beads have been accepted the young man fetches his cattle and generally gives them cows and calves, mixed together as he chooses. In addition he must also slaughter for his wife and some of them hang the stomach fat around their necks and the gall-bladder on their heads. They also mix some other fat together with buchu from [the hair of] the head (one of the elders does this) and they (the man and wife) eat it from each other's hands. And so everything is completed. However, nine of the oxen are a kind of a loan and one is for the parents for having brought the girl up. After three or four years the remaining nine, or others in their place, must be given back. The Hottentots have daughters willingly because they get stock at their wedding. A poor young man is in as bad a way as he would be in Europe; and a Hottentot who owns a lot of stock very often has two or three wives; which causes them more trouble than pleasure. The wives quarrel among themselves, first one running away and then the other. Then, the Hottentot who gets no satisfaction in being without his wives, must go after them and bring them back again. One of these, who had both an old and a young wife, was asked why he did not let his young wife go since she was always running away, replied that although it was certainly true that his old wife cared for him better he still liked the young one. Their 'Other-Making' occurs at births, marriages, (becoming man and woman) deaths and at other events. (Sometimes just for diversion). They never tie knuckle bones around their hands but almost always tie a gall-bladder in their hair until it falls off in one piece. Hottentots marry very young, a Namaqua told me, and that is why they are so weak.

From here took bearing on Brakfontein Berg: N. by E. 3 deg. E. Our course to here yesterday: N. 3 deg. W.

What is of singular interest here is the offhand remark that prefaces the account of the marriage practices: 'From Groene River there are nineteen stock farms in Namaqualand. On these there are five married farmers; the rest mostly take a Hottentot woman or two, which, so I hear, they marry according to their custom.' From the context of the passage it is clear that Gordon in no way considers it unusual or sensational that this is how the frontier farmers set up their homes and families. The passage comes after a comment that 'This is excellent sheep country' and is followed by an entry concerning compass bearings. Presumably his remark that there were five 'married' farmers would imply that they were married according to Christian custom only and has nothing to do with the race of the wives or of the farmers. It is indeed refreshing to note from this description how free from racial prejudice the tribespeople and the early Dutch settlers of this area were.[13]

We know from previous intimations that Gordon himself was most open-minded, indeed often affectionate, towards the indigenous inhabitants of the country, and so his attitude – his matter-of-fact recital of the ceremonies – can come as no surprise. What is betrayed here in the tone of the narrative is a certain humour, especially when we consider how the marriage customs would apply to a young Dutch colonist. The mere fact that the journal says 'no pissing is used' is funny because it implies that it very well might have been used. And then all the details about living 'pell-mell' in the hut, and the hanging of cattle innards around their necks and on their heads and in their hair – all have a ludicrous element when applied to people of European stock. Gordon must have recorded this passage because he saw this implication and it amused him. And what of the concluding sentence ('Hottentots marry very young, a Namaqua told me, and that is why they are so weak')? This shows humour of another kind.

As Gordon approaches his immediate destination – Pienaar's farm, Sandfontein – he encounters new faces. The entire entry for 27 September 1779 now follows, showing the tone and tenor of Gordon's journal at this time:

The same weather and wind which generally becomes light easterly three to four hours after sunset. Very hot on account of the loose, hot reddish-brown karoo sand. The wind fresh, veered with the sun. Therm: 68–100–80. Barometer gave 2165 feet.

	62 de.	– 12 min.
	27	– 48 from the zenith
giving	90	– 0
	1	– 16 southerly declination
	29 deg.	– 4 min. Latitude.

N.B. The course therefore fell in a more northerly direction.

As the sun was setting yesterday saw an animal that looked like a rhinoceros; it was standing against a hill but it was too far and the sun was going down. (My young Koerikei sees as well with the naked eye as I can with my pocket spyglass.)

The great change in the heat since Engelbrecht's has caused my nose to bleed from time to time. Yesterday I ate a beautiful wild cucumber which was so bitter that I became ill from it and vomited. This also happened to a Hottentot.

There were four robust young fellows of middling stature among these Bushmen: brothers. They arrived here from the east yesterday. They were very open and friendly and brought me milk this morning. There were only three children and a young girl and two older people. Had never seen people like me.

41. *The spiny, or wild, cucumber.*

Gave them some tobacco and they searched the countryside around here for stones for me; different kinds of pebbles and flints. The sand in this veld is looser: grass-country, bushman grass-country, or *Taaneina*. Plotted course ahead: E.N.E. 3 deg. N. Have used the compass to travel over this country; a Hottentot has been showing me the only waterholes. He has learned this from the Bushmen.

Last night, while travelling over this flat country by moonlight we found an ostrich nest which had twelve eggs which had been sat on for a time but were still good. In the outside circle however (as in the previous description of the ostrich nest) there were seven very fresh ones. The male, even though he also sits on them, makes himself a nest in the sand close beside the nest containing the eggs. There is a scarcity of water here and it does not taste good (but not brack). We have to let the oxen drink two at a time, digging and letting it fill up each time.

Departed E.N.E. 3 deg. N. and reached Sandfontein, Pinar's cattle-post after ten and a half hours' travel and found him there. It took him twenty-one days to reach here from the dead elephant. He had shot two elephants and thirteen hippopotamus along the left bank of the river. It has no waterfalls but it does have rapids over the reefs and very large bends. Found my two Hottentots and my wagon all in order. Because I am the first to come this way by wagon they were not expecting me to come from this direction. Until a mile short of Camasauws we had difficult, reddish brown, sandy ridges; thereafter hard, pebble-strewn, flat stretches and more than half of the way to Sandfontein we had loose reddish-brown and gravelly karoo sand. Shrubs everywhere and more stony hills up to 400 feet high. Saw where the river lay, one and a half miles to the north east, between a mountain range which is not, however, high. Runs E. ¼ S. thus Brink's map is totally inaccurate on this.

The wagon Gordon found here was, of course, the one he had sent 'due north' from Ellenboogfontein at the end of July 'under the supervision of my trusty Hottentot Iteki'. Pienaar was also waiting for him, as previously agreed.

It had taken the hunter 'twenty-one days to reach here from the dead elephant,' Gordon notes carefully, and he also reports what Pienaar had to say about the topography of the river between the two points. All this was, no doubt, important for his mapping of the river. Pienaar, it should be noted, had completed a vital portion of Gordon's journey by proxy, as it were; but his record was by no means perfect and Gordon's resulting map hardly indicates the deep sweep to the north taken by the Orange between modern-day Beesbank and Vioolsdrif.

Now that the party had come together once more, two days were spent resting on the farm and preparing for the arduous journey ahead. Most of the entries comprise information about the tribespeople encountered here, and in particular the male custom of excising one testicle[14] – a subject that seems to have fascinated Gordon, since it recurs many times in the course of his narrative. It is clear that he spent these two days gathering all the information he could about the tribes, the subsidiary rivers and other features he would meet along the river. Although he does not say so, it is clear that he intended to go as far east as possible, hoping, one can be sure, to map the river up to where he had last struck it in December 1777, near present-day Bethulie, and so complete his 'circuit'. Thus his entry for 28 September is again of great interest and is quoted here with few omissions:

Saw today for the first time two old *Eini* or *Einiqua*.[15] Both had one ball cut out, the one on the right and the other on the left. The remaining ball was slightly larger than usual and filled the pouch so that it did not swing loose at all. They were called Naugaap and Oegaap. They were married and lived with the Bushmen who frequent these parts and are called *Haussa eip*. Naugaap's was cut out by the Einiquas when he was an adult and he said it was because he had a pain in his loins and because it would make him run faster. He had four children and a wife. Oegaap's was cut out when he was still a young boy. It happened casually and not in the normal course of the cutting out custom. He was not obliged to do it. It appeared to be partly superstition and partly an old way of treating sickness; it happens at slaughtering as well, always with two head of stock or at 'Other Making'. For as long as Naugaap could remember only one of his people had died of it. Oegaap had nine children. Naugaap was sorry he had let himself be cut since he now lived with the Bushmen who never did it. It had made him very ill. He did not want his children to be cut. Laughingly, he said that he was now almost an ox. His wife was pregnant with her first child when he let himself be cut which was done by a man called Caumaap who did this at their kraal. At most there were two who could cut and they often do this to many men together at the same time in the rainy season. Then those who have been cut rub themselves with red paint, also about June. They must then each sit apart without letting any woman come to them until they are healed.

The first joint of the finger next to the little finger on Oegaap's right hand was cut off, for sickness; their parents do it if they are very ill, also the head-woman or head-man.[16] In each kraal of the Einiquas (which is the name of all the kraals though every kraal has its particular name) which lies on this river as many do not have the ball cut as do have it cut. They say that these uncut ones are too afraid but do not despise them or consider them to be different from the others. The women make no distinction between them and everything stays the same. They are all Hottentots and their speech varies only slightly from the Namaquas.

These people are called Hoensing eib meaning Spider Kraal.[17] Some of the *Einiquas* (the Ein comes from the name of the River) – those who live almost behind the Sneeuwberg on this side of the river, have much stock. The Coraqua are somewhat further up on the other side of the river.[18] They, the *Hoensing eib* are good friends of the Bushmen who fight with the Sneeuwberg farmers.

Klaas and Piet Bastart are living on Pinar's farm; they went with Vicar but have now returned.[19]

Two good days' journey to the north of them the black Briqua or Brinas begin. Saw a Kouqua (or One-of-the-people-who-cut-kraal)[20], an Einiqua too who had been to the Briquas and he called their corn *semica* just as the Caffers do. Earlier they did not use the bow but now they do. The *Kouqua* also had his left ball cut out and said that all the people in his kraal had this done according to an old custom, excepting only a few who were too timid. The Briquas cut as well.

The river that runs behind the Orange River is called Koeroemana by the Briquas.[21] It runs from the east to the N.W. and somewhat more north-westerly than parallel to this river.

We are making everything ready to go east upriver in the moonlight. We are making a wagon ready and are leaving the boat here since we are not able to travel very far with the wagon; after that we are taking pack-oxen. I long very much to see the so-called Briquas.

These concluding words are significant, for this is the first time Gordon hints that finding the Briquas is one of the aims of the journey. It will be recalled that Paterson had given this as the sole reason for Gordon's journey 'to go eastward along the river'. Here Gordon makes what, for him, is a strongly emotional statement about meeting these people. The reason is plain. He might perhaps be able to establish a link between those African people – the Xhosa – whom he had met in the east, and the Africans who were living here in the west, known as the Briqua, Brina or Batswana.

The next stage of his journey, lasting from 29 September to 22 October 1779, was to be made with one wagon. The terrain ahead was known to be rugged and for this reason the boat was left behind. So far as one can make out from scattered notes in the journal, the company was, in the beginning, made up of Gordon and Pienaar, the two 'Boland Hottentot' servants, Iteki and Koerikei, Schoemaker the artist, and the brothers Klaas and Piet Bastert, as well as Klaas Barend – all three excellent hunters and shots. In addition, there was a small group of Einiqua tribespeople – five or so men and women – but this element of 'wild people' would swell and diminish haphazardly, as the journey continued.

The route that the party took for the next three weeks or so has also been convincingly plotted by Professor Forbes.[22] From Sandfontein the company passed through Klein Pella, which Gordon called Soubiesjes, and made camp at Pella itself (his Commas). His next camp at Cabas Riviertje still has the name of Kabas. (It is approximately eight kilometres north of Pofadder.) Gordon's Cabouws and Naisees are almost certainly Koboop and Nanseep respectively, just as his Samoep and Aiaas must be our Samoeprivier and Eyas. Travelling east along the bank of the river, with a few camps in-between, Gordon came to a place he called Haries or Garies Poort on 11 October. This can only be the Bo-Naries shown on our maps today. The permanent spring at Gomnuip would accord very closely with Gordon's Gam Ey, though it should be mentioned that he described it as a 'brack underground waterhole' with no water then;[23] and of course there can be no uncertainty about his 'Aukoerebis of groote Watervall' (the Augrabies Falls) which he first saw on Friday 15 October 1779.

The subsequent camps made after the falls were at the 'Eerste Namaneijqua Kraal' and the 'Tweede Namaijqua', and given the fact that these were temporary dwelling places of tribespeople, they cannot be identified etymologically, though an *in situ* examination using the journal would very likely yield their location.[24] The last place on this stage of the journey is marked as Takemas and this can only be present-day Kakamas. (Professor Forbes has stated that the T and K in both spellings are approximations for a click sound still used in pronouncing the name by local people of Korana extraction.)

The first few days of the journey passed without much incident. From the entries we can see that Gordon spent some time talking to members of the group of 'Einiqua', who were accompanying them. Once more Gordon's interest in these people – his admiration even – is manifest. 'Noeroep,' he records, '. . . is a small elderly Hottentot who is swift and courageous and as a result all are respectful of him.' Gordon ends this passage by remarking wryly: 'These Bushmen serve our farmers and are good herdsmen but they do not tolerate bad treatment.'

The entry for 2 October 1779 is of particular interest. The party had been joined by a stock farmer called Model who drew an amused comment from Gordon:[25]

Departed first E. by S. half a mile until we reached a small hollow in the branch of mountains that extend to this point. Half-way we crossed the dry Cabas rivulet which runs S.E. from the plain in thunderstorms. After one and a half miles we came on to a bad, stony road going downhill: first a quarter of a mile N.E. then E. through a flat ravine through which a dry river ran, which I called Susannadal. There were many kouw[26] trees and much Bushman grass making it very pleasant.[27] But, looking for water, we found none and travelling on for a further quarter of an hour we made camp without water, after four and a half hours' brisk travel. In this valley we saw many giraffe tracks;

42. *Wrapped in his kaross, a male 'Hottentot' lies ready to be buried.*

they had grazed on every kouw tree and looking at their tracks I was astonished to see that, when they stand still, the rear hoofs can only be a foot away from the fore hoofs. We saw rhinoceros tracks as well.

We travelled now like the Children of Israel, since Model, due to the fact that the water on his farm had run out, had loaded his hut and his household goods on to pack-oxen and a pack-sled and was moving with us, which, together with all his stock produced a great hubbub of sheep and cattle. Some of the ewes lambed on the way; the lambs were then picked up and carried or placed on the sled as well.

At the end of the kloof we saw a great, flat country in front of us (lying between N.E. and S.E.) as far as we could see, broken only here and there by small irregularities.

First, we should take note of the name Gordon gives this 'flat ravine'. Who is this Susanna or Susette? (On Map 3 of the Gordon Atlas the place is called Susettedal.) Who is this lady who gave her name to this 'pleasant' spot?

On 4 October 1779, two days after Gordon had written about Susannadal, the Here XVII met in Amsterdam, and among the resolutions passed on that day was one concerning a certain Susanna Nicolet of 'Leijnerolle in Zwitserland'.[28] She was permitted to travel to the Cape of Good Hope on one of the ships from Amsterdam, and in addition she was allowed to take a maidservant to attend upon her. There was to be no charge for this.

Now Susanna Nicolet was the lady that Gordon was to marry in April of the following year, an event which will be discussed later in this account. There can be no doubt that it was after her that the kloof, with its abundance of grass and trees, was named on this day. Indeed, there is an agreeable degree of synchronism in that the naming of Susannadal and the permission for Susanna Nicolet to travel to the Cape occur within a couple of days of each other. But how typical it is of Gordon that he gives us no hint as to why he gave the kloof that name. It does show, however, that he knew she would be coming to join him at the Cape.

In this same passage we should also note Gordon's remark about the giraffe tracks. Clearly he was fascinated by these animals and was longing to encounter them, but for the moment he had to content himself with other creatures. On 4 October there is a vivid account of a rhinoceros hunt. The whole passage attests to Gordon's zeal for precise detail in the way things are done: the positioning of the hunters, the distraction of the hartebeest bull, the agility and bravery of his dog, the measuring and account of the dead animal's eyes, limbs and hide, all testify to the care Gordon took to get the facts right. The whole episode has a descriptive vigour which derives, surely, from the sheer pleasure Gordon himself took in these activities:

Therm: 56–76–68. At dawn a fresh east wind (calmer two

hours later). Fine weather, somewhat cloudy on the horizon. Very fine all day with a light east wind. There is little dew here and seldom.

Departed north over the plain downhill and after half an hour's travel we were out of the kokerbooms[29] and going uphill over difficult reddish-brown and stony sandhills. We made a small turn to get through the rises and thereafter followed our course on a hard road. Ahead of us we saw many rhinoceros tracks. They had been cutting all sorts of capers and running round in circles. At every place where they had dunged they had scratched two furrows, had kicked their dung and uprooted shrubs from the ground. Was nowhere able to find traces of horns in the ground but everywhere the scratching where they had dunged.

After we had been travelling for four hours, it being one o'clock in the afternoon, we saw two rhinoceros standing at about 1000 paces away on the plain between caan and kouw thickets ten to twelve feet high. We loaded our guns and the three of us went towards them, the Hottentot Klaas Barend, Model, (an off-duty soldier, a German) and I. They went off to the right, into the thicket, in order to stalk the animals from down wind and I stayed up in front in case they intended to come forth there. The rhinoceros were standing facing me, their ears flapping up and down. Before we had left the wagon to go into the thicket a hartebeest (bubalis) bull came right up to us, about 80 paces distant. It appeared to fear nothing nor to be aware of us. However, while we were on the plain we did not want to shoot it since we did not wish to disturb the [two] rhinoceros. It would, I believe, have come right up to us had my dog Keiser not seen it and flown at it. Fortunately it took a course away from the rhinoceros, bounding off in the most beautiful way, making beautiful jumps like a springbok, which caused the dogs to aim too short.

The rhinoceros had not been aware of anything and we went to the places mentioned before. Model and the Hottentot crept to within a good hundred paces of them but were then unable to see them well in the thicket. They had still not become aware of me because I saw them calmly lying down with the result that the two hunters were unable to shoot them. I went about fifty paces nearer, whereupon one of the animals stood up; shortly afterwards the Hottentot shot and the animal fell down dead. The shot, as we afterwards found, had gone close to or into the heart. The other received the ball high in the foreleg, in the body, and limped off. My dog Keiser, however, who respects no animal, flew at it on the first shot and attacked the rhinoceros from in front and from behind. It tried to gore the dog but Keiser was too quick for it and, before I could get to it, Model shot it dead.

We found that both were cows with two teats that were much bigger than those of a hippopotamus and with light, pendulous udders very much like a horse's. They were almost the same length and height and were fully grown. The largest was four feet ten inches high in a straight line in front and one and a half inches lower behind. It was eight feet, four inches long, measured in a straight line just as the animal lay there. We placed it in the same position it would have had were it alive and as if we were seeing it from the side. The other differed by one inch from the above measurements. The largest horn was 15 inches long and that of the smallest 8 inches, thus differing from last year's bull by one inch.[30] The thickness also hardly differed and with these the head was 23 inches long. The eye lies just between the tip of the nose and the middle of the ears, below the posterior horn, nine inches above the lower jawbone and only six beneath the posterior horn. Its muzzle is very pliable and loose (probably so that it can be extended and retracted) and the lower part as well; its tongue is not hard but very soft, although it is rough higher up towards the back. It can see forwards without turning its head. Although the eyes are placed as they are and the opening is one inch in diameter, the pupil is clear and protuberant and not sunken. The thick horns on the nose allow room for the line of sight to pass completely unimpeded also since the hindmost part of the eye at the side of the ears is much wider than the foremost part of the eye, this exposes more of the eye. Thus I was wrong in suggesting that the rhinoceros cannot see straight ahead but it was the hot weather that misled me last year. Also because it was the first rhinoceros I had seen I was busy with everything at the same time. An animal shot in the heat will swell up in less than an hour. Because of this its muzzle and fold around the eye were so swollen that one could see no movement in the muzzle and almost no eyes from sideways on, let alone from the front. The drawing is accurate as the animal then was. However since one of these rhinoceros was dying as I came up to it I saw, looking closely at the face, that it could see well in front of it and I saw that the eyes did not look inward but sat straight under the lids. It had a dark blue pupil, a darker iris; the white of the eyes was clear as well. I also saw that although the rhinoceros sometimes stands and looks as it does in the drawing, its more natural position however is with its head held lower down so that the horns form an angle of forty-five degrees to the horizon.

For the rest, both these animals had no folds in their hide, only at the flank; and only a slight fold on the foreleg and on the neck. They also had a much smoother hide and not as furry as last year's bull. Still do not know whether it is common for cows to have no folds. For the rest they are somewhat smaller than the bulls but they have the same stance. Both the horns were loose. Although they have no incisors the teeth do however come together in the front of the mouth in such a way that for a space of two inches there are no teeth.

The journey east continued without noteworthy incident for the ensuing four or five days. On 7 October a tribesman called Toenema, whom Gordon had befriended, estimated that they were 'two days from the great waterfall'. This was optimistic for they were now at Samoeprivier, a good eighty to ninety kilometres west of the Augrabies Falls. In fact it was to take them more than a week to reach this destination.

The next day Gordon wrote of his continuing, happy relations with the Einiquas, also stating how his immediate party was now constituted:

The *Einiquas* with me were delighted that their fellow countrymen would be astonished at me. They asked especially that I should wear my long hair loose when with them. There were now two male Einiquas and three women of that nation with us, as well as a Hottentot and good shot called Claas Barend. In addition there were another four Hottentots, one of whom was Koerikei and that, with Schoemaker, was all our company; the

Bushmen having gone with Pinar along the river. We have missed them this sixth day although our agreement was to meet on the first evening.

On 10 October something out of the ordinary occurred when Gordon received a new addition to his party:

Left at seven o'clock and had to travel S. and S.E. for three and a half hours with many turns around the range before we came to the underground water-hole *Haries*. It had good water but little of it. The whole range is the same; there are underground water-holes in the rivulets which only flow in thunderstorms. Found Pinar here; we had been looking for each other. Saw many giraffe and rhinoceros tracks and yesterday a herd of zebra, about 30, but could not get within range. They had shot four rhinoceros, two hippopotamus, killed an elephant and severely wounded another. They found a Bushman kraal the other side of Samoep. A woman gave him two young Hottentots about eight years old. One ran away again, the other stayed with me; his name was Cabas or Red.

No further details are given except this additional note made a day later:

Returned to the wagon in the afternoon. Was most astonished at young Cabas who is only three feet, four inches high. (Koerikei is four feet high). He carried the copper measuring stick of the barometer and he was always as close to me as a dog although I walked very fast and it was very hot. He paid close attention to everything and did everything to win my favour.

It was, of course, common practice for the colonists to take captured 'Bushmen' children by force into their service, but here there is no question of violence: the child Cabas was a gift. A probable reason for this handing over was that the 'Bushmen' were short of food and believed that the boy would be better off under the protection of these efficient hunters and powerful men from the west.

From the start of this stage of the journey Gordon had been recording the sighting of giraffe tracks, and it is clear that it was a prime ambition of his to bag one of these animals as the giraffe was a great rarity in the annals of eighteenth-century zoology.[31]

The first recorded sighting of giraffes had occurred in 1663 when two 'camels' (short for 'camelopards') had been seen by European travellers some 190 kilometres south of the Orange River. After that date, however, no further sightings south of the river were reported until the events described in Gordon's journal entry of 12 October 1779, quoted below.

As mentioned earlier, in 1760 Jacobus Coetsé Jansz shot two females in what is now southern Namibia and brought the skin of another young animal back to Cape Town. Then in 1762, during the expedition under Hop – also mentioned before – a female and bull giraffe were shot in the vicinity of Warmbad. The skin of the female's calf, which had died, was subsequently sent to Professor Allamand at the University of Leiden. It was the first example of this species to reach Europe in the eighteenth century and attracted considerable attention. Professor Allamand produced a short description of the animal and, together with a drawing of the skin, this was published in Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle*.

It can be safely assumed that Gordon knew of this account and, given his close ties with the professor, we can also assume that they had discussed this rare and wonderful creature – perhaps examined the skin too – before Gordon's second departure for the Cape.

William Paterson had examined a giraffe shot by Sebastiaan van Reenen in 1778 north of the Orange. This trophy would also have been discussed by Gordon when he and Paterson were together in the earlier stages of this journey. Finally, Gordon twice had occasion to mention giraffe skins in this journal: once when he met the deserter Wikar, who 'had the skin of a female giraffe with him', and secondly, when he returned to Ellenboogfontein from the mouth of the river, tersely remarking 'I had been given the skin of a young bull giraffe at the drift'. On this latter occasion he described the 'horns' and the head of the hide, adding that he had put it in water to soften it.

From all these facts we can see that the giraffe was of absorbing interest not only to the anatomists and zoologists of Europe but also to Gordon and his fellow explorers. With this in mind we come to the moment when Gordon meets his own first giraffe:

About sunset (N.B. after travelling for six hours) I saw the first giraffe but far off and I used my pocket spyglass. He came towards us in this course to the river, at times standing still and waving his neck from one side to the other like the mast of a ship that heels over strongly at sea. One of my Hottentots had already seen it and, stalking it, wounded it slightly but it got away. Pinar, who had been hunting two rhinoceros, came from behind, right into its path. Following the animal and setting my dogs upon same, I then heard barking and two shots. Although dusk was already drawing in, I left my horse and went on foot to the barking and came upon Pinar who was making signals by shooting and with fires, being an hour from the wagon. There I found this handsome and extraordinary animal, one of the most beautiful formed by nature, dead. Lighted by burning brands I could not inspect it enough for my satisfaction. Young Kabas and Koerikei had followed and stayed by me up hill and down dale; as full as it was of thorn bushes. I told two Hottentots to fetch the wagon although the other Hottentots said it would be dangerous in the dark, on account of rhinoceros of which there are many around here. It arrived at midnight. My upcountry Hottentots were the most astonished at this animal. In the evening a cold, brisk southerly wind came up and since I had become hot from walking, and being thinly clad, I suffered greatly from the cold until the wagon came. Had no water but for that in my water barrel.

Gordon's language is fired with excitement as he describes this exotic creature. His comments, if not poetic, are certainly unexpected in their metaphoric intensity, going far beyond the terse sobriety of his usual style. For once, it seems, he allows his delighted curiosity and enthusiasm

to burst out on to the page. It is oddly moving, too, when he confesses 'I could not inspect it enough for my satisfaction'.

The whole of the next day, 13 October 1779, was spent 'measuring and examining this beautiful animal' which was a 'fully-grown bull giraffe'. Gordon makes no idle claim: there are no fewer than seventy-eight different external measurements of the animal – all in Rhineland feet. In addition there are many further details given of the head, hide, sexual organs, neck, hooves and tail, etc. From time to time he breaks off to describe some facet of the anatomy or to recount some curious anecdote, such as that of 'the wife of a certain Visagie' who rides unharmed among the creatures, 'being dressed in striped clothing'!

Gordon is giraffe-mad – obsessed with the animal. The entry for the day takes up almost four folio- or foolscap-size pages of the journal, while his Atlas contains no fewer than nine drawings of giraffes, and only one of these is not in Gordon's or Schoemaker's hand.

The final result of all this measuring and description was to be an article in one of the supplements to Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle* contributed by Professor Allamand and published in 1781. In the article the professor freely and warmly acknowledges his debt to Gordon:

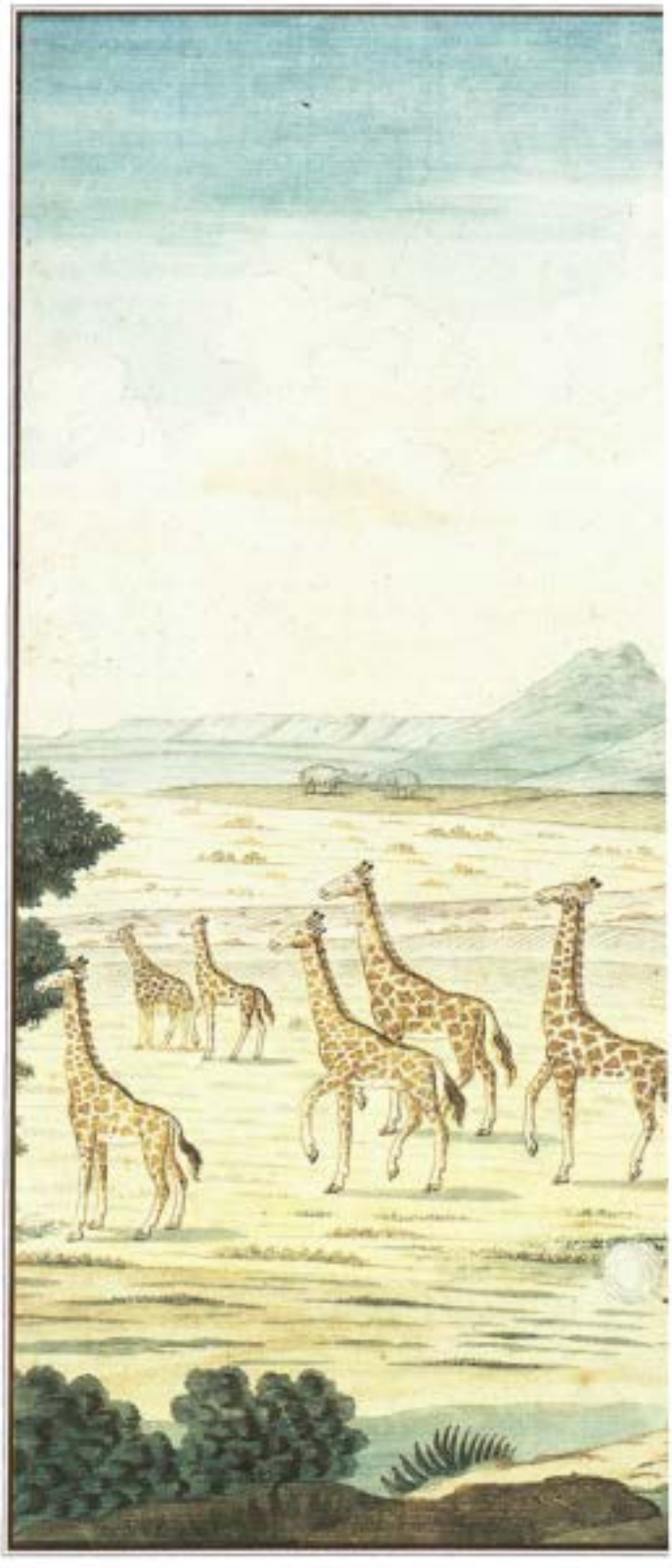
> He has seen several of them [i.e. giraffes] and has even killed some. He has examined them with all the attention of a judicious naturalist: he has sent me an accurate drawing of them which I have had engraved . . . and his letters to me have given me a fairly extensive description, thus clarifying at last what one should think of the animals . . . .[32]

That 'fairly extensive description' is undoubtedly taken from this journal, but the measurements and observations on the anatomy of the animal are of little interest to the general reader and therefore are not quoted here. The following short passage, however, is a little more digestible than the pages of figures in Rhineland feet and inches that precede it and gives some idea of Gordon's diligence as a zoologist:

> The shoulder of this animal is placed as though the breast formed part of the neck. It moves the neck backwards and forwards, slowly as it walks like an ostrich, and this must be, as it were, to keep its balance, and this causes it to appear low behind. Otherwise the chest and crupper are level. The crupper forms a rather narrow and pointed peak on the back and the two breasts are curved in front as well. When this animal stands the shortness of its body and the neck and shoulders sticking right up erect make it seem very much like an ostrich. Indeed some Bushmen call it the fourlegged ostrich.

As stated, most of the measurements given by Allamand in the *Supplément* agree with those shown in this journal entry. But the hide and skeleton received by Allamand and finally mounted in the attic of the Prince of Orange's 'Cabinet' came from a different giraffe, shot by one of Gordon's party near Warmbad in southern Namibia on 10 December of this same year, an incident that will be examined later. It is not clear why or how this confusion of giraffes arose, but it is strange that two such dedicated men of science should have allowed the mistake to creep in and then not have attempted to correct it.

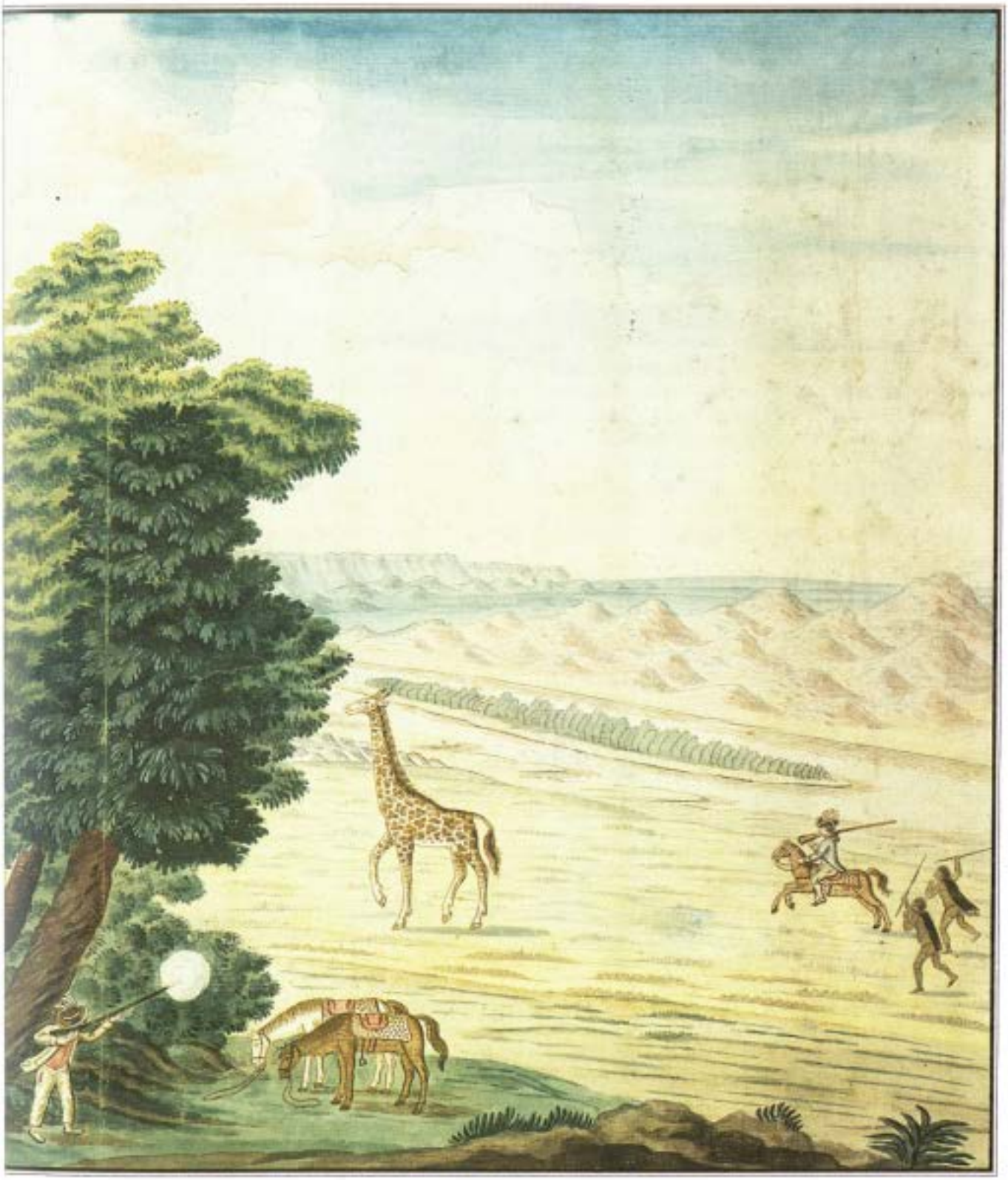
Another mistake that remained uncorrected was the statement by Allamand that Gordon had himself killed giraffes. According to Gordon's own journal this is not the case. The first giraffe was shot by Pienaar, as we have seen,



and the second was hit and wounded by Afrikaander, one of the 'Hottentots' who were with Gordon. Its throat was cut as it lay wounded on the ground. So in neither case could the dead animal be claimed as Gordon's own trophy.

There are one or two further points in the article that deserve attention for the light they throw on the attitudes and feelings of the men involved. Allamand states: 'The illustration of a skeleton which I append here, Plate XX, was sent to me by Mr Gordon. It had been drawn by a man who had little knowledge of anatomy, as one can easily perceive ....' And the Professor continues: '[The skeleton] is a monument to the zeal with which Mr Gordon applies himself to all that concerns Natural History. In order to do

43. *A giraffe hunt – one of the finest 'narrative' paintings in the Gordon Atlas.*



this he had no other help but that of several Hottentots who had attached themselves to him, as well as a soldier who served him as a draughtsman. Yes, those were the people who helped him to anatomize this great quadruped in the middle of the African deserts.'[33]

From these passages it can be seen how valued Gordon's contribution was and how deeply admired his exploits in pursuit of natural history were. Allamand was a most distinguished figure in the world of zoology at the time and his words would not have been taken lightly. But of interest too are the remarks that apply to Schoemaker, the soldier-artist, who had such a poor knowledge of anatomy. It appears that it occurred to neither the Professor nor to Gordon to give him any praise whatsoever for sharing in the trials and hardships of the journey.

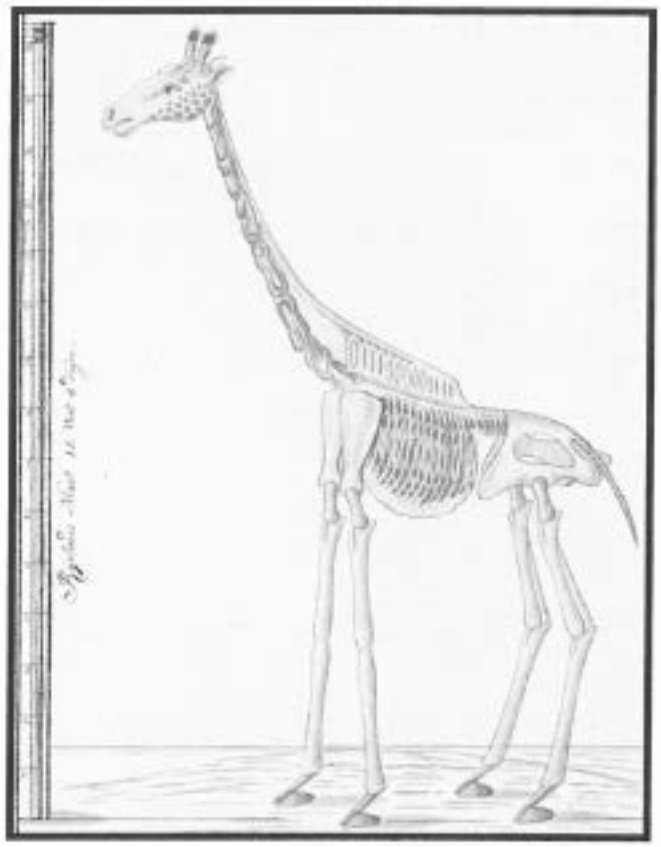
This raises an issue that must be faced squarely, not just about Gordon, but generally about the facts of class distinction in the eighteenth century. The gap between an officer such as Gordon and a private soldier such as Schoemaker was indeed wide and would remain so even under the shared hardships of a journey like this. It was easier, paradoxically, for Gordon to become friends with a Xhosa or 'Bushman' than with one of his own people of a lower social station. The European and 'Bushman'/Xhosa cultures were so remote from each other that there could be no meaningful class distinctions between them.

It is thus quite comprehensible that Professor Allamand would ascribe this whole enterprise to the leader's glory alone. Not unnaturally, Gordon also believed that the giraffes were 'his'. He had initiated the journey, he had the necessary knowledge to observe and anatomize the animals and, finally, he was leading the expedition.

Before returning to the journey, there is a further comment, made by Gordon concerning giraffes, which deserves notice here. It is written on a loose piece of paper, in his handwriting, and slipped between the pages of this journal. The note concerns the giraffe that Le Vaillant claimed to have shot north of the Orange on his *Second Voyage* [English Title: *New Travels*] *of 1783-1784*.[34]

> Barend Vrije shot Vaillant's giraffe.[35] He crossed the Great River only for a short while. Barend Vrije's dogs held the giraffe at bay towards noon and Vaillant took Barend Vry's horse for a giraffe and stalked it and nearly shot it dead, taking it for a giraffe. And Vailliand has never seen a live giraffe and this giraffe was smaller than mine, so Pinar told me who saw both of them. Klaas Bastert also confirms that this is so and says that Vailliant himself never saw it being killed, much less measured it and that he only could have seen it from afar while it was alive. However, he says he cannot be absolutely sure that when Barend Vry hunted the giraffe on horseback Valliant stayed behind and went back because of the heat. He said that it was an old animal and as Klaas expressed it 'a miserable cow'. Klaas and three other Hottentots slaughtered it in the presence of Barend Vry and Swanepoel and then brought it across the river to Valliant the next day, and Klaas said that it was not nearly as large as mine which he also helped to slaughter. In addition mine was a bull giraffe which had black patches.

44. *The giraffe skeleton sent to Willem V.*



This is, of course, unintentionally humorous. Gordon was clearly more than indignant when he wrote it. The repetition of how Le Vaillant took Barend Vry's horse for a giraffe, and the fact that this giraffe was smaller than his (on the somewhat dubious testimony of Pienaar and Klaas Bastert) are comic enough, but when we add to this that Gordon manages to spell Le Vaillant's name differently three times in this short passage, the unwitting humour is richly enhanced.

But what occasioned this outburst about 'a miserable cow'? It is just possible that Gordon could have seen a copy of Le Vaillant's *Second Voyage* which appeared between September 1794 and August 1795. As noted, it was in this account that Le Vaillant claimed to have shot a giraffe.[36] Could it have been this claim that caused Gordon's fury? If so, he must have written the note in the last year of his life. However, it is far more likely that Gordon read about Le Vaillant's giraffe in that traveller's first French publication, *Voyage de Monsieur Le Vaillant dans l'intérieur de l'Afrique*, which appeared in 1790. At the end of the book Le Vaillant appended a commentary or 'supplément', as he called it.[37] In it he states, somewhat coyly and mysteriously, that this 'is a kind of anticipation that may appear irregular, but to which I have in some measure been constrained by solicitations which I ought to consider as commands'.

While discussing 'the natural history of the animals', he remarks: 'Many and various accounts have been published of the giraffe; but, notwithstanding all the elegant

and scientific dissertations written on this subject, no just or precise idea hath been hitherto formed of its configuration, much less of its manners, its tastes, its character, and its organization.' This would have enraged Gordon, for in the dismissal of former 'dissertations' his own 'elegant and scientific' contribution to Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle* would have been included. Indeed, Le Vaillant remarks a little further on that 'the figures of this animal given in Buffon and Vosmar, are in general defective'.[38]

Perhaps, however, it was the Frenchman's claim, casually stated, that he personally had killed 'a number of these animals' that finally drove Gordon to write his note. His choler is manifest: Le Vaillant had lied not only about the size of his giraffe but also about who had killed the animal or animals. The interesting point here is: had Gordon forgotten who had shot 'his' giraffes?

Before breaking camp on 14 October 1779, a few final tasks were carried out on the remains of the giraffe. In recording these, Gordon also gives us a glimpse of how his activities struck the local tribespeople. It is easy to forget that they were as fascinated by Gordon's customs and rites as he was by theirs:

Cut up the whole skeleton of the giraffe. Succeeded in making an accurate drawing. On account of wild animals buried the bones in the ground until our return. Nothing could equal the surprise of the Bushmen and Einiquas on seeing the drawing. They said that we were extraordinary people and that they now saw that I could *coeroeo* everything (this was the word for imitating and writing.) They said they now saw why it was I always walk so far, backwards and forwards, looking, because at first they could make no sense of this.

When they made camp the same day Schoemaker was again in trouble: 'Without, it seems, taking account of the dry state of the grass nor of the direction of the wind, he made a fire upwind to grill meat.' Quite calmly Gordon records that they had difficulty in putting out the fire which could have destroyed 'the entire wagon'. This surely would have been a disaster for the expedition, but having recorded the event, Gordon does not speculate on this, nor does he demonstrate any irritation with Schoemaker. He closes the day's entry with a description of the countryside they are passing through.

The next day, Friday 15 October, is full of incident and interest. Once more giraffes were encountered which gave Gordon the chance to observe and record their ways of moving. This occurred 'at the underground water hole Koekabassi' which is shown just downriver from the Augrabies on Gordon's map. Indeed, he wrote that they were 'half an hour from the waterfall . . . the Einiquas call Aukoerebies or Holleplaats [sunken place]'. There is a sense of complete absorption in his description of the giraffes and so great was his fascination – and passion for accuracy – that he even felt it necessary to make a small outline drawing to illustrate a detail.

Saw at last what I had desired for so long: six giraffes close by so that we were able to examine them thoroughly. One of them (had blacker patches being a bull) was, at an estimate, half a foot higher than the others but probably not higher than about fifteen or sixteen feet at the most. They stood and grazed off the low trees. Then, because they had become aware of us, they paced ahead slowly, one after the other, like flamingoes.

I now saw that although, while standing, they sometimes hold their necks completely straight in a line with their feet, when they walk their posture is such that their necks form an angle of thirty degrees in a straight line from the zenith to the horizon. This means that the extension of the neck, shoulder and rear part of the body appears to make a slanting line, thus:  The head and mouth bend down. While walking their neck moves forward and down but not being able to trot (so it is said and I did not see them doing this) they fell into a hand-gallop when chased by my dogs. Every time the front part of the body came down the neck also went backwards and forwards; most curious to see. Nevertheless this animal runs as fast as an eland, but both can be overtaken by the average horse.

It is said that they can give a fearful kick and that they fight each other thus. The one we shot still bore scars from this. One dog could not keep it at bay, not daring to approach its feet, and unable to get at its body. We were most anxious to shoot one but the dogs were on it too quickly. Also, wanting to spare my horse Snel, I left it behind. (It could have chased and circled them). Furthermore, I planned to shoot one closer to the place where I left my boat so that I would be able to take the skin back with me. There is nothing ungainly about the legs, which are well-proportioned. It can eat from the ground without bending the knees but it mostly grazes off the leaves and branches of trees where its horns play a part. Without the dogs they would have remained standing, within shot, looking inquisitively at the wagon because they were not used to seeing anything like it.

The comparison of the pacing giraffes to flamingoes is both novel and illuminating. It was made, no doubt, in a spirit of scientific accuracy, of wanting to get that movement exactly right, yet the comparison gives the passage a lyrical quality which is unusual in Gordon's writings. But giraffes had this effect on him, as we have seen. Nor was his excitement confined to his journal.

In the Gordon Atlas there is a drawing which surely reflects this episode, although it appears to have been elaborated on slightly in order to make it a more 'typical' scene: eight and not six giraffes are pictured, and two hunters are seen shooting at the herd while a third follows on horseback, accompanied by two dark human figures on foot. The drawing is full of naive vigour in the depiction of the people but, significantly, the giraffes themselves are most lifelike, as though drawn by someone who truly understood their anatomy (see pages 102-3[39]).

Beneath the drawing is an inscription by Gordon which conveys so much about the man and his capacity for delight in the animals he encountered – latent and restrained though that passion may be – that it merits quoting here:

View of the country at 28 degrees, 32 minutes, latitude and 3 degrees east longitude of the Cape of Good Hope; below the

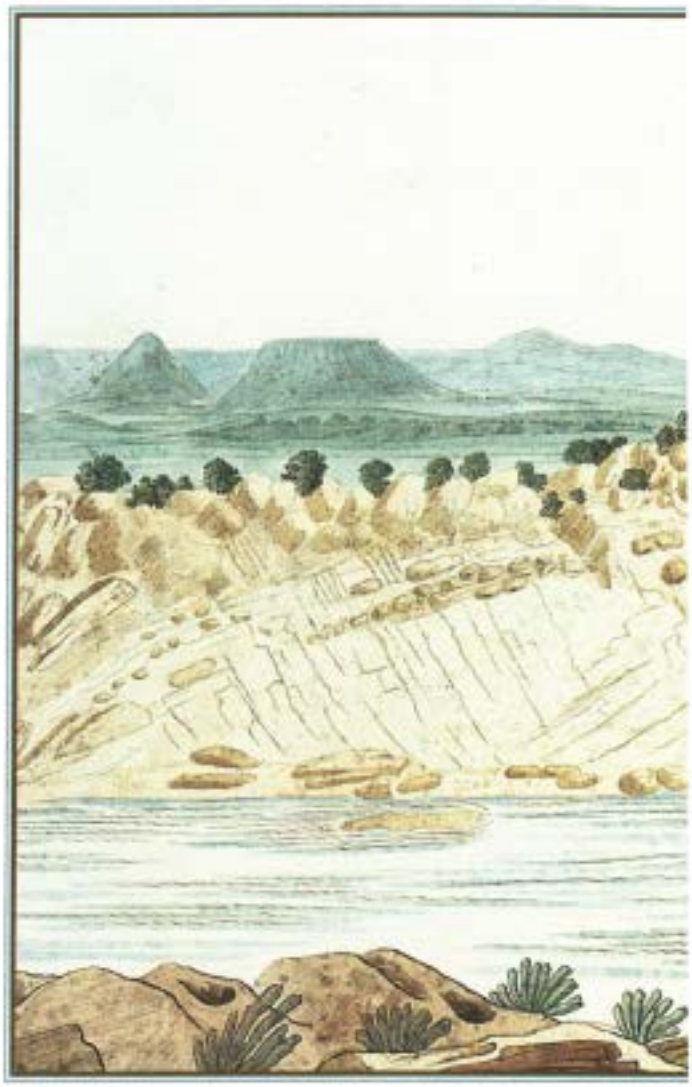
Great Waterfall Aukoerebis in the Orange or Garieb River in the country of the Einiquas. Here I saw the most beautiful and singular sight in all my journeys, seeing, all at one glance through a semi-circle: twelve giraffes, about fifty elephants, 5 rhinoceros, a flock of 20 ostriches, a herd of 13 kudu, and one great herd of zebra. Saw hippopotamus in the river below, swimming and playing together.

There is more excitement to follow. On the same day Gordon records his first sight of the Augrabies Falls. Gordon apparently drew, or had a view drawn of the falls as seen from the south bank of the river[40] ('at a point about 1½ miles in a direct line downstream from the main falls', according to Professor Forbes).

The description of the falls is carefully and accurately made in Gordon's usual manner, but what the somewhat exotic 'legend of the enchantress' refers to has not been recorded for posterity:

Went to the river to look at the waterfall which I could neither hear nor see although when the river is full the spray can be seen a day's travel away and can be heard from even further off. Because the countryside is flat around here found that the river forms deep clefts, entirely of rock, which are about ten to twenty feet wide below but a good fifty feet above. In some places they are 200-300 feet deep. As far as I know at present, the river divides here and forms three long rectangular, stony islands but with some shrubs on them. This lasts about a mile before the next confluence of the river.

Was fortunate that the river was now at low water, otherwise I could not have reached the islands and thus the deepest crevice (although I missed the fine view of the spray and the rainbow). From this arises the legend of the enchantress who sits in the middle and stirs it all up.



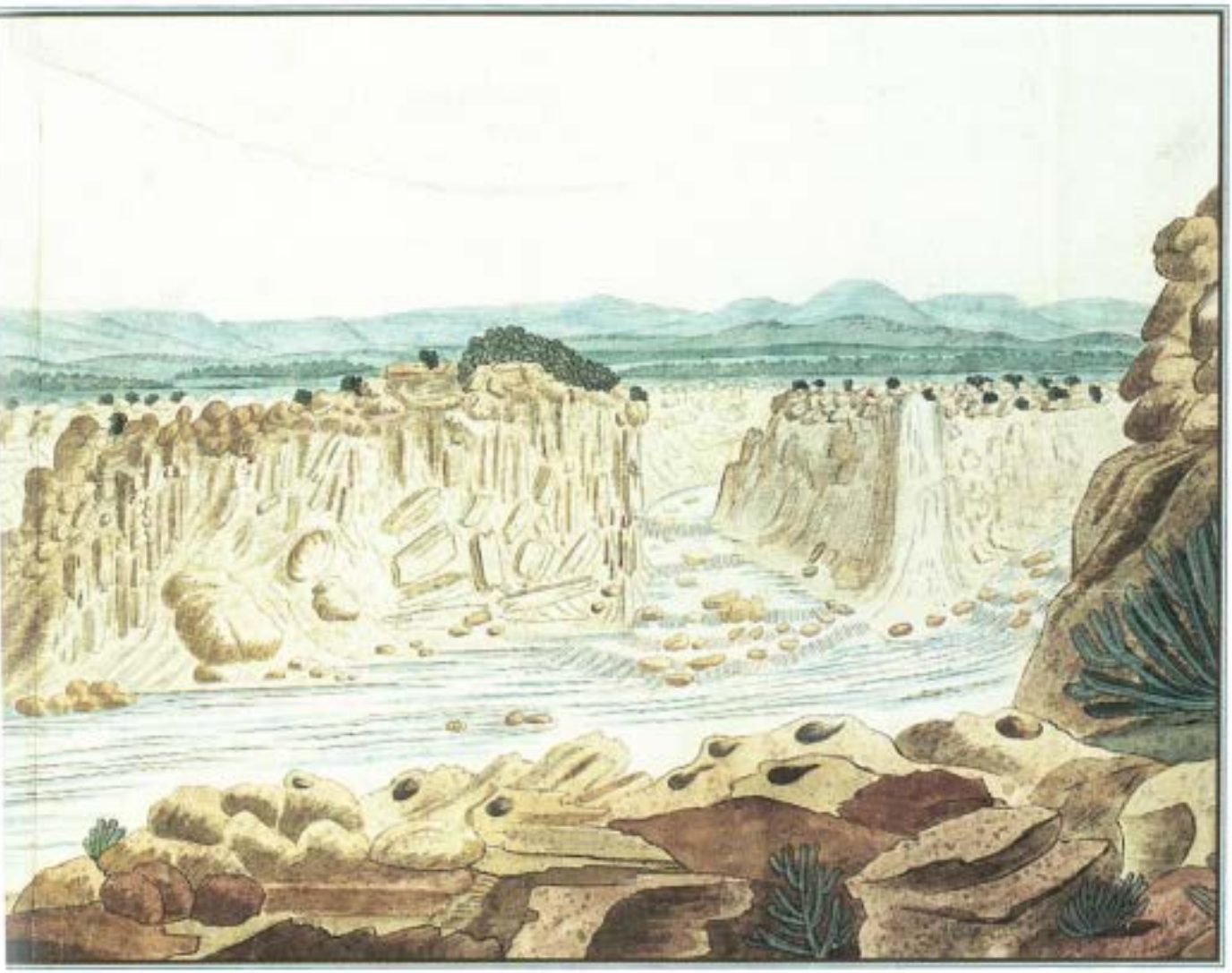
The concluding entry for this day, 15 October 1779, is particularly revealing. It is true Gordon and absolutely reflects his unruffled, calmly civilized temperament. The last sentence in particular is really only a confirmation of the feeling that underlies the whole of this journal, demonstrating his rejection of fantasy and his confidence in reason:

Have been surprised by the Bushmen; though all our things lie unguarded before them they will never touch anything with the intention of removing it. Although we are so vulnerable in this distant, savage country, full of wild animals, we are quite at ease in our minds, as in the middle of Cape Town, even though on our guard. When one compares this with the descriptions of people who even in the surroundings of Cape Town, find all kinds of danger, one can see how little danger there really is because it is only in the minds of men.

Exploration of the river continued and more human encounters took place. It all proceeded happily, as Gordon records in genial detail:

Fine weather. Normal heat. Cool easterly breeze.

Went to the river to take latitude. Bushmen and some of my people carried the barometer and the astrolabe. Between the second and third streams, which are further apart from each other, there are many trees and bushes . . . . Come midday obtained the latitude: 28 deg. 31 min. Error: 22½ deg. N.W. to here. We had grilled rhinoceros tongue to eat and went on a good half hour northwards across stony ridges and uneven places with the same trees. Here I again saw a crevice through which the water ran as in a powerful watermill. Coming from a more easterly direction saw that this stream is formed from four others. Standing here in order to look round, I saw some Bushmen running away. I waved and called to them but they continued on their way until Toenema saw them and knowing that they were his friends he called one of them by name and said that he should not be frightened but should come to us across the river.[41] This the others then did, showing however that they were most timid, and astonished by me. Gave them some tobacco and Toenema, greatly praising my kindness towards them said that he was like a child to me and told them everything that I could do. This the others repeated almost word for word, or the latter half of the sentence only, which is their way. This has an extraordinary effect if there are many of them together; everything that one says is mimicked by way of approval. The Bushman stayed close to my side repeating often to the others: 'This is my *Hoenequai* or Master or Lord.' Then



45. *Gordon's view of the Augrabies Falls from a point 2.5 km downstream of the main falls.*

another two of them came up. These two or three Kraals are the *Anoe eis* (or bright kraal) and they stay here by the river.[42] Three of the four, since they had been joined by yet another, lacked, like Toenema, one ball, but not one old man. Thus most of them are half-castrated. . . . Returned to the wagon with the Bushmen. Found some of the others busy filling my water-barrel. These Bushmen catch fish and live by hunting, digging pits on the side of the river in order to catch hippopotamus and rhinoceros. These pits are just like the one I and my horse fell into on a previous journey. On this kind of island saw many baboons and not many birds, but saw some ducks and divers. These Anoe Eijs are Einiquas who, because of a quarrel with the Namneyqua Kraal have lost all their stock but they are once more good friends. The Namneyqua live a day further on. The Anoe Eijs stay mostly on the other side of the river or on these unusual types of island when it is low water. But when it is the season of thunder and rain and the river is full they stay on this side. The Hottentots who half cut themselves call this ceremony *Tabie*. So far as we know there are more Bushmen living north of here: they told me these were called *Noe Eis* and *Ei Eis*.[43]

The party renewed its journey with the wagon on 18 October 1779, travelling E.S.E.. After four and a half hours they arrived at an island 'one and a half hours wide'. This could only be present-day Perde Eiland. Gordon's gift for making friends with the tribespeople, who had never seen a white person before, is yet again convincingly demonstrated here. He encounters a small band of 'Hottentots' who have, he writes, 'ten mat-huts among the trees and I estimate there are five to six people in each hut'. This day and the next day were spent among them. His observations are full of interest and bear quoting at some length:

Two came to me and I went with them across the stream which was about 20 feet wide and less than a foot deep and reached their island, which they abandon when the river covers most of it at high water. Found this a most beautiful place. The trees and the foliage below which we walked and of which there is so little in this land made it delightful. The change from the parched, ugly, stony and poor countryside made the difference all the greater.

I was received in the most friendly manner by a cousin of one of the chiefs which they call *Ghawoep*. His name was *Tamega* and he was much whiter than the others. Thundery weather coming up I took shelter in his hut. There, however, the rain

46. *A 'Hottentot' chief's grave.*

poured in so heavily that I had to cloak myself with their large oval bedding-skin of cattle-hide. The opening or door was so narrow and low that one could scarcely creep in or out of it. The storm over, I went to take the altitude of the river with the barometer, getting 2 000 feet. Tamega, the son of Aboegoeb, who showed me the way through the forest, could make no sense of my work although I explained it to him. Like all wild people the quicksilver astonished him the most; how it is wet and yet dry.[44]

Found Pinar here. Yesterday he and his people shot five elephants (these forests are full of them). They shot three cows, a young calf and a young bull from a herd of 20. We heard them shooting close to us and saw the brightly burning fire that they had lit in order to keep the live elephants at bay and to guard the carcasses. This is an old custom; Tamega told me too that they often have to burn wood to keep the elephants away from their huts. The elephants chase them as well when they encounter them. These Hottentots possess cattle; though not very many, also sheep and goats and are great hunters. (The sheep are smooth-haired like goats and have long thin tails. N.B. They milk their sheep). Met some of them in the forest; their pack-oxen and cows were laden with elephant meat and they were most satisfied.

Returned to my tent which was pitched a little distance from the stream, accompanied still by thunder, hail and rain. Tamega was astonished at my house. Gave him some meat but he wanted no biscuit or the bread which we had baked with some flour. When the heavy thunderstorm was over, the two kinds of chief each brought me a wooden cylinder of milk and I gave them some tobacco. They said that they had continual arguments and war with the *Kau Heys Kaw Eis* (Cutting Kraal) and the Ogoqua or Agokwa (Narrow Cheeks.)[45] These are actually the Einiqua.) They said that they were always stealing each others' cattle and killing each other. A nephew of Aboegoeb walked with a limp from a poisoned-arrow in the knee which he had got two years previously. They mostly complained of the Ogoqua but they owed each other nothing. I told them that our great Chief wanted them all to live in peace and that I would also discuss this with the Ogoqua, upon which they were delighted. Nothing astonished them more than my long hair which I was wearing loose at the request of Toenema, my thick beard as well. No king in Europe could have received more respect than that which they gave me in their own manner.

These woods are full of birds: Guinea fowl or Camdebo chickens as well as pheasant, (francolin). Saw a most beautiful woodpecker, but only one, which, to their amazement, I shot.[46] But further saw nothing of the usual birds of the river. I traded a sheep-skin for two of jackal and *Coerak Coelak*, as well as some smaller skins of animals I had not seen but which only exist here. It is reported that there are again four elephants dead though this is not certain because of the thundery weather. (If an elephant falls down and there are others with it they push and trample it hard in order to get it to stand again.) We are now 2 degrees, 9 minutes east from the latitude of the Cape and 4 degrees, 4 minutes from the mouth of the river which is now to the west of us.

19th October 1779.

Fine weather. Light easterly breeze. The air much cooler but sultry once more in the afternoon.

Again went to the kraal and the river which are on the same path. Would have fallen into a pit, dug out for hippopotamus, had I not been forewarned by the *Ghawoep* and his son Goroe who were walking ahead. They were very wary going through the forest on account of the elephants which, they told me, were liable to chase and trample them to death, although they never hunt them. As they showed me from their tracks, the elephants often come to their kraal, which they called by the name of *Comm*. In addition a short while before an elephant had trampled one of their young girls to death while she was walking in the forest looking for food.

For some time we wandered through the forest and along the river where I found some beautiful blue stones as transparent as sapphire, also some orange, speckled, green ones. Saw fresh tracks of elephant which according to the Hottentots, had passed 50 paces away yesterday. Six elephants had gone that way, one of which was wounded and they advised me not to use this path to venture through the forest. It is certain that one cannot see far in this thickly wooded place and that the animals can be upon one before one knows it. The Hottentots say that in a bad thunderstorm an elephant will stand still in the same place from fear. Till now these people have not found any of the elephants that have been shot.

Arriving at the kraal I saw a Hottentot who lacked an eye. I asked him how he had lost it and he told me, in the presence of the kraal, that a star had fallen out of the sky on to his head and in this way had wounded him badly. Enquiring further I found that superstition was mixed up in it and that he had probably had a kind of stroke. Asking how the star had fallen from the sky he and an old woman said that it looked like a porcupine, and that three girls had caught the thing. He said that although he was a very rich man and had already slaughtered much stock (this being 'other-making') he had not been able to become strong and healthy again. Thus all their customs end up in eating, as indeed with most peoples, who also add drinking. When a rich Hottentot dies many cattle and sheep are slaughtered and eaten at his grave. The bones and joints are left there as a memorial. I presented the two Ghawoeps or headmen with some beads and two little mirrors (one each) for their favourite wives

and we were good friends. They warned me to be on our guard with the other Hottentots saying that they were treacherous.

Today again saw some hippopotamus in the river which here runs S.E. and N.W. Saw some blue ixias as well; and otherwise up to here there have been few flowers, and also much honey.

It can be noted from this passage how Gordon in no way patronizes the tribespeople. He does not sneer condescendingly at their astonishment but obviously delights in their naive surprise at the quicksilver, 'wet and yet dry'. Clearly, he is only too happy to oblige his friend Toenema by wearing his long hair loose. Furthermore, his sincerity and appreciation shine through when he remarks on the respect he receives from these people 'in their own manner'. Even the account of the star like a porcupine, wounding the 'rich' man's eye, is related without mockery. It is, after all, a good story but balanced by Gordon's explanation, so characteristically rational, that it was 'probably . . . a kind of stroke'.

As the narrative flows, it is easy to ignore or forget the vital part that Pienaar and his followers played in the expedition, since Gordon himself does not often refer to their activities. They were, of course, constantly hunting for game, thus providing the main source of food for the party. By doing so, they freed Gordon to carry on his exploring and observing and recording. Without Pienaar and his half-caste marksmen, Gordon would not have been able to take and record so many measurements or to supervise and make such a wide variety of drawings, to name just some of his many activities. On this particular day Pienaar and his men provided a substantial amount of elephant meat, so much that they were able to give the tribesmen a feast as well. Their 'pack-oxen and cows were laden,' Gordon records, '. . . and they were most satisfied'. Such gifts no doubt helped greatly to strengthen the good relationship that had sprung up between these diverse strangers in the wilderness.

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They travelled on with the wagon the next day, 20 October, and made their camp on the dry river bed of the Camagaqua or Hartebeest River, which still bears that name today. A hippopotamus was shot and the tribesmen appear to have appreciated this treat as much as they did the elephant meat. It is a savage scene which Gordon records as they slaughter one of these animals 'wildly prattling and screaming as they cut the flesh off with their assegais'. Later he entertained them by lighting 'their pipes of tobacco with a burning glass' and by playing 'upon the cithern for them'.[47] This is the first time that we learn that he had such an instrument with him or that he had any musical gifts. Though perhaps his detailed descriptions of indigenous music, mentioned earlier, should have alerted us that Gordon had a musical bent. What, one wonders, did he play for them, here on the remote reaches of the Orange? Xhosa songs, marching tunes, or Celtic melodies are all possibilities, as we know from the few accounts we have of Gordon's musical diversions. At all accounts it is an entertaining tableau to reflect upon, before following this exceptional man across to the northern bank of the Orange, on this last stage of his eastward exploration of the river.

It was at this point that Gordon decided to continue his journey without the wagon and pursue his course on the other bank, 'taking only as much as four pack-oxen could carry'. He decided to abandon his barometer but to take his astrolabe. This gives us an interesting insight into his priorities: it was more important to know his latitude than to register the heights of places on the journey. It is also interesting that he changed his journal notebook from the large folio size he had been using up to now for a smaller, quarto size book. Obviously this was easier to carry and to handle for a man going, for the most part, on foot: for, although we know from some remarks later in the journal that the party did cross the river with horses, it is evident that Gordon foresaw, correctly, that the terrain would be rough and unsuitable for extended riding.

At no time in the narrative does Gordon say what his destination was on this northern bank of the river. It can readily be supposed that, at most, he hoped to get to that part of the Orange near Bethulie that he had struck in December 1777, thus completing the circuit alluded to earlier. However, one can at least opine that he wanted to confirm that it was indeed the same river and, from the casual remarks in the journal, it is clear that, in Gordon's mind, this minimum aspiration was met. In fact he and his party were to travel approximately 150 kilometres upstream to the vicinity of present-day Koegasbrug which is about forty kilometres downstream from the town of Prieska.

On 22 October – the day before crossing to the northern bank – Gordon wrote in the journal that his party now consisted of 'three Europeans and nine Hottentot marksmen, as well as my two young servants and some Bushmen'. The 'Europeans' could only be Gordon, Pieter Pienaar and Schoemaker. The two young servants must have been Koerikei and the newly enlisted Cabas. Disappointingly, Gordon does not tell us who the marksmen were. From the evidence in the journal, Piet and Klaas Bastert, Klaas Barend and 'Afrikaander' were probably among those nine men mentioned.

EPILOGUE

GORDON'S DESCENDANTS

Gordon was survived by his wife and four sons. On 8 March 1797 Mrs Gordon sold their house, Schoonder Sigt, and shortly afterwards left the country, accompanied by her children. The family first travelled to England where Mrs Gordon endeavoured to sell her husband's papers, as has been related in the opening pages of this study. Towards the end of 1797 she moved to Lausanne, and from information obtained in the Cantonal Archives of that town, we know that she continued to live there, or in the vicinity, until her death. It is also recorded that she lent money to various individuals from time to time. She died in 1831, at the age of eighty-two.[1]

As noted earlier, Robert, the eldest son, joined the Cape garrison force as a cadet, eventually becoming an ensign. He was in his sixteenth year when he left the Cape in 1797. Once in Europe, it seems, he joined the French army, in whose service he attained the rank of colonel. Before the Battle of Waterloo he was appointed chief of staff to a French army division; however, for some unknown reason, he decided to turn traitor, revealing the numbers and positions of the French to the enemy. His treachery was discovered and he was shot in cold blood by the soldiers of the Governor of Condé on 7 July 1815.

It appears that Gordon's second son, Pieter, also joined the French army, rising to the rank of lieutenant. He is thought to have died in the Serbo-Turkish War.

Alexander, the third son, joined the French navy and was a nineteen-year-old sailor at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. He married a Dutch wife in Amsterdam in 1820, but after this nothing further is known of his life.

James Charles Gerhard, the youngest son, born in 1791, joined the Swiss Guards in France and was later married in Switzerland. It was said that he was struck by one disaster after another and finally went mad, dying some time between 1839 and 1861.

Gordon's only known grandchildren sprang from this same James Gordon. Two of these lived and died in Switzerland, but the second child, a son, settled in New York and was still alive in 1862. He, in turn, had four children, all born in New York. There is also a record of two other great-grandchildren being born in Switzerland, but apart from this, nothing more about Gordon's descendants has been brought to light.

86. *A decorative motif from Gordon's 'great map'*

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