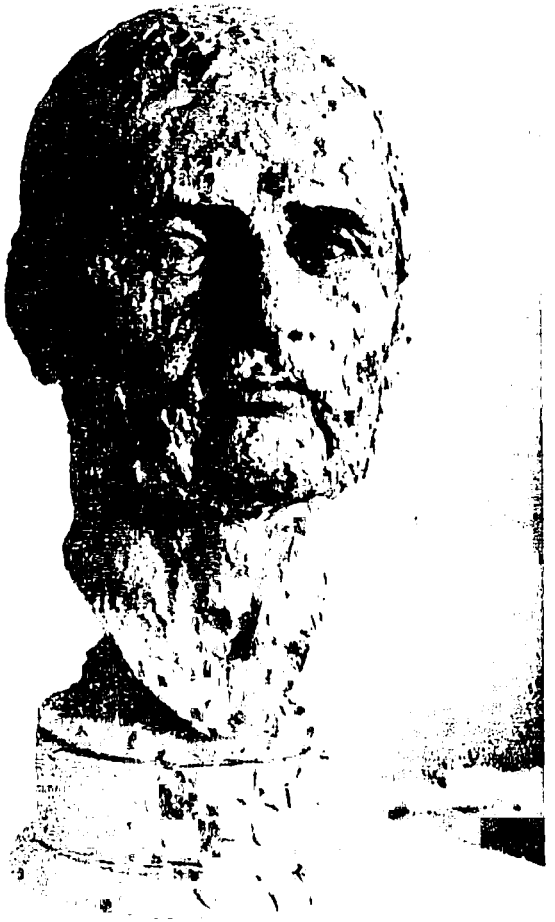

CHARLES JOHN ANDERSSON
From a study by Joyce Wallis

FORTUNE MY FOE

The Story of
Charles John Andersson
African Explorer
(1827-1867)

by

J. P. R. WALLIS

with a Foreword by
The Rt. Hon. General
J. C. SMUTS

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CHAPTER IX

ON THE WAY TO THE 'GREAT LAKE'

ANDERSSON soon had his freight ashore. He had brought a few horses, which the Hottentots would buy at high prices to carry them in their raids. The beasts were made to swim ashore with halters about their necks. One, a little mare, slipped her noose and made for the open sea, and was rescued just in time from the shark-infested waters, to carry her master right through his next journey.

When all was in order, Andersson rode to Scheppmansdorf and picked up the local news. Jonker was away on another raid and the harassed Damaras had all but deserted the Swakop country. Hottentots from Rehoboth had also gone north, under a pretext of trading that deceived nobody, and in defiance of their law-abiding chief, Swartbooi. Their contumacy, moreover, brought him into conflict with Jonker, who had threatened to intercept and despoil them on their return. This was the first hint of a momentous feud that was to develop between the two tribes.

Andersson had his two waggons assembled and loaded, and with oxen lent him by Mr. Bam, took them to Scheppmansdorf, where he left one of them while he took the other into the interior. The unusual rains of the previous summer had covered the land with rich

grass, so that travelling was easy. Business was brisk, in spite of the influx of many new traders. By mid-March Andersson had sold most of his wares and found a purchaser for the waggon. The balance of his goods he handed to Jonker's lieutenant, Eybregt, to sell for him, and the cattle he had collected he sent overland to the Cape in charge of a trusty native, Jonathan Afrika.

Lions swarmed among the game that thronged the abundant pastures, and they even invaded camps and villages. A Hottentot chief at Otjimbingue, Old Piet, had killed one within a foot of his door, and his boy had shot another in the midst of Mr. Rath's people as they slept about his waggon. Old Piet had had a still narrower escape. A lion attacked the ox he was riding, and he was thrown violently. In spite of the shock and though still weak from a severe fever-bout, he staggered to his feet and confronted the beast, that stood with one paw on the coat the chief had shed in his fall. The dazed old man fumbled in vain to disengage his sword and pistol, and at last snatched away the coat and fairly buffeted the lion with it. At this unexpected onset, he told Andersson, the beast grinned and growled terribly. At last a Damara ran up with a musket and the lion drew back a few paces and sat eyeing Old Piet. A shot sent it off into the bush, but whether it was wounded, he was too shaken to know.

On the authority of Hahn, who first heard it from the same communicative chief, Andersson gives what reads like a passage from a medieval bestiary. 'When a lion has killed a beast and satisfied his hunger, he will perhaps retreat a few steps and lie down. The hyena, who generally is on the look-out on such occasions, now

makes her appearance, at which the lion springs upon her, and as a punishment for her audacity, bites off all her four feet, and afterwards leaves her miserably to perish.'

On his trading circuit Andersson had visited Cornelius, chief of the Red People, and there met Amraal, with a band of Griquas who had recently crossed the Kalahari with forty-seven waggons in quest of ivory, and had passed within a day and a half of Lake Ngami. Andersson questioned them eagerly, and heard that from Tonuobis, the farthest point reached by Galton in 1851, it was only nine days' march to the Lake, and that there were two or three fountains along the route. Had he needed fuel to maintain the fires of his pioneering zeal, here it was. Nor could the warning underlying the Griquas's comment, that if the territory had not been so formidably arid the Boers would long ago have entered it, daunt him. It was precisely the kind of challenge that the headlong spirit of adventure in him would leap to meet.

Before he set out to the Lake, he talked with Jonker, though to little purpose. The evasive chief was 'ready to say *Ja* to everything', which, as Andersson felt, meant nothing. He heard, however, that the once powerful Damara chief Katjamaha, with his son, Kamaherero, had made peace with their former enemy, the Afrikaner ruler, and sided with him against their own people. This was to have notable consequences for Andersson and Damaraland, but for the moment the explorer was not interested. He had his own work to do. For a while, it seemed as if the trader Reid might have accompanied him, but in the end he chose to return with his cattle-

train to the Cape, where he reported Andersson's pending journey to Ngami with a party much smaller than was usually taken on so hazardous a venture.

Andersson had sold his two waggons, intending to rely upon oxen for transport. But now he found he had been too hasty, and was fain to borrow a vehicle, a neglected and decrepit thing, from a native. Still it served to carry his supplies.

On April 2nd, he started on his little mare. The going was fairly good. The soil was sandy but reasonably well grassed, with 'kameel-doorn' trees scattered over it, and water was plentiful throughout the earlier stages. His main trouble was with his natives, who had heard tales of the hazards and hardships ahead, and showed signs of hanging back. Timbo, their headman, who should have known better, was as bad as the rest, and on a slight disagreement with his master, asked to be discharged and allowed to go home. Andersson managed to cajole him into staying, but the fellow was to cause him serious trouble later. He was indeed almost indispensable, being the only person with any serviceable tincture of sense and civilization. Andersson gleaned much from him concerning the countries adjoining Mozambique, whence Timbo had originally come. This information he entered in a separate note-book which also held his meteorological and other observations concerning his route and the Ngami territory.

Passing copious waters at Otjomatanga and Rhenoster Vlei, he came at length to the junction of the White and the Black Noosops, where Jan Zaal, the hunter, had his kraal. Here he met Eybregt again, who had just married — after the Namaqua fashion, as the journal

notes – one of Zaal's daughters. He had made very little of his trading on Andersson's behalf, and when he was now sent out again results were still disappointing. He reported that other traders had been beforehand with him, and that there was little sale for his employer's moleskin cloth: guns and ammunition were the only wares that interested the natives. While Eybregt was away, Andersson stayed with the father-in-law, enjoying the neat simplicity of his house and household and relishing the abundance of milk, both sweet and sour, as a welcome change from the monotony of an invariable meat diet. It was here, too, at eight in the evening of April 30th, that he saw a very bright comet with a curved tail. He seems to have been the first in southern Africa to observe and record the phenomenon. His friend Maclean, the Astronomer Royal at the Cape, did not note it till May 1st.

Leaving this pleasant spot with Eybregt and his brother-in-law Klass Zaal, on May 4th, he followed the Noosop southward and in a day or two came to a well-watered spot on the river-bank where he decided to spend the week-end. For he was a scrupulous Sabbatarian, except when the incalculable exigencies of a pioneer's life absolutely forbade. But this halt was made memorable by an incident that testifies to a queer streak of casualness in him. He made a point of familiarizing himself with Bushman fare by tasting every root, bulb and berry he came upon, though not, as a rule, without first consulting the natives. For once, however, he forgot this wise caution, and ate seeds which, though wholesome when cooked, were poisonous if eaten raw. The result was a bout of sickness that prostrated him.

On the day that he was able to travel again, fresh set-backs awaited him. He lost his horse and saddle, his Damaras deserted while he was searching for it, and some springbok he had wounded could not be recovered. He blamed Timbo's overbearing manner for the defection of his natives, though their fear of the dangers ahead may have had something to do with it. Even his 'henchman', Bill, who only the day before had protested that he would never leave his master, had decamped. Andersson was in a parlous plight, but fortunately Eybregt came to his aid, went after the runaways and persuaded them to return. The mare also was recovered and a passing Damara found and brought in the saddle.

At Twass, the headquarters of Amraal's son Lambert, Andersson secured the services of a Griqua, Piet, as guide. He had been to the Lake the year before and could report that it was twelve days' journey with a waggon, and seven or eight on ox-back. The road Andersson was following was deep in sand and the bush dense, but water was still abundant and game plentiful. But he had no luck in hunting. His mare, though speedy, was gun-shy, and his ammunition, weighing no more than fourteen or seventeen to the pound, much too light for game of any size. The consequence was that most of the animals he hit escaped, to die in the bush. On May 21st he 'wounded severely' two fine giraffes, but had to abandon them to some poor Damaras whom he set on their trail. On the 23rd he came suddenly upon two white rhinoceroses; though both were struck, they escaped. 'Have no luck with the game nowadays,' is his disgruntled comment.

Travelling by sandy ways closely beset with thorn-

bush, he reached Elephant Kloof, a large fountain much frequented by the animals after which it was named. Here too a great number of Bushmen had taken up temporary quarters, fine muscular fellows much superior to their kindred in Namaqualand and the Cape. Here Andersson managed to bring down a giraffe 'as fat as butter' and had hopes of bagging rhinoceros; but though he watched all night at the waterside, the Damaras kept up so great a din that the beasts were scared away. On the last day of the month, after he had left the Kloof, other Bushmen offered to lead him to a haunt of elephants. The next morning he set out with them after an early breakfast, but with the casualness that so often landed him in tight places, he gave too ready ear to the assurances of his guides that the quarry would soon be found, and took no more provisions with him than a small piece of meat, and this he gave to the natives. The vlei where the animals were said to be was not reached till sunset. There he slept on an empty stomach, and next morning was off before sunrise, breakfastless, on the track of five bulls. All day he followed the trail, and then had to abandon the pursuit and turn back. The night was chilly, and having no kaross he felt the wintry cold painfully. On the morrow he tried to satisfy his cravings for food by eating some of the bitter roots the Bushmen guides brought him, but though this time he was cautious and partook sparingly, they made him sick. Two hours before dark he reached his camp, ravenously hungry.

While he had been absent, his people had gone after three rhinoceroses without success, and on the same day 'Timbo came suddenly upon a black rhinoceros, but as

usual the gun would not go off!' The party packed up and took the road again, Andersson riding on ahead. Once more his men, following with the waggon, came on three rhinoceroses, and again, 'made a mess of it' as the journal bitterly puts it, and their leader wounded another, which escaped. 'I never remember being so unfortunate' he says. Eybregt visited three fine vleis where game was known to abound, yet brought nothing home. Klaas Zaal and the Griqua Piet had many shots at zebra and rhinoceroses, but failed to kill. Andersson was in despair: 'It looks as if our guns were enchanted', he writes.

On June 8th he came to Tonuobis on the Otjombinde river, 'the permanent abode of Bushmen and much visited by elephants and other game'. Here he was told that the direct route to the lake was impassable through lack of water and that it would be better to follow the stream to the south-east and then strike north-east again. To test this advice he rode along the river when an accident befell him that, as he tells in the journal, 'nearly finished my career in this world'. His mare fell into a pitfall prepared for giraffes. These were oblong in shape, and divided across the centre by a wall of earth, so as to catch the game a-straddle with its feet dangling above the deep floor on each side. It was in this painful position that the mare came down. Her rider scrambled out with little difficulty, but the poor beast was held in helpless suspension athwart the central ridge. Andersson therefore dropped down into the pit again, and, by placing himself under the animal's chest, succeeded in heaving it from its awkward lodgement so that it stood on all fours in the rearward section of the trap. Then

holding its head down with one hand, lest in its panic it might try to leap the wall, he set to work with his feet and disengaged hand to break down the barrier and one side of the pit till he had made a ramp up which he was able to lead the mare on to level ground. By most remarkable good fortune he escaped entirely unscathed and his beast had only a slight scratch.

At Tonuobis he prepared for the last stage of his journey, whither no white man had yet penetrated. As always, the natives could tell nothing but what was vague and baffling. Only one thing seemed certain — the waggon must be left behind. The deep sand ahead, the density of the bush and the complete uncertainty as to water, left no choice. So he sent it back to the Bay in charge of Eybregt, with letters for kith and kin in Europe and the Cape. He also wrote a letter to the *South African Advertiser* outlining the course of his journey up to the time of writing and setting out his schemes for the future. 'My plan, after reaching the Lake, was to have divided my party, and with the one half proceed farther north, to ascertain if a river-communication to the sea, either east or west, may not be found. But since my servants have expressed much unwillingness to proceed any further, this will scarcely be possible, and I suppose I must be satisfied with merely seeing the Lake this time.' His men were giving considerable trouble. They were scared by the hazards ahead, and were turning stubborn. Andersson had to flog one for gross disobedience.

Difficulties pressed upon him from every quarter. Whatever he took with him had to be carried on the backs of oxen, and most of the available beasts were

draught-animals unused to the pack. There was, moreover, a grave shortage of the long reims needed to lash the loads. So the first day of the new stage, June 14th, was heart-breaking. From early morning till late in the afternoon they toiled to fasten the freight on the fractious animals, and when at last they were able to start, they had to halt with provoking frequency to re-adjust the burdens. As they went on, the dreaded 'wait-a-bit' thorn with its inevasible hooks closed more and more upon them. Wrappings were rent asunder and the contents plucked out and lost by the way. It was thus that, to his deep regret, Andersson lost two fine flags, a British and a Swedish, that Consul Letterstedt had given him to hoist on the shores of Ngami. To have flown them on the spot he had so perseveringly striven to reach would have been, to his simple sense of the dramatic, a fitting climax to a thrilling achievement.

On the 18th Ghanze was reached. The name signifies 'very large but nevertheless very small', that is, little water in a big space. But game was everywhere. One night Andersson saw twenty rhinoceroses in a single clump. Several were killed, but many more were lost. 'Shot at no less than five rhinoceroses last night,' runs a journal entry, 'without getting anything. Two, however, when shot, fell to the ground, but, to my astonishment, they stood up again.'

After leaving Ghanze, he was unable to find sufficient water for the cattle, and rode on with some Bushmen to seek it. He found it abundantly in a large vlei where the tracks of game lay thick, so he set himself to enjoy a night's sport. 'Contrary to my expectation,' he notes next day, 'I had most wretched shooting during the night.

A few rhinoceroses came off, but exceedingly shy. The rascally Bushmen ate up all my meat that I had brought. Started one with a letter to tell my men they must make haste to reach the water. The Bushman could not possibly understand what to do with the letter. At first he took it for a charm for the rhinoceroses. Shortly after sunset the "Trek" arrived, at which I was heartily glad, having had no meat for two entire days.' But this was not the worst. Before setting out on this luckless quest he had handed his watch to George Bonfield, and the boy, in winding it, had put it out of action. Andersson tried, but in vain, to repair a mishap that seriously crippled his observations. He could still calculate latitudes, but longitudes were beyond him.

On June 28th he came to Kobis, by a road thorny and circuitous. A vlei and limestone wells seemed much frequented by elephants, and the place was thronged with Bushmen of the finely built northern type. As he needed meat to spare his dwindling supply of slaughter-cattle, he made up his mind to stay for a few days' shooting. But it was useless. Elephants and, of course, rhinoceroses, came in numbers to the drinking-places, yet the hunter could do nothing. 'Cannot kill anything,' he writes despairingly; 'our usual bad luck is returning.' On July 3rd he brought down a large white rhinoceros, but paid dearly for the success. He dropped asleep in his skerm, worn out with many vigils, and woke to find his left knee completely crippled with rheumatism. For five days he was confined to his couch, unable to move the stricken limb. To save as much time as possible, he sent Timbo and the Griqua Piet with the customary presents to announce his coming

to Lecholetebe, the chief of the Ngami country. Meanwhile he was harassed by the shortage of meat supplies, so that at length and in spite of his lame leg, he had himself carried to the drinking-place, there to lie in wait for big game. 'It is rather dangerous, considering the state of my leg,' he says simply. He sat within his skerm through the winter night till near sunrise, seeing only jackals and hyenas, that hung about 'in a most impudent manner'. He flung handfuls of pebbles at them without effect and at last hurled his camp-stool. A moment later a procession of at least fifty elephants marched down within a dozen feet of his lair. He singled out the leader and brought it down with his first shot. Thrilled with his success, he crawled out on all fours and seated himself in triumph on the carcass. From his perch he hailed his natives, but though the camp was well within earshot, there was no response. Repeated calls went unheeded till finally the scared servants crept up timorously, expecting to find that some wild beast had carried off their master. The news of his good fortune soon spread. Scores of hungry Bushmen flocked to the quarry and before noon every trace of it had vanished, except the sternum, the head and some of the larger bones.

The poltroonery and indolence of his men and camp-followers were sources of constant annoyance and irritation. Onesimus, the fellow he had had to flog, and Kamapju, another of his people, proved 'great cowards: as soon as they heard the elephants, they took to their heels'. 'What cowards the Namaquas must be!' he writes. 'They never wait to see the elephants come to the water, but the noise is quite sufficient to scare them away. But they do not stop here: they even go as far

as to say that, if shot at, the elephant will come to your place of concealment, and, should they not find you there, they will destroy anything you leave behind, and afterwards come to your house, take up a piece of fire. with their trunks and set fire to it!!!' As for the Bushmen, they 'will not follow up anything that is wounded. If the beast is not dead almost on the spot, they will return immediately to their werft, and thus a person is liable to lose many a noble animal that must perish in the veld,' whereby the hunter lost his ivory and much valuable meat was wasted. Andersson came upon several carcasses of big game that native indolence had left to the vultures or to putrefaction.

Though for a while his foot was badly twisted, the trouble in his leg gradually passed and he was able to hunt in comfort again. Adventures were common. Once he lay watching a black rhinoceros, a solitary and surly old male, that in its unprovoked fury ran in circles charging and tossing every object in its path. Suddenly it caught sight of Andersson behind his skerm and ran directly at him. A frontal shot, the only one possible, struck it squarely on the horn. 'Springing almost perpendicularly into the air, and to the height of many feet, he came down with a thump that seemed to make the earth tremble: then plunging violently forward (in doing which he all but trampled on me) he ran round and round the spot for fully five minutes, enveloping every object in a cloud of dust. At last he dashed into the wood and was hidden from view.'

At dusk on the 16th Timbo returned from the Lake. He reported that Lecholetebe was a youngish man, uncommonly shrewd for his years, but very mean.

'He allowed Timbo to starve the whole time,' says Andersson, and remembering Nangoro, he adds, 'It seems peculiar to Captains of black nations to be covetous'.

Tired of rhinoceroses, Andersson went back on his tracks to a vlei called Abeghan, in the hope of bagging elephants. The following night, July 19th, he was thrice within a hair's breadth of being killed and for the rest of his life felt the severe effects of the injuries he received. The moon shone so brilliantly that he could distinguish even small objects at a considerable distance. With a blanket and two or three spare guns he ensconced himself in a skerm on a narrow gut of land dividing two pools.

He was scarcely settled when a troop of bull-elephants hove in sight, making directly towards the strait passage between his lair and the water, where there was barely room for a full-grown beast to pass. Andersson, looking for a shoulder-shot, waited just too long. A glint of moonlight on the gun barrel brought the leader down upon him, a towering fury with ears spread, trunk advanced and mouth agape. Andersson flung a shot at its head and leapt across the skerm. The wall was too high and his leg too sore for a leap, but the impact broke it and he fell forward. Hastily recovering himself, he saw the elephant making off. He clambered back into his place, seized another gun and pulled the trigger. The weapon missed fire. Had the first served him so, he must have been killed.

A while later a large white rhinoceros dropped to a shot, and soon afterwards a black one came up. Its shoulder was hidden, whereupon Andersson broke its leg, to hinder it from escaping until it could be dealt with finally when day broke. In the ensuing lull, he

walked across to see whether the first beast was dead and on his return came suddenly upon the crippled one. Its stance was unfavourable for a shot, so he flung a stone to make it alter its position. Instantly it charged. A snap-shot and Andersson was down, with the beast thundering over him. Luckily he kept his presence of mind, and as the huge hindquarters spanned his head and shoulders he rolled free, and jumped to his feet. But the creature had the wind of him and caught him again before he had run two or three paces. This time its horn struck his flank, ripped his trousers and drawers, and flung him heavily to the ground. Once again he scrambled up, to make for the nearest tree, but the animal had lost the scent, and was lumbering blindly away. Now the hunter could examine his plight. His clothes were torn, his body sorely bruised and he was badly shaken, but otherwise he seemed unhurt.

At daybreak, being too stiff and sore to go himself, he sent Kamapju to track and dispatch the beast. Presently he heard a cry, and dragging himself towards it, saw the rhinoceros, a cow, standing upon three legs, and snorting with rage, while the native stood before her unnerved by fear. A shot from Andersson sent her staggering blindly to and fro, and after receiving several others she sank to the ground. But she was still dangerous. As the hunter approached to finish her, she leapt to her feet once more and charged furiously at him. Hastily firing at her head, he turned and fled, the cow so close at his heels that he had to take a sidelong leap into a bush. Even this would not have saved him, but that just at the critical moment the valiant beast dropped, her nose within hand's reach of the hunter.

On the following day he found himself very weak and as time went on, he found reason to suspect internal injury. However, he had enough of hunting for the moment, and time pressed. His journal is silent on the 22nd, as if he had conceded himself a day's rest, but on the 23rd he was again on the march, leaving his trophies and his spare baggage with the Kobis Bushmen. To round off the story of the perilous night, it may be told here that some years later he had the upper portion of the horn that had so nearly transfixed him mounted as a beaker, with an inscription about the silver ring at the base stating briefly the circumstances and giving a reference to the account in his *Lake Ngami*. But the cup was more than a memorial of a thrilling encounter. He had come to hear of the belief current in the Cape and elsewhere in southern Africa, that like the Italian glasses of olden times, a vessel of rhinoceros horn would be shivered if the liquor it held was poisoned. It was just the sort of romantic fancy that would appeal to Andersson who refers to it in his book.

CHAPTER X

LAKE NGAMI AND THE TEOGHE RIVER

On the day of his setting out, twenty-four Bechuanas, all fine looking fellows and one the chief's uncle, met Andersson to conduct him to Lecholetebe's presence. They had orders to afford him every assistance, a stretch of hospitality that Andersson could not believe to be altogether disinterested.

Their first camp was pitched in the neighbourhood of some Bushmen who played on the fears of the white man's craven followers with a tale that the Bechuanas had been sent to murder them. Young Bonfield crept under cover of darkness to where his master slept, and reported the fearsome rumour; but Andersson knew the native mind too well to be perturbed. And investigation proved that the Bushmen, loth to lose so generous a provider of meat, had concocted the fable, that the hunter might be dissuaded from going farther and continue to kill for them.

Andersson was off in the morning with his new guides, who led him, not by the circuitous way of the ordinary track, but in a direct line across country, where the thornbush was 'dreadfully thick'. That evening he bivouacked in a clump of giant baobabs, the first he had seen, and some of them not less than from fifty to sixty feet about. 'Finding abundance of fuel, the wood was soon illumined

by numerous watchfires, around which, besides my own party', says Andersson, 'were grouped many a merry and laughing savage, each with his shield planted as a guard behind him. Altogether the scene was striking and picturesque.'

Before daybreak the party was off, Andersson riding ahead that he might be the first to set eyes on the Lake. 'The country hereabouts,' he says, 'was finely undulated; and in every distant vale with a defined border I thought I saw a lake. At last a blue line of great extent appeared in the distance, and I made sure that it was the long-sought object; but I was still doomed to disappointment. It turned out to be merely a large hollow, in the rainy season filled with water, but now dry and covered with saline incrustations. Several valleys, separated from each other by ridges of sand bearing a rank vegetation, were afterwards crossed. On reaching the top of one of these ridges the natives who were in advance of our party suddenly came to a halt, and pointing straight before them, exclaimed, "Ngami! Ngami!".'

'The first impression occasioned by this sight,' he writes in his published account, 'was very curious. Long as I had been prepared for the event, it now almost overwhelmed me. It was a mixture of pleasure and pain. My temples throbbed, and my heart beat so violently that I was obliged to dismount and lean against a tree until the excitement had subsided.' He found relief in tears.

Second impressions, as the sober diary records them after the first natural emotion had spent itself, were less enthusiastic. 'I am rather disappointed in its appearance. It is certainly a magnificent piece of water, but its

"luxuriant vegetation", of which I have heard so much, I cannot find. It is true it is the dry season, and therefore much is not to be expected. I am however exceedingly thankful having so far succeeded. May I never be forgetful', he adds, and the cry is characteristically Anderssonian in its humility, 'of what I owe to my Creator for so much kindness. I deserved it but little.'

At the western extremity, from which he first saw it, the Lake was 'exceedingly shallow: the waterfowls are seen everywhere resting on little sandbanks and the shores are almost level with the water, and it is only in a few places that a person can approach the waters on account of the mud'. Once again he had leisure to be 'Kambahandera, the bird-killer', and observed many species, aquatic and other, that were new to him as he took his three days' journey along the southern edge towards Lecholetebe's capital. This stood at a considerable elevation, and below it the margin of the lake was thickly fringed with extensive belts of reeds and rushes, penetrable in but one or two places. So far as he could see the northern shore, it seemed low and sandy, bare of vegetation and with trees at rare intervals. An hour or so before sunset, he reached the eastern extremity, where the water was deeper. Here the river Zouga or Botletle, a stream two hundred yards wide, flowed into it, and Andersson pitched his camp on the southern bank, with the river between him and the chief's village. Lecholetebe straightway sent word that the traveller need not carry his goods across but that he would like to see him at once. 'As I was rather tired, I declined the invitation', says the diarist.

Next morning, having borrowed an interpreter from

a European trader in the neighbourhood, he paid his call in state. To do honour to the occasion, he dressed himself in white duck, with a red velvet sash lined with silk of the same colour, and a gold-embroidered skull-cap. These resplendent adornments were the gifts of 'a dear female friend', Sarah Aitchison, to whom he had promised to don them on the first 'grand occasion'. He found Lecholetebe drinking coffee with a number of his men squatting around. A young man and corpulent, after the native notion of princely majesty, he was of very light complexion, 'olive brown, which seems to be the colour of his tribe', and his eyes were dark, under curved eyebrows. He wore moleskin trousers, socks and veldshoes, and over his shoulders was a handsome jackal-skin kaross, which he soon changed for a commonplace coat and vest. Of his subjects the diary relates that 'some shave or cut their hair; others only partly do so. But the most appear to cut the hair short on the crown of the head and behind, and on the sides they attach thin strings, some three or four inches long, which gives an appearance of the hair being really long. The men wear but few ornaments, sometimes a sort of necklace consisting of several pieces of bead work in the shape somewhat resembling a Malay hat; and round the arms, generally below the elbow, very pretty bead arm-bracelets. Some have ivory rings also. The women wear skin both fore and aft, and round the waist very prettily made up strings of beads of all colours. They have also necklaces and arm-bracelets. Hair short. Generally very clumsy and ugly.'

Lecholetebe listened in silence to the customary speech his visitor made, eyeing him dubiously all the time.

Doubtless a traveller so disinterested was unusual enough to suggest to the suspicious mind of his auditor all sorts of ulterior motives. If he had been asked for a concession, such as permission to trade or hunt, the chief would have been more at ease. But that a white man, not a missionary, should travel so far merely to see a lake and explore a countryside, seemed scarcely credible. Wherefore he took refuge in unresponsive silence, and when at the end of his oration Andersson tried to open a conversation, the chief declined to be drawn. Questioned about his territory, he pretended to know nothing, and pressed further, added that none of his people knew anything. 'I was annoyed,' says Andersson, 'but felt the necessity of concealing my vexation, and soon after rising, I said: "Well, Lechóletebe, perhaps when we become better acquainted, you will be more communicative. In the meantime, when it suits you, come over to my encampment and have a chat, and maybe, you will find something there to captivate your fancy".'

The covetous chief, a shameless and importunate beggar, came hot on the heels of this invitation. At least the white man's goods could conceal no menace to his prerogative. The gifts that had been laid out for him interested him not at all, and were handed over to his noisy followers. He pried into all his host's possessions, and especially into his store of ammunition, and was profoundly displeased when the traveller declined to transgress the government ordinance and would give him no more than one pound of powder. On the previous day he had tried to beg the resplendent skull-cap, and now was so insistent that he was told that he could have it in exchange for a good elephant tusk, to which terms

he agreed. But when he was asked for men and boats to bring his visitor to Libebe on the Okavango river, he tried, says Andersson, 'to excuse himself by saying there were very bad people on the other side who would kill me in the night. I told him I did not intend to proceed beyond it. Then he tried to frighten me with saying that the sea-cows were very numerous and savage on the Teoghe. But finding I was determined to go,' the journal continues, 'he said he would give me whatever I required, but could in no way be answerable for any accident that might befall me.'

This promise, if sincere, was generous, but Andersson was dubious. So were some white traders in the neighbourhood. It was one of these, Shrimpton, who had lent Andersson his interpreter: another, J. H. Wilson, re-appears frequently in this story and deserves more notice. A trader-pioneer, he was interested in natural history and had sent early specimens of little-known animals to the Cape Town museum. It is said that Livingstone had found him already at Ngami, but at his entreaty the explorer had not published the fact, that he might keep the new trading field to himself as long as possible. When Andersson met him, he had just returned from a tour about the Lake and up the Teoghe towards Libebe, precisely the route Andersson had in mind. But tsetse fly had attacked his horses and cattle, so that he had had great difficulty in extricating his party, and had left one of his waggons and a large quantity of ivory behind in charge of a local chief. Before that trip he had traded on the eastern side of the Kalahari, in the country of Livingstone's friend Sechele, who opposed so stout a front to Boer aggressions from the Transvaal. At the

outset Andersson, ever a friendly soul, had rather taken to the trader, their common interest in collecting being, no doubt, a bond. Wilson told him much of depredations by Griquas and Boers. Shrimpton had been robbed of all his powder and most of his other stores, while two young Englishmen had had to abandon all their belongings and flee for their lives. Andersson therefore felt a thrill of satisfaction when Wilson praised the service he had rendered to trade by opening an alternative route from the Bay.

On August 2nd he sent to tell the chief that he was setting out next day and to ask for the promised aid. At the same time he despatched Timbo to buy from Wilson a supply of beads for gifts and barter. In a native community every little happening travels quickly to the ears of the chief, and Lecholetebe's suspicions were stirred anew. He went in person to ask Wilson why the beads had been bought, and still unsatisfied, tried to buy them back from Andersson. But next morning the promised convoy appeared, though the chief still tried to turn the traveller from his purpose. Andersson had, however, to start without an interpreter. Lecholetebe averred that his people feared the fever and hippopotamuses, and even Shrimpton's man would not go.

Paddling down the Botletle he camped on the northern shore of the lake, in a chilly night under heavy dew. In the morning he went after game across a small plain 'literally covered with wild beasts' but too shy to give him any opening. On the 5th he reached the Teoghe, the most westerly channel of the Okavango river. At that time it entered the lake by many mouths, only one or at most two of them navigable. That chosen by the guides

was so shallow at its outlet that the canoes had to be man-handled for a considerable distance. Thereafter it was found to be from twenty to thirty yards wide and of good depth, and to be running swiftly between fairly high banks. But its course was so devious that when he went ashore with a few of his men, to stretch his legs and to lighten the boats, he could reach in an hour and a half a point that took three hours by water.

After a while the well-defined banks gave way to a vast reedy swamp with nothing but occasional palms to break the extensive monotony. In this interminable bog they came upon a village inhabited by Bayeye, the former owners of the country: they had been subjugated by Lecholetebe's father, and were now known as Bakobas or Makobas. Here the party camped, where not a stick was to be found for fuel, though during the night the temperature dropped to 17 degrees. To make matters worse the guides insisted on staying for two days, leaving the helpless Andersson with nothing to do but wade about in vain pursuit of game. But when he was able to start again, the landscape changed for the better. Trees spread down to the water's edge, the black-stemmed mimosa, the wild fig and the handsome fruit trees he had seen in Nangoro's country. Buffaloes, rhinoceroses and many kinds of buck were plentiful, though difficult to approach, and hippopotamuses and crocodiles swarmed in the river. For eight days he struggled on, the stream twisting in every direction bewilderingly. Occasionally he was able to kill a buck, but his attempts to bag larger game were unsuccessful. On the 17th he reached a place which he dubiously calls Pako, where the river forked; his guides took the lesser branch. The next day the water

ran so shallow that time and again the men had to scramble out and push the boats. And once more they were toiling through a dreary waterlogged flat intersected by such a net-work of rivulets that the guides mistook the way continually; nor was it possible to shorten the journey by proceeding overland. But fortunately that same day they struggled into the village where, as Lecholetebe had told them, they were to find a change of guides and canoes. Andersson had taken the precaution to send ahead to announce his coming, yet when he landed, he found to his disgust that the chief had that same morning gone off to hunt hippopotamus, and none could say when he might return. Lecholetebe had checkmated him.

For two days Andersson hung about the settlement; then the chief's wife told him plainly what he had suspected from the first, that it was useless to linger, since her husband would not be back for some time. Whereupon he called his guide before him, and the guide's father, who was deputizing for the absent chief. He demanded an explanation, and assistance to help him forward to Libebe. They flatly refused to stir. Lecholetebe, they said, had ordered them to come thus far and no farther, and he must await the chief's return before he could have what he needed to take him on to the next tribe, the Matsamyana, who in their turn would hand him over to those who were to lead him to Libebe. When he asked for information concerning the country ahead, they were dumb; he could not so much as learn whether Libebe was the name of a tribe, a chief or a town.

Yet everywhere he heard rumours of a mysterious river, the Atchitanda or Mukuru Mukuvanja, of which

the Cunene was but a branch, and that flowed westward into the sea. It was all vague and contradictory, but the reports concurred in affirming the existence of a great waterway that, as Andersson envisaged it, might open a new route from the Atlantic to the Ngami, navigable throughout its entire length except for a short stretch overland from the unknown stream to the Teoghe. It was a new lure, a new challenge. 'Should it be the Almighty's will to spare me another year, and I should be able to scrape together sufficient means, I shall in all probability make an attempt to explore the Atchitanda.' So he wrote in his diary on August 21st, dreaming a new dream now that Lecholetebe's treachery had foiled the fulfilment of the former one.

Picking up his men at the camp, he set out for Ondjuma, keeping an eye open for game. Having wounded but lost a giraffe, he was constrained to waste five drams of powder and a spelter bullet on a rabbit, which was at least something to eat. Almost immediately he came upon a herd of springbok, and was just taking aim when a magnificent gemsbuck, in prime condition, jumped up at his feet. In a brief while it had been flayed, quartered and packed on oxen. He lingered a while, doing a little unprofitable hunting and some surveying, and hoping in vain that natives would bring in ivory. At length he struck camp and on July 1st came to the Omaruru. It was shrouded in sea-mist, but there was copious water in its bed.

So ended his first attempt upon the Cunene. What he thought and felt is set out in a letter to Chevalier Duprat.

'After the indifferent success that has thus attended my late endeavours, you will probably imagine that I have given up all idea of further explorations. But not so. *He is but half a man who gives up all for lost because a spoke has chanced to start in his fortune's wheel.* I am beaten, no doubt, but only in part, for I have still a chance left of reaching the river in question, and the practicability of that chance I am already about testing. In short, without returning to civilization, I am once more bending my steps to the distant interior, but this time by a more easterly and circuitous route, and it will go hard if I cannot one day greet you from the banks of the Cunene. Anyhow, I will persevere till every means within *my reach* are exhausted. Whether I fail or succeed, I mean to be found with harness on.'

CHAPTER XIV

AMONG THE ELEPHANTS

STRAIGHTWAY he set about preparing for his second sally towards the Cunene. He sent Tom Mortar, with a couple of Damaras to bring his mail and a gun or two from Otjimbingue, and selected the stores he would require during the interval of waiting. Then he decided to accompany Tom to Omapju where he wished to take the latitude and perhaps get a little shooting by the way. While busy with stellar observations, an alarm of lions compelled him to gather up his instruments and hurry out against them. They escaped unscathed, but the hunter was amused by the antics of his natives, who kept up a frightful din against the beasts, cursing them lustily. But the affair caused him the loss of his two best dogs; the two that remained were so cowed as to be useless for giving warning of danger from wild beasts.

On July 9th he was off on a lengthy big-game expedition till such time as his waggon came back. He had eight or nine saddle- and pack-oxen, four donkeys, his old horse, a few sheep and goats and five Damaras. One of these, Kamapju, had taken a wife, who ran off, and he, by collusion or not, followed her. The defection, bad enough in itself, was worse in its effect upon the morale of the others, who showed little zeal to face the perils ahead. At first game was scarce, but later the hunter's luck mended. In one morning he brought down

two giraffes and the finest koodoo bull he had ever seen. The bagging of the former makes a curious story. Near the top of a rise he fired at a 'noble' cow, which, mortally wounded, staggered over the summit and out of sight. Sure of his quarry, he leisurely reloaded, but to his amazement, when he came to where he expected to find it, he saw it, as he thought, racing down the slope at a great rate. He brought it down, but was more puzzled than ever to find that it bore no trace of the first shot. Then it dawned upon him that he had killed not one but two beasts, and, retracing his steps, he found the first dead within twenty paces from where it had been struck.

So the shortage of meat was relieved, but not his shortage of labour, which hindered more congenial work. Galton had lately put out his *Art of Travel*, which suggested to Andersson a similar project for travellers in southern Africa. He therefore started to jot down the substance of his own experience in this sort, with illustrative drawings of his own. Though he kept the skeleton chapters and the Introduction by him for many years and toyed with titles – 'The Pioneer's Companion', 'Shifts and Contrivances available in the Wilds of Southern Africa' and so forth — the work was never completed.

It was now, too, that somehow he found leisure to study the Shakespeare he had formerly read for amusement. He thought the poet's 'remarkable command of the language' one of his most wonderful qualities. 'What a fearful, but yet too true picture he gives of the times of Chivalry! Chivalry! Is it possible that this term can be applied to times when men's minds were apparently

more than ordinarily given to sordid passions, and sordid gains, and sordid Lusts?' It smacks more of rusticity than of the 'higher criticism', but this and like interests kept him above the miry places wherein too many of his fellows slipped in a wild and lawless land.

When Tom Mortar returned, two men who had been with Andersson on the mines came with him, Smuts and 'honest Jones'. In their long talks with him, they gave him much gossip, not always heartening, as when they told of the brothers Green wasting their substance in riotous living instead of going eastward to Ngami where other traders were doing well. But if his partners were remiss, the greater the call for hard work on his side. Wherefore he set up his camp at Otutundu, put Timbo in charge, and moved back and forth about the headwaters of the Omaruru and Omatako, where he had reasonably good luck among the elephants as well as exciting experiences, like that at Okaovaoa. This was a fine vlei, rich in many kinds of game, but so bare of cover that Andersson had to betake himself to the top of a tall ant-hill. Presently he heard heavy crashings among the trees and bushes that ringed the open space and a dozen young males broke into view. They were out of range and when the hunter slipped down for a nearer shot, they bolted. Hardly had he regained his perch when a herd of full-grown bulls came out, swiftly but with 'steady heedful step'. Dropping down to take cover behind a young tree, he fired as the foremost beast came near. Sorely wounded, it turned and fled, passing within a few paces of the hunter. Another plunged past on the other side, so that for a breathless moment the monsters towered above him. 'I felt frightened,' he

admits, 'but fortunately they did not attempt to molest me.'

While he puzzled over his failure to bring down the stricken bull, two others drew cautiously towards the water. Presently one, bolder than its fellow, came within a dozen yards of the ant-hill. A clean shot through the heart, and it spun round, staggered a short distance and dropped. The other fled, but soon stalked into view again. Just as it presented a fair mark, it caught the hunter's scent. But too late. A fatal bullet caught it as it turned.

Andersson fired this last shot sitting. The recoil of the heavy weapon, charged with twelve drams of powder, sent him head over heels, bruising his breast and crippling his shoulder.

Nevertheless he stuck to his post and was well rewarded, for 'the best part of the night's entertainment was yet to come'. 'I had returned but a short time to my ambush when a large herd of female elephants with their calves came on, perfectly heedless of the firing which had previously taken place. With a rush they gained the water, exactly opposite to where I was perched on my ant-hill. Soon afterwards they were joined by several other troops pouring in from different directions, consisting of cows and bulls intermixed. It was quite remarkable to observe how they arranged themselves closely side by side, like a line of infantry. They drew themselves up in single file, occupying the entire width of the water (which at that point was three hundred yards broad). I estimated their numbers at between one hundred and one hundred and fifty. The moon was just then nearly at its zenith, and shed a glorious

and dazzling light on the huge creatures below. I felt no inclination to disturb so striking a picture,' he continues, though he gives himself away when he adds: 'and, indeed, it would little have availed me, as the vlei in the direction occupied by the elephants was totally destitute of cover.' All he could do, therefore was 'to look on, sigh, and admire'.

It was glorious elephant country, with fine vleis, rich pasture and dense cover. 'The stupendous powers' of the beasts amazed him. In a morning's march he passed hundreds, if not thousands, of trees broken down or entirely uprooted by them. The cows were particularly vicious, and he had more than one narrow escape from them. Thus on August 14th he set off upon a report of two bulls near by, and found a herd of cows with their calves. As he was stalking a fine beast, he became aware that two others had silently stolen to within fifteen paces of his rear. He barely had time to leap a bush in front of him, when they were on him again. A second time he was routed from his hiding-place, to find the whole mob facing him, with ears outspread and trunks raised. His fingers tingled for a shot at the leader, but a movement would have brought the living avalanche down on him in an instant. On a sudden they swung away. With incredible hardihood he fired at the coveted cow, and instantly the herd bore down on him, trumpeting shrilly. There was only one thing to do, and he did it, with the angry creatures tearing through the bush at his heels. It was well for him that, as abruptly as they had charged, they checked, for he was near the edge of the clearing, where he would have been seen at once.

Still undaunted, he climbed a tree to find their

whereabouts, but saw only a solitary cow. Thinking it the one he had hit, he drew towards it, and again found the herd confronting him. They looked so menacing that he crept back to cover, to watch them. They would charge and then stop to smell the ground and test the wind. Then, as suddenly, they would surge forward, 'trunks erect, their ponderous ears flapping against their sides most audibly, whilst their stumpy tails were switched rapidly to and fro'. They were too much even for the pertinacious Andersson. 'I don't think I shall attack female elephants again in a hurry' he says, though he leaves himself a loophole by adding, 'at least not unless I can get first-rate cover to stalk them in'.

Yet two days later he was after a herd of cows with a few fine bulls among them. Suddenly he stumbled upon another herd almost hidden in the brake. He fired at a big male, but the bullet glanced off the tough hide. At once they all came at him. To run would have been fatal. He kept close and the beasts halted almost on top of him, while the old bull, in blind fury, made a sidelong charge and carried away a whole tree. 'He looked very grand, as, for a moment, he exposed himself full to view, part of the torn-up tree still clinging to one of his tusks, which were very fine.' Soon afterwards they vanished and he saw them no more.

On August 20th he was at his Otutundu headquarters, perturbed by the prolonged absence of the waggon and worn out by exposure, unremitted toils and lack of rest. His shoulders were black and blue beneath the recoil of his heavy elephant-rifle, and his disordered blood made slight wounds fester. He had perforce to refrain his zeal a while, besides which the big game were quitting the

country for the Kaoko veld. He was now at leisure to turn to writing his second book, the *Okavango River*. He had meditated it on his recent hunting-trips, even to the extent of selecting episodes for illustration. He had been moved in part by what he had heard of Livingstone. His aunt, Miss Lloyd, had met the explorer and his wife, and the echoes of his resounding fame came as a challenge to Andersson to make known what he himself had done. As little prone to envy as most men, he could not but feel a momentary twinge of bitterness as, lonely and sick and bruised in body and mind, he turned from the picture of his own lot to that of his popular contemporary. But he kept his reflections to himself and his diary, and readily acknowledged the Scotsman's merits. 'Asking Oswell one day,' he says, 'what sort of man Livingstone was, he gave me the following remarkable reply: "Well, to look at him, you would think nothing of the man; but *he is a plucky little devil*".'

Still, in his next book, he would tell the public plainly that he had had to earn every penny needed for his explorations, and that no public body had made him grants.

Presently Pereira came in with the mended waggon and Damaras who had carried Andersson's store of five hundred and thirty odd pounds of ivory to Otjimbingue, returned to report its safe delivery. Everything was ready for a fresh start to the Cunene. The supernumerary natives were paid off, and the thirteen who were to go north were reviewed. Among them was the runaway Kamapju, who was to act as driver. Pereira, however, wanted to go south again, to establish his wife in Barmen, out of the way of Hottentot raids. There was no denying

him, and his master consoled himself with the reflection that he could bring back the mail with him.

On August 31st Andersson was off. 'May Heaven look propitious on my undertaking,' he wrote in his journal.

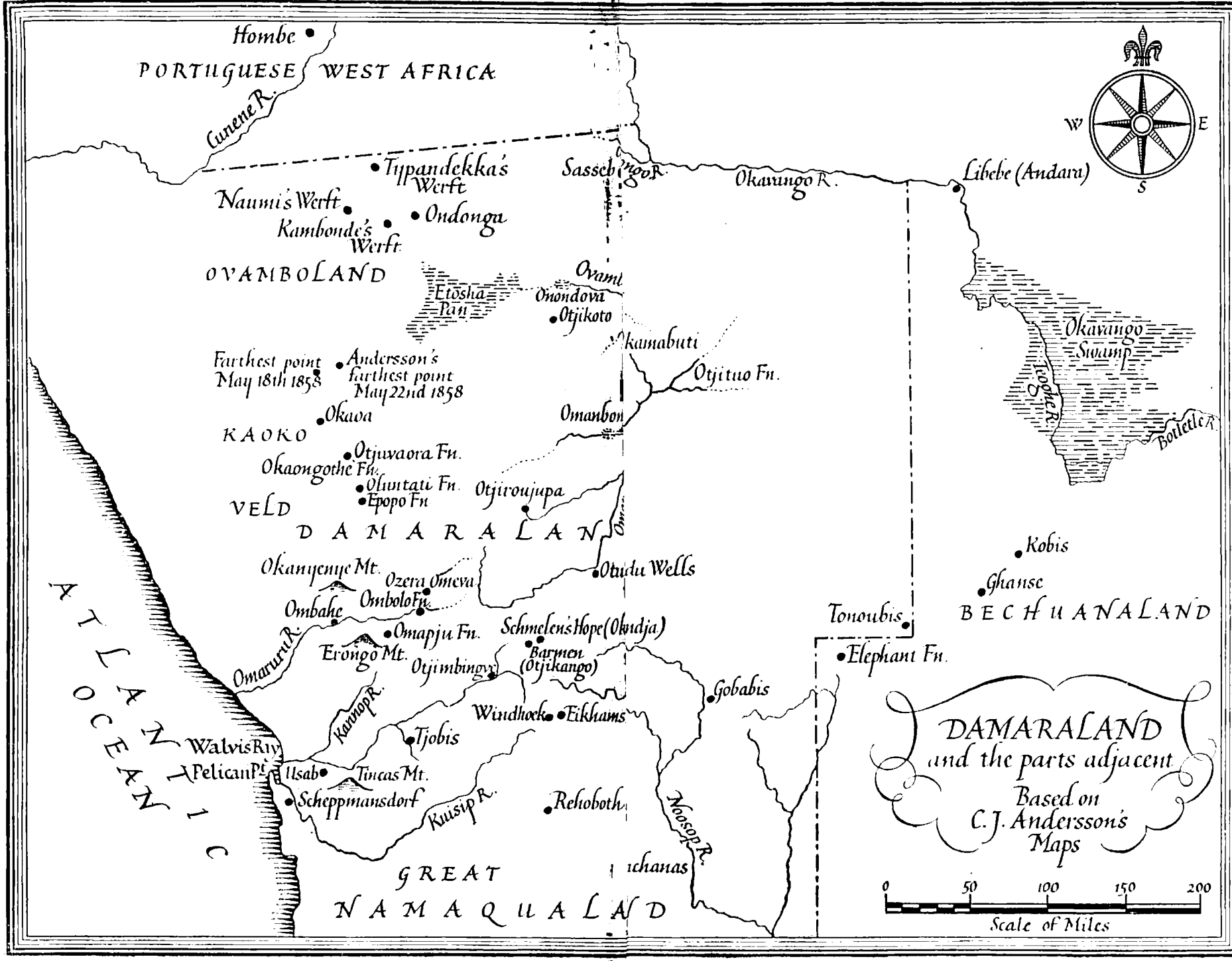
CHAPTER XV

OMANBONDE ONCE MORE

DURING his recent hunting trips Andersson had met a troop of Kamaherero's Damaras travelling northward to trade, as they said, with the Ovambo. He had hoped that by this time they would have been well in advance of him, but they had dawdled, and now incommoded him by forestalling him at the wells where the water was already low after the long dry season and by spoiling the pastures. They now marched beside him by day, camped near him at night and hung about him in his hunting, greedy for the spoils of meat, an intolerable plague.

His course lay north-east along the Omatako watercourses. The veld had 'an eye of green in it', trees were in blossom, and distant lightnings on all sides heralded rains. But the going was arduous, over ground closely pitted with huge elephant spoor formed in the summer mud and now baked iron-hard. The overladen waggon toiled through the windings of a tortuous track or strained through deep sand. Men had to be kept ahead to dig for water or to uncover concealed game-pits, though game itself was scarce and often Andersson was out all day and found nothing.

Presently he sent Tom with the waggon to wait for him where the Omanbonde river joined the Omatako. He himself, with Kamaherero's rascals still at his heels,


Hombe
PORTUGUESE WEST AFRICA
Cunene R.
Typandekka's Werft
Naumi's Werft
Ondonga
Kambonde's Werft
OVAMBOLAND
Sassebi R.
Okavango R.
Libebe (Andara)
W
E
S
Ovami
Onondova
Etosha Pan
Otjikoto
Okamabuti
Okavango Swamp
Farthest point May 18th 1858
Andersson's farthest point May 22nd 1858
Otjituo Fn.
Okawa
Omanbon
KAOKO
Tioghe R.
Botletle R.
Otjuvaora Fn.
Okaongothe Fn.
Otjitoujupa
VELD
DAMARALAND
Okanjenje Mt.
Otudu Wells
Kobis
Ozera Omeva
Ombolo Fn.
Ombahe
Ghanse
BECHUANALAND
Omapju Fn.
Schmelen's Hope (Okudja)
Tonoubis
Omaruru R.
Barmen (Otjikango)
Elephant Fn.
Erongo Mt.
Otjimbingue
Gobabis
Kamop R.
Windhoek
Eikhams
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Walvis Riv
Pelican Pt.
Tjobis
Usab
Tincas Mt.
Scheppmansdorf
Kuisip R.
Rehoboth
Noosop R.
GREAT NAMAQUALAND
DAMARALAND
and the parts adjacent
Based on
C. J. Andersson's
Maps
0
50
100
150
200
Scale of Miles