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A LIFE OF SIR FRANCIS GALTON

From African Exploration to the Birth of Eugenics



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South Africa

My own inclinations were to travel in South Africa, which had a potent attraction for those who wished to combine the joy of exploration with that of encountering big game. — But I wanted to have some worthy object as a goal and to do more than amuse myself.

— F. Galton, *Memories*¹

Francis Galton was 27 in 1849 when the idea of a South African expedition came to him. Except for North Africa, parts of West Africa, and the southern rim of the continent, extending eastward from the Cape of Good Hope, little was known about this vast land mass. Galton learned that David Livingstone, a young Scottish medical missionary, had travelled far north in South Africa past the Kalahari Desert to a lake called Ngami. Since "the well-watered districts beyond this desert could now be reached by wagon from the Cape," he "felt keenly desirous of taking advantage of this new opening, and inquired much of those who had recently returned from South Africa concerning the conditions and requirements of travel there."²

Exactly how Galton got wind of Livingstone's discovery of Lake Ngami is unclear. It must have been before Arthur Tidman, the Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary Society, published an account of the lake's discovery in the March 1850 edition of the *Missionary Magazine*, but after Livingstone returned from the Lake in October 1849.³ Livingstone's discovery piqued Galton's curiosity and he discussed his plans initially with his cousin Captain Douglas Galton of the royal engineers.⁴ Douglas Galton had achieved early recognition for his role in demolishing the wreck of the *Royal George* at Spithead in 1842 using an electric current to detonate the explosive charges for the first time. Later he would gain fame as a sanitary engineer. Douglas Galton

suggested that his cousin contact the Royal Geographical Society. This organization could provide the kind of influential backing he would need for his expedition even if its support was moral rather than financial. Galton's old Cambridge friend Robert Dalyell knew Sir Roderick Impey Murchison, the current vice-president of the Royal Geographical Society, and could provide an introduction.⁵ Meanwhile, Darwin and Douglas Galton put Galton up for membership and he was elected a member in the spring of 1850, beginning a long and active association with the Society.

Galton could not have proposed his expedition to Lake Ngami at a better time. The hard-charging Murchison, at the height of his career, was about to become president of the Society for the second time. He had a personal interest in South Africa as his friend, Sir John Herschel, the famous astronomer, had sent him trilobite fossils from there.⁶ Earlier Murchison had made a major geological discovery while working through a succession of sedimentary rocks in Wales underneath the Mesozoic series called the "Grauwacke." Murchison's Silurian System, named for the Silures, a British tribe indigenous to the region in Roman times, was underlain by his friend Adam Sedgwick's Cambrian System and would constitute part of what is now called the Paleozoic series. Murchison's magnum opus, *The Silurian System*, published in 1839, brought him worldwide fame.

Society members were helpful in many ways to Galton whose "vague plans were now carefully discussed, made more definite and approved."⁸ He was introduced to many persons useful to him including the "Colonial Secretary, Lord Gray, who gave instructions in my favour to the Governor of the Cape." A particularly important addition to Galton's expedition was Charles J. Andersson, a Swede brought up in England, who was a keen observer intensely interested in natural history, not unlike Galton. He had sailed from Gothenberg to Hull in 1849 with a large collection of living birds, mammals, and preserved specimens intending to dispose of his collection before travelling and collecting elsewhere around the globe.⁹ By happy circumstance Andersson and Galton were introduced by Sir Hyde Parker, a scion of the distinguished naval family and a rear admiral in the Royal Navy.¹⁰

Galton next outfitted his expedition and, considering he was a novice, he was meticulous in his planning. Wagons and beasts of burden would be purchased in South Africa. Supplies and equipment were collected "on the principle of having them as light as possible, and in duplicate, the half of which" Galton could leave in a cache when "I had to quit my waggons, as a store to fall back upon should I happen to meet with robbery or accident."¹¹ He was uncertain what presents to carry with him for the local chiefs he encountered so he bought guns, beads, knives, gaudy calico, mirrors, accordions, hunting-coats, old uniforms, burning glasses for concentrating the sun's rays, bracelets, anklets, Jews' harps, rings, and a faux crown that was to prove handy. He also possessed some charts to aid him in his exploration.¹² One, a detailed map of the Cape of Good Hope and surrounding areas from John Arrowsmith of the

well known family of cartographers, rapidly became devoid of any geographical features north of the Orange River. Another, which he apparently planned to use in proceeding to Lake Ngami, displayed the East Cape region as far north as Delagoa Bay in what is now Mozambique with the mission at Kurumen. Livingstone's jumping off point, clearly marked.

On April 5, 1850, Galton and Andersson embarked on the *Dalhousie*, a slow three-masted East Indiaman commanded by Captain Butterworth, which was "quite incapable of beating against a head wind."¹³ The ship had rough accommodations for the British emigrants it normally carried at inexpensive rates plus a few cabins for more affluent passengers. Galton hastily wrote his mother on May 9, as a homeward-bound vessel was to pick up the mail, remarking that they had taken heavy seas on the ten-day passage of the Bay of Biscay and that one of the emigrants, a young clergyman's daughter, had perished from a lung infection.¹⁴ On the long and tedious trip, Galton became quite attached to his seemingly accident-prone second-in-command who on one occasion succeeded in ramming a harpoon through his hand and on another had an old musket burst on him while he was firing it. Once Andersson clambered to the maintop chased by a sailor who planned to bind his feet with a piece of twine when he had gone as high as he dared so he could make Andersson "pay his footing."¹⁵ But Andersson, with simian agility, descended from the heights via the mainstay, a feat even the sailor would not attempt, confirming Galton's opinion that he was of the mettle necessary for their expedition.¹⁶

Gentle breezes carried the *Dalhousie* so close to the island of Madeira that vineyards and handsome cottages were visible scaling the mountainside all the way to its summit.¹⁷ Later uncooperative gales blew them so far to the west that they sighted the South American mainland. Meanwhile Galton passed away the monotonous hours reading and learning to use a sextant. After 86 days at sea, a third longer than average for the voyage, the travellers spied the hulking massif of Table Mountain hovering like a landlocked aircraft carrier over Cape Town and, after rounding Robben Island, the *Dalhousie* entered Table Bay where she anchored. The travellers disembarked "among the white stone and green shuttered houses of Cape Town."¹⁸ They viewed with interest the pentagonally shaped castle, built between 1666 and 1679, with its thick walls and 500-foot-long sides. It stood behind the Grand Parade where Jan van Riebeeck, who established the first Dutch East India Company trading post, had built his first primitive earthwork in 1652.

They lodged in Welch's Hotel.¹⁹ Galton was delighted to find his old friend Hedworth Barclay from his Nile adventure in residence and that Sir Hyde Parker's ship was in port trailing some prizes behind it.²⁰ Andersson observed that Cape Town was laid out in a regular pattern with broad, unpaved, rubbish-littered streets set out at right angles to each other. The diversity of Cape Town's populace was striking—"Indians, Chinese, Malays, Caffres, Bechuanas, Hottentots, Creoles, 'Afrikanders,' half-castes of many kinds and negroes

of every variety from the east and west coasts of Africa, and Europeans of all countries."²¹ Except for the Europeans, the Malays seemed the most capable residents being "distinguished for their industry and sobriety," and while the women wore no head covering, the men tied red handkerchiefs around their crowns over which they wore enormous umbrella-shaped straw hats.²² Galton had originally planned to stay in Cape Town for several weeks and then sail eastwards to Algoa Bay proceeding northwards from Port Elizabeth on a route similar to Livingstone's. However, the Governor of the Cape Colony, Sir Harry Smith, dissuaded him, for the Boers had occupied the habitable land north of the Orange River through which he would have to travel. "The Boers," said Harry Smith, "are determined men; and although I have no fear for the safety of your lives, they will assuredly rob you of all your goods and cattle, and thus prevent your proceeding further."²³ Nor could Galton outflank the Boers to the west for that would bring him face to face with the vast Kalahari Desert.

Smith was the quintessential Victorian soldier and the cause of the problem.²⁴ He had fought under Wellington in the Peninsular War (1808-14) meeting his future wife Juana during the siege of Badajoz the Proud. In 1814, he was posted to America and, following the defeat of Windham's Yankee militia in front of Washington, rode up to the White House with his victorious comrades. The dining room table was laid with 40 settings, the food was warm and the wine chilled as President James Madison and his entourage had moments earlier beat an unexpected and hasty retreat. Smith found "a supper already which was sufficiently cooked without more fire, and which many of us speedily consumed . . . and drank some very good wine too."²⁵ The soldiers picked up souvenirs ranging from the president's love letters to a pair of rhinestone buckles while Smith contented himself with a presidential shirt, but he was shocked at the expedition's goal with its "barbarous purpose of destroying the city."²⁶ He "had no objection to burn arsenals, dockyards, frigates, buildings, stores, barracks, etc., but well do I recollect that, fresh from the Duke's humane warfare in the South of France, we were horrified at the order to burn the elegant Houses of Parliament and the President's house."²⁷

Smith was with Wellington again at Waterloo, and after serving in a succession of posts, was sent to the Cape Colony in 1828 as deputy quarter-master-general, arriving during the lull between the fifth and sixth frontier wars against the Xhosas to the east. In early 1840 he was posted to India where his greatest moment came in the battle of Aliwal, when his forces defeated a Sikh army of 10,000 under Ranjur Singh. Smith, the "Hero of Aliwal," was honored by Wellington in the Lords and Peel in the Commons. Late in 1847, Smith became governor of the Cape Colony as the Seventh Frontier War, or War of the Axe, wound down. He was so highly regarded that the South African towns of Harrismith and Smithfield were named for him, Ladysmith and Ladismith for Juana, and his victory over Ranjur Singh was celebrated by naming two towns, Aliwal North and Aliwal South.

Smith, having dealt with the Xhosa, turned his attention to the Boers north of the Orange River. But he had not reckoned on Andries Pretorius trekking out of Natal toward Trans-Orangia with a large party of Boers to escape British rule. Pretorius wanted to establish a Boer homeland in Natal and became a national hero in the process by leading a band of 470 voortrekkers to victory over a Zulu impi of 10,000 warriors in the battle of Blood River in 1838. In 1843 the British annexed Natal, so Pretorius with his followers trekked out of Natal to join their comrades north of the Orange River. After much discussion Smith got Pretorius to agree to canvass the Boer communities to see whether they would accept the Union Jack as their ensign. A misunderstanding arose and Smith proclaimed British sovereignty over the Orange River territory before Pretorius reported his results. They revealed that the majority of Boer communities rejected British rule. The Boers revolted, so Smith marched on Boomplaats defeating Pretorius after a furious battle in August 1848 and restored order in the Orange River territory. But the calm was only on the surface, as many of the Boers had retreated northwards and there they would harass the British in the future, rendering Livingstone's route to Lake Ngami unsafe.

Galton got on famously with Smith, who, after a glorious dinner at Government House, stood up and made a speech proclaiming to all what a good fellow Galton was.²⁸ He asked Galton to aid him by establishing friendly relationships with any local chiefs he might meet and to persuade them that the Boers were up to no good. He provided Galton with an enormous parchment passport inscribed in large letters in English, Dutch, and Portuguese. From the parchment dangled a huge seal, eight inches in diameter, set in a tin box. After years of experience the governor knew how to impress the natives, so to add an extra flourish he had cut the seal from the royal mandate creating Galton a lieutenant governor of the colony and attached it to the parchment.

There were two routes that would gain Galton access to Lake Ngami while avoiding the Boers. He initially considered sailing up the east coast of Africa and landing near the southern tip of Mozambique at the port of Lourenço Marques, now Maputo, the capital of Mozambique.²⁹ He soon abandoned this notion because of the pestilential conditions existing there, as this was country where malaria and sleeping sickness abounded. Then he met a distinguished Portuguese gentleman, Signore Isidore Pereira, who advised him that his father had crossed Africa from east to west travelling from Mozambique to Benguela in Angola and that he himself had travelled extensively in Mozambique and knew the native chiefs well. Pereira suggested landing further north in Mozambique at Quillimane near the Zambezi River delta. However, Galton abandoned this plan too when he found that the only means of carrying baggage into the interior was on men's backs with the travellers themselves being transported on palanquins. This would not do since Andersson was to assemble a large natural history collection and beasts of burden would

be needed to carry it. The other way round the Boers was to travel up the African west coast. Some merchants suggested that Galton's expedition sail to Walfisch, now Walvis, Bay in what is presently Namibia and proceed inland across the desert. Wagons and oxen could be used for transport and there were missionary stations nearby. Furthermore, fertile, inhabited land lay east of the desert. This was the plan Galton settled on and he began gathering the necessary beasts and manpower for his expedition, buying two wagons, nine mules, and two horses. He knew the horses would eventually succumb as horse distemper was prevalent in Namibia, but the mules were more disease resistant. He took only a few sheep for meat, thinking wrongly that there would be plenty of game.

He next set about hiring the personnel he would require. A Portuguese named John Morta, a Madeira native, signed on as headman and chef. This was a coup as Morta was the cook at the club in Cape Town where he had won high praise. He was also honest, frugal, hardworking, and a great story teller who could dissolve his audience in laughter. His only fault was irritability, which Andersson passed off by saying "this in a cook, always excusable."³⁰ Next Galton hired Timboo, a fine looking black man and a lady-killer, to do various odd jobs. Timboo's childhood had been cruelly interrupted by the spectacle of his tribe being attacked by rival warriors who carried off his parents after killing many of his kinsmen. Later Timboo was sold as a slave to the Portuguese, escaped, was recaptured, and put on board a Portuguese slaver. The slaver fell into the hands of a British cruiser and Timboo, together with many other slaves, was brought to Cape Town and released. While Galton was pleased with both Timboo and Morta, Gabriel, a fine-looking Cape native with a ready smile, was another story. He attached himself to Galton offering to be his agent in gathering horses, dogs, and anything else. Galton assented, much to his later regret, for Gabriel was a troublemaker. He also hired two wagon drivers and two leaders for the oxen. John St. Helena, a man of mercurial disposition, was hired as head wagoner and a relative of his, John Waggoner, as one of the leaders. Waggoner was a slacker whose imagination was infinite when it came to finding excuses for not doing things. The other wagon driver, Abraham Wenzel, a Cape Town wheelwright, was worse. He was discovered pilfering various articles from the expedition's stores for which he was punished. John Williams, the other leader, rounded out the group. Williams, a short, stout, merry lad, was a jack of all trades who cooked, washed clothes, and generally made himself useful in addition to leading the oxen. Galton chartered the *Foam*, a small schooner, to take them to Walfisch Bay as ships only called there every one or two years. The kicking mules, whinnying horses, boxes, axle trees, wagon wheels, etc. were manhandled aboard and the schooner embarked in mid-August 1850. The 60 or so oxen required to draw the wagons in spans of 14 to 16 would be purchased when they landed.

Making Peace with Jonker Afrikaner

The great man of all the country, who could do what he liked, and of whom everybody stood in awe, was Jonker Afrikaner.

—Francis Galton, *Tropical South Africa*¹

On August 20, 1850, the *Foam* rounded Pelican Point, a fingerlike sandspit forming the western rim of Walfisch Bay, so named by the Dutch for the humpback whales that were abundant there in breeding season. The schooner edged in gingerly for no proper nautical charts of the bay existed and the explorers glimpsed a desolate, sandy beach dancing giddily in the mirage. They anchored about a mile offshore as nightfall approached. On the east side of Pelican Point a shallow lagoon teemed with fish that were often stranded at low tide, becoming prey for the local natives who speared them on the tips of gemsbok horns affixed to slender sticks. Walfisch Bay was home to immense numbers of geese, ducks, countless flocks of sandpipers, myriads of flamingos, white pelicans, and several species of cormorants. American and British whalers frequented the bay and British ships, collecting guano on the small island of Ichabo to the south, provisioned there.² Although fresh water was absent near the beach, it was available three miles inland and supported abundant pasturage. Some enterprising individuals from Cape Town had established a facility for salting and curing beef, and they furnished cattle to guano traders and to Cape Town and contracted with the British Government to supply the island of St. Helena with livestock.

The next morning the schooner sailed closer in and the captain and the explorers disembarked to be greeted by seven natives drawn up in a line, three of whom brandished guns. Galton wrote that they had "a most ill-looking ap-

a hunting party and shot it, discovering one of Stewartson's dogs inside. Meanwhile, the oxen having arrived at Walfisch Bay, Andersson conveyed the rest of the baggage to Schepmannsdorf.

Stewartson agreed to guide the explorers to the next mission, Richterfeldt, at Otjimbingue on the Swakop. Galton bought several oxen including Ceylon who would become his faithful ride ox. The explorers started off with Stewartson guiding from the back of his ox, most of the entourage walking, and Andersson and Galton riding the two horses except when allowing the men to ride now and then. Peas, sugar, rice, biscuits, coffee, water, ammunition, spears, tents, instruments, clothes, tools, trinkets for barter, Andersson's natural history implements, etc. were carried on pack oxen or in a cart drawn by the mules. A few goats were driven ahead for milk and some sheep for meat. Galton was confident that after traversing the sterile Naarip plain they would find game on the Swakop, which flowed every year during the rainy season. The river had cut a deep gorge and its moist bed, along which a rivulet still trickled, was smooth and covered with grass, creepers, and ice plants, and fringed by giant reeds. There were clumps of camelthorn trees here and there and the explorers discovered a pool of excellent water under a projecting rock where, hot, dirty, and thirsty, they could drink and bathe along with their animals. Andersson collected a redbilled francolin, a quail-like bird, and a couple of species of flycatchers.

The next day, September 21, 1850, the expedition turned east on the Naarip plain paralleling the Swakop. Following a magnificent sunrise that tinted the distant mountains vermillion and caused the dewdrops on the pebbles beneath their feet to glitter like diamonds, the blinding, pulsating disk rose ever higher searing the landscape below so by noon the air was deathly still and the sand so hot that it cruelly burned men's feet. The animals were suffering too, heads drooping and tongues hanging out, with the mules being the most distressed, having gorged on grass from the riverbed instead of their usual ration of dried fodder. Three of the miserable creatures lay down refusing to budge, so their cart had to struggle on without them. After camping that evening, Andersson and two others returned to capture the recalcitrant animals, but the shadows were lengthening and they came back after a couple of hours empty-handed. On Stewartson's advice the remaining mules and the two horses were allowed to forage and rest overnight in the river bed. The next morning Galton sent a man after the animals, but he returned without them. He excitedly reported finding their galloping hoofprints flanked by the pawprints of several lions after which he found a hyena gorging itself on a half-eaten mule and nearby the carcass of the largest horse guarded by a ferocious-looking lion.

Timboo and a companion were sent to fetch the other horse and remaining mules that, miraculously, had been joined by two of the three mules aban-

doned the previous day. The explorers hacked as much flesh off the two dead animals as they could, for they had seen little game and lacked fresh meat. After dinner Galton returned to the scene of the carnage determined to watch for lions, but with Stewartson and the men still carrying back horsemeat, he decided to have another go at the mule, clambering up the side of the gorge where the dead animal lay. As he tugged out the mule's last shoulder, the men below spied a lion crouched on a ledge above him and shouted him a warning. "I did feel queer, but I did not drop the joint. I walked steadily down the rock, looking frequently over my shoulder; but it was not till I came to where the men stood that I could see the round head and pricked ears of my enemy peering over the ledge under which I had been at work."

The caravan pressed on with Andersson spotting a flock of grey louries high up in the trees displaying their prominent crests and calling out distinctively "go-way-y-y." Delicate and pretty butterflies danced everywhere and Andersson was badly stung trying to capture a brilliant blue wasp. The weather became intolerably hot with Galton recording 143°F in the sun and 95°F in the shade. Andersson fell behind while pursuing some interesting birds and suddenly realized that his comrades were nowhere to be seen. He hurried to catch up, but just as he spied the party he began feeling giddy and barely managed to rejoin the expedition, where Galton propped him up on the horse while he gradually recovered his senses. The expedition proceeded along a tributary of the Swakop, the Tjobis. Guinea fowl were abundant and Galton shot a giraffe whose meat was cut up and jerked before they continued to Tjobis Fountain where there was water and they could "outspan" for the night. They remained there for almost two days and were visited by several Hill Damaras who provided them with some ostrich eggs after learning via appropriate gestures that they could take any meat left on the giraffe. John Morta whipped up a superb ostrich-egg omelette by cutting a small hole in an egg, adding salt and pepper, and shaking the egg violently to mix the yolk and the white.

The country was less bleak than before with a thin grass ground cover dotted with small shrubs and occasional aloes and thorn bushes. Galton learned to ride an ox, soon to become his sole means of transport. On September 30 the entourage arrived at Richterfeldt, situated amongst abundant water and grass, where the Reverend Rath and his wife welcomed them. They camped in a stand of tall shade trees adjacent to a spring. Behind Rath's house were three small villages where some 200 members of the Damara tribe lived. Andersson thought them a fine-looking race. The men were often over six feet tall and well proportioned with good and regular features, but while their outward appearance denoted great strength, they could "by no means compare, in this respect, with even moderately strong Europeans."⁸ The women seemed delicate with small hands and feet and full forms, but their beauty was fleeting in the harsh conditions under which they lived so "in a more advanced age many be-

came the most hideous of human beings."⁹ He deplored the Damaras' dirtiness that made "the color of their skin totally indistinguishable" and "to complete the disguise" they smeared their bodies with red ochre and grease so that "the exhalation hovering about them is disgusting in the extreme."¹⁰ Married women wore a picturesque helmet-like headdress and women who could afford to wore "a profusion of iron and copper rings—those of gold or brass are held in little estimation—round their wrists and ankles."¹¹ Damara warriors sported the ubiquitous *assagai*, the slender iron-tipped spear with a hardwood shaft favored by southern African tribesmen, plus bows and arrows and a few guns. But their favorite weapon was the *kierie*, a knobstick used dextrously for purposes as diverse as laying an enemy low or knocking down a francolin on the wing. Galton jotted down a few Damara words like bone (*etuba*) and bruise (*omasuro*) preparatory to learning to carry out a rudimentary conversation in the language.

At Richterfeldt, Galton met Hans Larsen, a fair-haired blue-eyed Dane and ex-sailor, who had jumped ship seven years earlier. Immensely strong with a reputation for courage, Larsen came highly recommended by Mr. Bam, so Galton was anxious to hire him. Larsen did odd jobs around the missions to make ends meet, but he was accumulating a substantial herd of cattle that he eventually hoped to drive to Cape Town. Fortunately, Galton succeeded in hiring Larsen for not only did he know the country well, but he was steeped in bush lore. He also provided ride oxen for the trip, Galton's being exhausted.

Galton now learned of a potential threat to his expedition. About a hundred miles further up the Swakop was Schmelen's Hope, a mission with a large Damara encampment that had been brutally attacked by Namaquan tribesmen led by Jonker Afrikaner. Jonker's warriors had fallen upon the mission murdering and mutilating the Damaras and pillaging their cattle. The Rev. Kolbe and his wife had been forced to flee to Barmen, a mission between Richterfeldt and Schmelen's Hope. The attack was a surprise and Galton decided to ride ahead to Barmen with Stewartson and Larsen to see whether his future plans might be affected. After a couple of days, they covered the 40-odd miles to Barmen, which was situated about three-quarters of a mile from the Swakop. Toward the west behind the mission irregular formations of low, broken rocks ended abruptly at a bluff a thousand feet high, and over this tortured landscape grew a profusion of shrubs and thorn trees. To the east, the Swakop's course was marked by handsome black-stemmed mimosas and beyond the river a range of mountains rose majestically to a height of six to seven thousand feet.

At Barmen, Galton met the Reverend Hugo Hahn, a Rhenish missionary of Russian extraction married to an Englishwoman. Hahn and another missionary, F. H. Heinrich Kleinschmidt, had come to Africa in 1842 at the urging of the Reverend Hugo Schmelen.¹² Schmelen seems to have hoped that

they could make peace between Jonker and the Damaras. Their first impression of Jonker was favorable since, while he was passing through Okahandja where they planned to establish a new mission, he advised them to move a little further to the north to Otjikango where there were hot springs. The missionaries did so, naming their mission Barmen after the German town where they had studied theology. Later Kleinschmidt trekked south to create Rehoboth, a new mission among the Namaqua tribesmen, leaving the Reverend Hahn in charge at Barmen.

The Reverend Kolbe and his wife had taken refuge at Barmen following Jonker's massacre and Galton learned the details of what had happened. Schmelen's Hope had seemed a very promising mission since a Damara tribe led by Kahikené had set up camp there. He was the richest and most powerful of their chiefs or *kaptains*, as measured by his sheep, cattle, and oxen. But Jonker's warriors had destroyed this vision, slaughtering and mutilating with horrifying results. Later Galton himself saw two Damara women who had crawled the 20 miles to Barmen. Their legs ended in bloody stumps because the Namas had severed their feet so they could steal their iron anklets. After a day of brutal carnage Jonker and his blood-sated Namas celebrated through the night. The next morning a thoroughly intoxicated Jonker came weaving up to the mission door, banged on it loudly, and ordered the cowering Kolbes to unbar it. To their relief he neither ran them through with an *assagai* nor raped Mrs. Kolbe, but simply demanded breakfast and, after gorging himself, departed unsteadily with his marauding followers and the Damara cattle.

Who were these warring tribes? The Damaras or Hereros, were cattle herders living north of the Swakop who apparently migrated southwards from central Africa at the turn of the eighteenth century.¹³ In Namibia they encountered a people called by Galton the Ghou Damup, a corruption of the Khoikhoi name Xou-Daman meaning "filthy black people." The Afrikaans called them Bergdamas, Mountain, or Hill Damaras, to distinguish them from the cattle Damaras. South of the Swakop was Namaqualand. The Nama, or Namaquan, tribesmen living there were Khoikhois of yellow or reddish complexion whose women often possessed very prominent buttocks (*steatopygia*). The largest of these tribes was called the Red Nation because of the complexion of its members. The most powerful Nama chieftain, Jonker Afrikaner, was not a Nama at all, but an Orlam, most of whom derived from unions between Afrikaaner masters and Khoikhoi slaves. They began migrating north from the Cape Colony about 1800. The Basters, another colored people of mixed parentage, even more Europeanized than the Orlams, later trekked north of the Orange River in search of freedom, with the main group settling in 1870 in the vicinity of Rehoboth.

Jonker was the son of Jager Afrikaner, who had murdered his tyrannical Afrikaaner master. Jager Afrikaner had stolen his cattle, and fled northwards

out of the Cape Colony terrorizing the countryside until Johann Leonhard Ebner, a fearless missionary, came to live with him and his family.¹⁴ Jager was baptized, presumably forgiven his many sins, and died a Christian. The first major clash between the Damaras and the Namaquas occurred about 1820, when severe drought caused the two peoples to intrude on each other's territory in search of grazing land. The Red Nation appealed to Jonker for help in defeating the Damaras. In return he would receive his choice of land for a residence and for cattle grazing. Jonker and his well-armed men defeated the Damaras in three successive battles, stole their cattle, and settled in the midst of the Red Nation's tribal domain at a place where hot springs provided a plentiful supply of water. The Khoikhoi word for the springs was "Ai-gams" or fire water, corrupted to Eikhams by Galton's time. It is now Windhoek, the capital of Namibia. In 1840 missionaries arranged a three-year peace between Jonker and the Damaras, setting up a blacksmith's shop at his headquarters where quantities of *assagais*, hatchets, and beads were made and sold for cattle.¹⁵ The cattle were exchanged with Cape traders for clothes, guns, and the like, but in the process Jonker got deeply into debt. He resorted once more to cattle rustling from the Damaras and it was in one of these raids that the Damaras encamped at Schmelen's Hope were massacred.

To explore northwards to Lake Ngami Galton had to secure his rear against Jonker, meaning that he must arrange another peace. He recognized that Jonker, born a British subject in the Cape Colony, still feared and respected the colonial government. As Governor Sir Harry Smith's deputy, he wrote Jonker early in October demanding that he cease raiding the Damaras. His letter left no doubt that the colonial government would be greatly displeased if he continued to attack the Damaras. He concluded by saying Jonker's "past crimes may profitably be atoned for by a course of upright wise and pacific policy, but if the claims of neither humanity, civilisation or honour have any weight with you perhaps a little reflection will point out some danger to your personal security."¹⁶ Galton had his letter translated into simple Dutch, rewritten on a magnificent sheet of paper, and sent off to Jonker by messenger.

There was nothing to do but wait and much to do in preparation for the upcoming expedition north, so Galton returned to Richtersfeldt where he would remain with Timboo and John Morta. Meanwhile Andersson, Stewartson, and Larsen continued on to Scheppmansdorf to break in more oxen.

➤ On the way they killed a black rhinoceros and cut off much of the beast's hide to make *shamboks*, wicked whips capable of inflicting severe wounds. At Scheppmansdorf, Andersson observed the fiscal shrike or butcher bird impale a small, frantically kicking mouse on a thorn. He found that its name did not signal monetary prudence, but derived from the Afrikaaner term *fiscaal* used for a magistrate. The Cape people believed that the bird administered justice to smaller creatures much as a judge does to mortals.

After three weeks at Scheppmansdorf, Andersson's party started back to Richtersfeldt with the remaining stores and wagons, with the oxen partially broken in. Crossing the Naarip plain they startled an enormous black rhinoceros with her calf. Andersson hit the mother with a musket ball, but she seemed unfazed, galloping away at high speed. Andersson and Larsen gave chase, but suddenly, the rhinoceros wheeled around and came to a dead stop facing them. With Larsen hanging back, Andersson walked within 15 or 20 paces of the massive creature, cocked his musket, and pulled the trigger. His first barrel misfired whereupon the rhinoceros made an about face as he fired his second barrel hitting her in the hindquarters, but she charged off again. When Andersson chided Larsen for not coming forward, Larsen was indignant:

Sir, when you have had my experience you will never call that man a coward who does not attack a wounded black rhinoceros on an open and naked plain. I would rather face fifty lions than one of those animals in such an exposed situation; for not one in a hundred would take it as quietly as this one has done. A wounded black rhinoceros seldom waits to be attacked, but charges instantly; and there would not have been the least chance of saving one's life in an open place like this.¹⁷

They pursued the rhinoceros and her calf hitting her once again with a musket ball, but she finally escaped. Andersson, showing some remorse, wrote that he felt "sorry for the poor rhinoceros; for, though she was lost to us, I felt certain it was only to die a lingering death at a distance. From experience, indeed, I should say that a similar fate awaits a large proportion of birds and animals, that escape us after being badly wounded."¹⁸

After suffering from intolerable heat, the exhausted men and animals camped near Onanis, where a small, periodical stream flowed from which they could drink. Onanis was home to a community of Hill Damaras. They raised a little tobacco, for which they had a perfect mania, and also some *dacka* or hemp whose young leaves and seeds they sometimes substituted. Their pipe holder was the long, gently spiralling horn of the kudu, to which they added a little water. Near the horn's tip was a small hole into which a clay pipe containing burning tobacco or *dacka* was inserted. The tribesmen would sit in a circle with the chief enjoying the first pull. "As little or no smoke escapes from his mouth, the effect is soon sufficiently apparent. His features become contorted, his eyes glassy and vacant, his mouth covered with froth, his whole body convulsed, and, in a few seconds, he is prostrate on the ground."¹⁹

While awaiting Jonker's reply, Galton tried to keep busy copying Mr. Rath's dictionary of Damara words, but the days dragged by and no answer came so he decided to return to Barmen. As luck would have it Jonker's reply reached him there. It was rambling and evasive so Galton wrote him an even

more strongly worded letter. While waiting for a response, Galton got to know the Reverend Hahn better. His large household was served chiefly by Namas who had migrated with him from Eikhams amongst whom were an interpreter and subinterpreter who had learned Damara. The subinterpreter "was married to a charming person, not only a Hottentot in figure, but in that respect a Venus among Hottentots. I was perfectly aghast at her development, and made inquiries upon that delicate point as far as I dared among my missionary friends."²⁰ Being a "scientific man" and also, one suspects, a randy one after several months in the bush, Galton wanted to measure her heroic buttocks. He dared not ask the lady's permission, especially as his Damara was fragmentary, nor could he ask the Reverend Hahn to do it for him. Galton, momentarily at a loss, "gazed at her form, that gift of bounteous nature to this favoured race, which no mantua-maker, with all her crinoline and stuffing, can do otherwise than humbly imitate."²¹ Then he spied his trusty sextant as the "object of my admiration stood under a tree, and was turning herself about to all points of the compass, as ladies who wish to be admired usually do."²²

He grabbed the instrument and recorded "a series of observations upon her figure in every direction, up and down, crossways, diagonally, and so forth, and I registered them carefully upon an outline drawing for fear of any mistake; this being done I boldly pulled out my measuring-tape, and measured the distance from where I was to the place where she stood, and having thus obtained both base and angles, I worked out the results by trigonometry and logarithms."²³

One day the Reverend Hahn remarked that he had learned Damara from a man who had lost half his nose to a hyena while sleeping on his back. Galton would have been skeptical had he not seen something similar happen to an old Bushwoman. One night a hyena caught hold of her heel while she slept, but her anguished cries drove it off. The next day she came into the mission to have the wound bandaged, but that evening, as she slept coiled up close to the fire, the terrifying hyena again attacked. The third evening Galton and one of Mr. Hahn's men lay in wait and shot the hyena when it made its appearance on cue.

While awaiting Jonker's reply, Galton wrote each Damara chief. He explained that he represented the monarch of a great nation who wished to send traders to the Damaras to purchase cattle in exchange for iron implements, but who did not rob and plunder as the Namas did. Hahn translated the note into Damara, but to convince the chiefs the messenger needed some token from Galton to demonstrate that he really represented the great white chief. He rummaged around in his kit and found a "great French cuirassier's sword in a steel scabbard" bought years ago in Egypt. "This was just the thing. The Damaras adore iron as we adore gold; and the brightness of the weapon was charming to their eyes."²⁴ With nothing to do but wait, the impatient Galton returned to Richtersfeldt bent on doing a little exploration. On December 11, he rode off with Larsen, John St. Helena, and Gabriel to the broad table

mountain called Erongo north of Otjimbingue. Its surface was composed of huge, smooth white rock slabs hundreds of feet in length with great fissures in between them. The climbers moved gingerly up them, removing their shoes for fear of slipping. Leopards were numerous and baboons and steinboks provided them with wild prey enriched with the occasional goat or sheep filched from the Hill Damaras. The summit of Erongo was dissected with ravines and clothed with thickets of camelthorn and abundant cactus-like Euphorbias. Having satisfied their desire for some action they returned to Richtersfeldt the day after Christmas with 25 oxen and 30 or 40 sheep that Galton had managed to purchase.

But this was merely a diversion. Galton knew he must force the issue with Jonker or the expedition would remain mired indefinitely in the necklace of Rhenish missions along the Swakop. On December 30 the expedition set off again for Barmen taking a week to make the journey because of frequent timeouts for freeing stuck wagons. On the last day they camped a few hours from Barmen and Galton rode ahead to see if anything had been heard from Jonker. Although Jonker's raiders had not swooped down on Barmen, there was an ominous feeling in the air as if something could happen at any moment. A guide Galton had hired at Richtersfeldt refused to accompany him. His other Damaras were also becoming more restive, fearful that the Nama leader and his horde would fall upon them. Galton knew he must act soon or his expedition might disintegrate.

Jonker's letter had invited Galton to visit his headquarters in Eikhams so he decided to accept, recognizing that he could be walking into a deliberate trap, but gambling that Jonker would defer to him as the governor's representative and a white Englishman. On January 13, 1851, the expedition moved to the devastated mission sited at Schmelen's Hope on the right bank of the Little Swakop, its banks lined with majestic acacias now in full bloom. Leaving Andersson in charge, he set out for Jonker's lair on January 16 with Larsen and John Morta and several others. He brought along his red hunting-coat, cap, corduroy breeches, and jackboots that he had shipped to Africa perhaps expecting to hunt with the governor in the Cape Colony. It proved to be a stroke of genius. After riding for three days until within a few hours of Eikhams, they stopped to rest their oxen. Galton donned his "official" costume and rode into Eikhams where Larsen pointed out Jonker's large hut. Galton dug his spurs into Ceylon's ribs causing the great beast to do his best imitation of a canter. A deep ravine about four feet wide crossed in front of Jonker's hut, but the intrepid Ceylon leaped over it. The trusty ox thrust his head, mounted with its two formidable horns, through the doorway of Jonker's hut where the astonished chief was smoking his evening pipe.

Galton's ruse had worked. He had made detailed notes on what he planned to say. He read his riot act loudly in English glaring menacingly at Jonker who

dared not look up. Since Jonker did not understand English, Galton had an interpreter make his meaning clear in Dutch. Then he turned Ceylon's head and left in a great huff to make camp in Jonker's village, after which the humbled chief sent Galton several notes begging rapprochement. Capitalizing on the ferocious impression he had made, Galton forced Jonker to sign letters of apology both to the Kolbes and to the British Government with the latter acknowledging the wrong he had done and pledging his word to refrain henceforth "from all injustice to the Damaras." He promised to do his best to "keep the peace with them" and to use his influence to persuade other Nama chiefs to do the same.²⁵ Jonker signed the letter and Galton and another member of his party witnessed the signatures. The amused explorer later remarked condescendingly that this "may seem laughable, but Oerlams [Orlams] are like children, and the manner which wins respect from them is not that which has most influence with us."²⁶ Galton also drew up a 15-point code of conduct for the Nama chiefs. After the chiefs were assembled, Jonker read them the code and Galton lectured them sternly. The code held for a year, enough to see Galton safely through his explorations. Later, Jonker resumed raiding the Damaras again and did so until his death in 1861 following which his son Jan Jonker continued the tradition.²⁷



Expedition to Ovampoland

In 1850 the famous English explorer, Sir Francis Galton, landed at Walvis Bay, and set off for Ovamboland. He reached a point some seven miles short of his goal—Lake Ngami—which had recently been discovered by Livingstone.

—O. Levinson, *Story of Namibia*¹

With Jonker under control, Galton was ready to proceed in March 1851.² But first there were personnel problems to deal with. John Waggoner, whom Galton had fired at Barmen, was pretending he was Galton's representative and inveigling cattle, horses, wagons, etc. from their unsuspecting owners.³ Galton pursued Waggoner in a strenuous 24-hour chase, failing to overtake him. Waggoner returned to Cape Town with his booty and conned a trader into advancing him a large sum of money with which he vanished. Gabriel also decamped for the Cape leaving a trail of insolence and violence while Abraham Wenzel, already caught for stealing once, got into another scrape so Galton fired him. Fortunately, the Nama chief Swartboy, with whom Galton was friendly, provided two Damaras. One, Onesimus, who spoke fluent Damara and Namaqua, had been captured by the Namaquas as a child and brought up by them. The other, Phillipus, had forgotten his native tongue, but could speak Namaqua and Dutch fluently.

Galton's largest wagon, containing spare guns, canvas bags full of books, and other items, plus artifacts for barter, was divided in two by a curtain so when it was wet Andersson could sleep in front and Galton in back. The smaller wagon was filled with other freight and no one slept in it except in driving rain. Because of their weight not many provisions could be carried,

and biscuits and vegetables were long gone. There was coffee, tea, and a little sugar, but the expedition's food supply consisted of the sheep and oxen they drove before them plus any game they shot. Galton, who loved making calculations, estimated that one sheep fed ten people for a day, that an ox equaled seven sheep, that a hartebeest provided as much meat as two sheep, and a giraffe the equivalent of two oxen. A white rhinoceros made a feast equal to four oxen.

The large wagon, driven by John St. Helena, was led by Onesimus while Phillipus drove the small wagon led by "any odd Damara." Hans, John Morta, and Timboo were the other regulars, with Damara and Ghou Damup servants, trailed by wives and children, changing often. Since the Europeans had difficulty pronouncing their names, they often gave them nicknames, some odd like "Grub," "Scrub," "Moonshine," "Rhinostrer," and others ordinary like "Bill." On March 4 the expedition traversed the Swakop through a narrow, boulder-strewn gorge dissected with ravines and armed with abundant thorn-trees. The oxen, not yet fully broken in, were wild. Galton remarked that if "I had to undergo two or three more such days of journeyings, the waggons would have to be left behind."⁴ The safari was now in the hands of its Damara guides in uncharted territory. Galton became distinctly uneasy, remarking that "they have no comparative in their language, so you cannot say to them, 'Which is the longer of the two, the next stage or the last one?' but you must say, 'The last stage is little, the next stage is great.' The reply is not, it is a 'little longer,' much longer, or 'very much longer,' but simply 'it is so,' or 'it is not so.'"⁵

Nor did the Damaras distinguish days, weeks, or months, reckoning instead by the dry season, the rainy season, or the pig-nut season. They had no system of counting, driving the numerically oriented Galton to distraction as they used "no numeral greater than three. When they wish to express four, they take to their fingers, which to them are as formidable instruments of calculation as the sliding-rule is to an English schoolboy. They puzzle very much after five, because no spare hand remains to grasp and secure the fingers that are required for 'units.'"⁶ However, the Damaras seldom lost oxen because they knew them all by their faces. Galton was scornful:

Once, while I watched a Damara floundering hopelessly in a calculation on one side of me, I observed Dinah, my spaniel, equally embarrassed on the other. She was overlooking half a dozen of her new-born puppies, which had been removed two or three times from her, and her anxiety was excessive, as she tried to find out if they were all present, or if any were still missing. She kept puzzling and running her eyes over them backwards and forwards, but could not satisfy herself. She evidently had a vague notion of counting, but the figure was too large for her brain. Taking the two as they stood, dog and Damara, the comparison reflected no great honour on the man.⁷

So Galton dismissed the average Damara as of little worth. This, plus his success at cowing Jonker and later hoodwinking the Ovampo chief Nangoro with a fake crown, caused him to dismiss black Africans as not having much ability. This opinion was reflected later in his book *Hereditary Genius* where he assigned blacks to the bottom rung of the ladder. The "mistakes the negroes made in their own matters, were so childish, stupid, and simpleton-like, as frequently to make me ashamed of my own species."⁸ But as he acknowledged telling oxen apart was more important than their total number not only to the Damara, but to his own expedition since "it is perfectly essential to a traveller here that some trustworthy persons of his party should be able to pick out his own oxen from any drove in which they have become mixed; for, depend upon it, the strange Damaras will give no help on these occasions."⁹

Galton respected the native chiefs up to a point, remarking in the same chapter of *Hereditary Genius* that he "has as good an education in the art of ruling men, as can be desired; he is continually exercised in personal government, and usually maintains his place by the ascendancy of his character, shown every day over his subjects and rivals."¹⁰ But then came the put-down. "A traveller in wild countries also fills, to a certain degree, the position of a commander, and has to confront native chiefs at every inhabited place. The result is familiar enough—the white traveller almost invariably holds his own in their presence."¹¹ Despite this he respected Kahikene who was "the only friend among the Damaras the Missionaries ever had, and his friendliness and frankness to me, and my men interested all of us without exception most thoroughly in his favor."¹²

As they travelled north, a messenger arrived from Kahikene inviting Galton to visit. He took advantage of the opportunity to question the chief about the country beyond. Kahikene reported that he had sent trading expeditions to the Ovampo people across whose land Galton must proceed to Lake Ngami, but west of the direct route Galton proposed through the village of Omobondé (Fig. 6-1). This avoided the territory of an unfriendly Damara chieftain, Omagundé. After Jonker had decimated Kahikene's people at Schmelen's Hope, Omagundé's son, like a jackal, had preyed on the leavings, making off with some cattle, killing several of his children, and stealing one or two more. Galton offered to mediate with Omagundé's son to recover the children and some cattle as it was common custom among the Damara for the conquering tribe to return part of the spoils to their victims. But Kahikene was too proud to accept Galton's aid even though, as he explained in front of his remaining warriors, his best men had been killed and those he would take with him were likely to scatter at first blood. Sadly, the chief's prediction proved correct. Galton later learned that Kahikene attacked Omagundé's son shortly after they parted company. In the thick of the fight, his men abandoned the chief who was overwhelmed by a shower of arrows and

spearred to death as he fell. A son, who rushed to his defense, was summarily cut down too.

At first sight, Kahikene seems a tragic figure, but he could administer fierce justice on occasion. One morning Galton found that three of his best front oxen and a slaughter ox had been stolen by a band of Damara marauders. A posse recovered three of the oxen and captured six of the rustlers. Kahikene proposed lynching them on the spot, but Galton, disliking violence, temporized so the chief made a case that Galton felt he could not refute. The thieves were not only guilty of stealing Galton's cattle, but had perpetrated a crime against the chief. The expedition was in Kahikene's protection so, although Galton might choose not to punish the rustlers, Kahikene must. While two of the culprits escaped, four were beaten with *kieries*, spearred with *assegais*, and left for dead, with one surviving in a horribly mangled state. Soon one escapee was captured and brought to Galton for punishment. He flogged the prisoner before releasing him to prevent him from suffering a far worse fate at the hands of Kahikene's warriors.

To circumvent Omagundé's territory the explorers marched west past the high cones of Mt. Omatako rising two thousand feet above the plain (Fig. 6-1). After rounding its escarpment they found that while the periodic river to the north was dry, a pool remained where they could water, but then they would have to cross a largely waterless plain to Mt. Omuvereoomb. They had no estimate of distance as their Damara guides first said the journey would take ten days, but later decided that three would be sufficient. Given this ambiguity, Galton rode out about 20 miles with a couple of men to Mt. Eshuameno which had an excellent view of the surrounding countryside. They ascended the mountain and he ascertained, by means of rough triangulation, that Mt. Omuvereoomb could probably be reached in 12 to 14 hours. After heavy rains during the night, they set out across the plain on March 22, discovering a fine temporary pool after several hours. The next day they arrived at some large wells with plentiful water, but beyond there was no guarantee they would find more. On March 24 the expedition camped in the narrow valley between Mt. Ja Kabaka and Mt. Omuvereoomb near a wretched pool of abominable water stirred up by animal herds. Since finding an acceptable source of water was becoming a priority again, Galton and Larsen made an exhausting climb up a steep hill near Mt. Omuvereoomb the next day. After scanning the desolate landscape with their telescopes they finally spotted water in the distance.

Getting to the water proved singularly unpleasant because thorn trees were everywhere. Andersson counted seven species, noting that each "was a perfect 'Wacht-een-bigte,' or 'Wait a little,' as the Dutch colonists very properly called these tormentors."¹³ The oxen bucked and thrashed violently as the thorns tore at their flanks and "got their heads out of the yokes; and often the waggon-men could not get up to the fighting creatures on account of the

thorns."¹⁴ The water Galton had spied was a magnificent fountain called Otjironjuba, the calabash, on the flank of Mt. Omuvereoomb. Its source was two hundred feet above the base of the mountain where several rivulets united into a stream that cascaded merrily down the mountainside. At the fountain's edge stood an enormous fig tree whose gnarled roots entwined scattered boulders and whose broad and leafy branches afforded welcome protection from the noonday sun. Here the explorers gratefully bathed their grimy bodies and washed their filthy clothes using soap made by the cook John Morta by ladling a mixture of wood ash and water from one pot into a second pot of simmering fat sitting atop a fire. "This ash-water is sucked up by the grease; and in ten days the stuff is transformed into good white soap."¹⁵ The trick was to make ash from the right kind of wood since ash from some bushes made the soap too hard while that from others was too soft. As usual Galton scrupulously filled several notebook pages with masses of measurements accompanied by sketches of the mountain peaks they had seen and records of their altitudes.

By the end of March the expedition had covered about 150 miles. Their next destination was Omanbondé at the north end of the Omuvereoomb escarpment, but to reach it they had to navigate an undulating plain covered with more thorn bushes. On the second day out they came upon some Bushmen digging for wild roots, capturing a man and a woman. After much gesturing they learned that at Omanbondé the "water was as large as the sky" and that hippopotami existed there."¹⁶ The Bushman and his wife escaped that night, but Galton and Andersson now excitedly anticipated another excellent water hole so the expedition picked its way along a dry river bed hemmed in by a thorn tree jungle, halting at occasional small watering places. On April 2 they came across ox tracks indicating the presence of a native village and spotted some Damara men and women who tried to escape. The women, heavily laden with iron anklets, were caught and soon the men came after them. The explorers made friendly gestures to the Damaras, plying them with tobacco, and eventually, one enormously tall Damara volunteered to lead them to the great lake of the hippopotamuses at Omanbondé.

On April 5, a year to the day after Galton departed from England, the expedition reached the brow of a hummock overlooking the broad, grassy Omoramba river bed. On the far bank, beyond a projecting rock, was a hill topped with a grove of camelthorn trees from which the name Omanbondé derived. The explorers' spirits soon sank "as the water as large as the sky" proved to be a nine-mile dry reach of the river devoid of hippopotamuses. Briefly disappointed, Galton considered turning back, but he decided to reconnoiter northwards with several others to ascertain whether the country was passable. They returned three days later, reporting that the terrain ahead looked promising and that they had located another Damara village. On April

12 they started north parallel to the Omoramba and then headed east past huge herds of giraffes. As the day progressed, tall and graceful fan palms became more abundant and that evening they arrived at the Damara village. Galton found that these Damaras intended to deceive them by sending the expedition east rather than north, their wives revealing the plot to the wives of his Damaras. The tall guide proclaimed his innocence saying that he would happily take the explorers to the Ovampo and do anything else they wanted in exchange for a calf. Timboo was taken in. The Damara got his calf and Timboo lent him his horse rug to sleep on, but that night he decamped with both, further reducing Galton's low opinion of the Damara.

Finally, Galton obtained a reliable guide who led the expedition to Okamabuti on the northern edge of Damaraland, the village of the great chief Chapupa where they arrived on April 17. An impatient Galton wanted to press on toward Ovampoland, but Chapupa, after many excuses, flatly refused to provide a guide. Making the best of Damara estimates of questionable reliability, Galton guessed that the journey to Ovampoland would take about 20 days. He decided to delay briefly in favor of a shooting expedition to some wooded knolls a few hours distant where a fountain springing from a limestone bed supposedly served as a drinking place for elephants. They rode through countryside that contrasted favorably with the barren, thornbush-studded terrain they had grown tired of. It was marked by savannas of grass so tall that the blades reached above their heads, alternating with magnificent forests of straight-trunked stinkwood trees with great spreading limbs and dark foliage. At first all went well, but then a calamity struck. The oxen pulling the largest wagon unexpectedly bolted down an incline, careening it into a stump so hard that a front wheel spun off, and the axletree broke. This was the kind of disaster Galton constantly feared, as fashioning an axletree for the long return trip required seasoning the wood for several weeks. He decided to proceed north with a reduced party including Andersson, leaving Hans Larsen, the handiest of his companions, in charge of repairs.

While waiting at Okamabuti to bribe a guide, Galton learned from Chapupa that his people carried on a lively trade with the Ovampo. Every year or so their caravans arrived to barter beads, shells, *assagais*, axes, etc. for cattle. Chapupa was also greatly indebted to Nangoro, the Ovampo ruler. He had allied himself with Chapupa, then a minor chief, to seek revenge against the principal Damara chief of the region, who had betrayed the Ovampo by stealing back all the cattle he had bartered with them. After eliminating the principal chief, Nangoro and Chapupa split up his cattle and Chapupa became the dominant ruler. The reason for his reluctance to supply Galton a guide now became clear. Chapupa, knowing nothing of Galton and his men, feared they might be spies and that he would incur Nangoro's wrath if he showed them the way to Ovampoland. He requested that Galton await the expected arrival

of the Ovampo caravan. This would free Chapupa of any possible recriminations from Nangoro. While the days marched by in slow procession, a frustrated Galton diverted himself briefly by convincing Chapupa and his wife to pose for sketches.¹⁷ She was bare-breasted and crowned with the typical helmet worn by Damara women, her neck surrounded by a wealth of long necklaces, with a simple skirt around her waist. Chapupa was clad in a loincloth and from his neck hung a single necklace with a pendant. Both the chief and his wife had valued iron bands on their upper arms and many iron bracelets circling their wrists.

Chapupa's reasoning was impeccable, but Galton, in a hurry as the season was advancing, took advantage of a Damara's offer to guide him. They rumbled off on April 25, but three days later the guide confessed he was hopelessly lost. Fortunately, the explorers ran into some Bushmen who guided them to a series of wells named Otchikongo, which they christened "Baboon Fountain" for the troops of baboons that frequented it. Their Damara guide recognized this as the place he had aimed for originally and promised no further mistakes, but the next day they were lost again. Toward evening Andersson came across another party of Bushmen and coaxed them into camp. Galton and Andersson lavished favors on them and showed them their faces in a mirror that Galton kept for this purpose. The Bushmen were won over and agreed to lead the expedition to Otchikoto.

Early on May 2, they were overtaken by several men the Damara recognized as Ovampo, the vanguard of the expected caravan. They were tall and scantily clad with shaven heads and one front tooth chipped out. Each carried a dagger at his waist. In their hands they held light bows and a short, well-made *assagai* while on their backs were quivers holding ten to 20 barbed and poisoned arrows. Around their necks were strung quantities of necklaces for trading. Each man carried a narrow pole across his shoulders from the ends of which dangled small square palm leaf baskets containing items for barter such as spear-heads, knives, and copper and iron beads. Galton won their hearts by providing them with meat that they greatly appreciated, having eaten only kaffir corn, a variety of sorghum, since leaving home. Their leader was a tall young man named Chikorongo-onkompe whom Galton nicknamed Chik. He tried to convince Chik to loan him a guide, but Chik firmly refused, saying the expedition must return to Okamabuti while the Ovampo bartered, after which they could accompany Chik and his men home. Galton, now quite skilled at Damara, noted that Chik "spoke the Damara language perfectly, but with an accent, and so did Kaondoka and Netjo, the next in command, but the others could barely make themselves intelligible."¹⁸ He was impressed that the Ovampo, unlike the Damara, could count adding up his oxen as quickly as he could and numbering Nangoro's wives at 105.

On May 23 the caravan was ready to return, having added Galton's party plus numerous Damara men, women, and children, and 206 head of cattle.

They passed through the Baboon Fountain and continued to Otchikoto, a deep, bucket-shaped hole scooped out of the limestone terrain some 400 feet across. Thirty feet below its rim Otchikoto was filled with water to a depth of 186 feet. Dirty and badly needing baths, Galton and Andersson plunged in to the horror of the tribesmen who believed that any man or beast falling into Otchikoto would perish, a myth that had arisen because neither the Ovampo nor Damara could swim. The water was cold and sea green in color and Galton and Andersson, joking and laughing, paddled over to a cavern in the rim startling a couple of owls, but the myriad of bats clinging to the rocks never moved, for they had died years earlier and been mummified in the dry climate. Galton, like many a modern tourist, scratched his name on a great boulder that jutted out into the lake.¹⁹

After Otchikoto, there were more thorn-tree forests to navigate, but on the afternoon of May 29 they reached Omutchamatunda, an Ovampo cattle post, swarming with several thousand people, where there was a fountain luxuriously overgrown with tall reeds. Vast herds of cattle grazed on the surrounding plain together with troops of zebra and springbok. The explorers were soon surrounded by mobs of curious Ovampo who marvelled at their white skins. They were most hospitable and seated Galton's party on the ground, following which an immense dish of butter was brought out. The head man proceeded to smear the face and chest of each individual with butter. Galton, his turn nigh, held out both hands and exclaimed, "Oh! for goodness' sake, if the thing is necessary, be it at least moderate!"²⁰ so the head man gingerly daubed Galton's cheeks once or twice to everyone's amusement. The explorers relaxed for a couple of days at Omutchamatunda shooting ducks, geese, and francolin. On May 31 they moved on, marvelling at the great Etosha salt pan, the "big white place"²¹ shimmering with the mirage. They departed Etosha for Ondonga, where Nangoro's village was located, crossing the edge of a boundless savanna called the Otchikoto-wa-Notenya and passing a majestic tree that, according to Damara belief, was the parent of all Damaras, Bushmen, oxen, and zebras. Then they were ensnared in endless thorn-tree forests once more until suddenly, on June 2, "the charming corn-country of the Ovampo lay yellow and broad as a sea before us. Fine dense timber-trees, and innumerable palms of all sizes, were scattered over it; part was bare for pasturage, part was thickly covered with high corn stubble; palisadings, each of which enclosed a homestead, were scattered everywhere over the country."²² On these fertile plains the Ovampo also cultivated millet, calabashes, watermelons, pumpkins, beans, and peas. To his friend Dr. William F. Campbell, Galton wrote "they have poultry and pigs and live right well."²³

On the way to Ondonga the explorers were put up by old Netjo, then by Chik, and then by a friend of Chik's, but despite this hospitality, Galton was ill at ease. "Everybody was perfectly civil, but I could not go as I liked, nor

where I liked; in fact I felt as a savage would feel in England."²⁴ Finally they came to a big clump of trees, a quarter of a mile from Nangoro's dwelling, where Chik ordered them to halt, but Galton was deeply concerned as there was no place for the oxen to graze. He pleaded with Chik for better pasturage, but Chik refused saying he must wait for Nangoro who would arrange everything.

Who was Nangoro and from whence came the Ovampo? Theories of Bantu migration are fraught with controversy, but linguistic evidence suggests that Bantu speakers, including the Ovampo, probably migrated south from the Niger-Congo region.²⁵ Nangoro succeeded his uncle Nembungu as king, founding his royal capital at Ondonga around 1820. At his accession, Ovampo power was dispersed among princelings who ruled small and scattered wards and did not recognize the king's power. Nangoro first made peace with the oldest inhabitants of Ovampoland, the Aakwankala, or Bushmen who became members of his bodyguard. Having achieved internal stabilization in his own realm, he entered an expansionary phase, attacking and defeating the Ovampo kingdoms of the Aakwanyama, Askwambi, and Aangandjera. His expertise in rainmaking endeared him to his subjects, as crops were plentiful and his subjects experienced little hunger. He bartered with the Damara for cattle and other commodities, using salt, iron ore, and finished products in exchange. He also sent ivory and slaves (his own subjects) north to a Portuguese trading post south of the Kunene River in exchange for glass beads and pearls. Hence, through negotiation and war, Nangoro's kingdom increased in population, natural resources, and wealth and he was at the height of his power when Galton's expedition arrived.

Galton's pasturage predicament was becoming increasingly desperate. Nangoro failed to come on June 6 as promised, but sent some corn as a present and asked Galton's party to fire their guns so he could hear the explosions. They obliged, shooting musket balls into the sky with loud reports. The next day Nangoro, an enormously fat old man short of breath, appeared in the midst of a large bodyguard accompanied by his miniature court of well-appointed Ovampo men attending to his every need. He waddled up to Galton who bowed elaborately, but Nangoro took no notice and simply stared at him. Galton, not knowing what to do, sat down and began making notes in his journal. After a few minutes Nangoro gave Galton a friendly poke in the ribs with his staff and Galton gave the king his presents apologizing that he did not have more. Unfortunately, he had gilt finery and not beads. "The sway of fashion is quite as strong among the negroes as among the whites; and my position was that of a traveller in Europe, who had nothing to pay his hotel bill but a box full of cowries and Damara sandals."²⁶

Galton compounded his mistake by displaying bad manners. The Ovampo were a superstitious people "as are all blacks, and most whites."²⁷ An Ovampo

man believed that if he supped with a stranger, his guest could exert a powerful magic against him and charm his life away. A countercharm was needed and Nangoro devised one. "The stranger sits down, closes his eyes, and raises his face to heaven; then the Ovampo initiator takes some water into his mouth, gargles it well, and, standing over his victim, delivers it full in his face."²⁸ The dripping stranger was now in the king's good graces and all proceeded decorously, but Galton refused to be splattered by Nangoro as he had previously when the guest of Chik and of Netjo. This was bad form just as it would be today if the proffered cheek of one's hostess remained unknissed, but the Ovampo, of course, believed the consequences could be far more serious.

Despite Galton's misdeeds the king was a good sport and said he would forgive him provided he donated a cow to accompany the ox he had earlier presented. Galton acquiesced and Nangoro requested the travellers to shoot their muskets again, the loud explosions delighting the king. They continued chatting via an interpreter, although Galton suspected that the king knew Damara, and Nangoro eventually decreed that Galton's party was free to trade. This was the signal the Ovampo awaited and they crowded around the travellers ready to do business, a jolly people full of good spirits. The women "were decidedly nice-looking; their faces were open and merry, but they had rather coarse features and shone all over with butter and red pigment. They seemed to be of amazingly affectionate dispositions, for they always stood in groups with their arms round each other's necks like Canova's graces."²⁹

There was nightly dancing to tom-toms and a guitarlike instrument and Nangoro invited Galton and Andersson to attend. Andersson, greatly bored, amused himself by ogling the young Ovampo women, many of whom had exceedingly good figures. But these social occasions did not mark a warming of relations with the Ovampo monarch who visited Galton rarely. The oxen remained a sore point since Galton's animals, lacking access to Nangoro's stubble fields, were beginning to starve although they could drink at Nangoro's watering places once his cattle were finished. One day, when Nangoro seemed in a good mood, Galton presented him with the faux crown he had bought in Drury Lane explaining that the great chiefs in England wore such headdress. He begged Nangoro to honor him by donning it and the flattered chief assented so Galton adjusted it to its maximum size and crowned the Ovampo monarch. His courtiers were overjoyed as was the king who viewed himself with great satisfaction in Galton's mirror. While Galton feigned delight at the king's pleasure, he wrote his mother that "I . . . crowned him straightaway with that great theatrical crown I had" although "he was a brute fat as a tub."³⁰

Nangoro, a man of proper manners, wanted to reciprocate and to present Galton a valuable gift. Shortly after Galton crowned Nangoro, he entered his tent dressed in his one well-preserved suit of white linen and there in one corner was Chipanga, heiress to the Ovampo kingdom, clothed in her scanty fin-

ery and painted with red ochre and butter. She was "as capable of leaving a mark on anything she touched as a well-inked printer's roller."³¹ Without further adieu Galton ejected his temporary wife, grievously insulting her and the king. Nangoro was now thoroughly fed up with Galton. He told him on June 13 that he could trade that day, take his leave the next day, and depart the day after. Galton longed to journey northwards four days to the Kunene River, but this would involve temporizing further with Nangoro with no guarantee of success. Since the river was already frequented by Portuguese traders, Galton "could not help feeling that Nangoro's refusal to let me proceed was all for the best."³² His oxen were in such bad shape that he would have to cross Omagunde's pasture lands on the way back. Galton had not reached Lake Ngami nor had he cast his gaze across the swift Kunene River, but he had carried out one of the first great African explorations of the nineteenth century. He left with a much higher opinion of the Ovampo than he had of the Damaras.

I should feel but little compassion if I saw all the Damaras in the hand of a slave-owner, for they could hardly become more wretched than they are now, and might be much less mischievous; but it would be a crying shame to enslave the Ovampo. . . . They are a kind-hearted, cheerful people, and very domestic. I saw no pauperism in the country; everybody seemed well to do; and the few very old people that I saw were treated with particular respect and care.³³—The Ovampo have infinitely more claims on a white man's sympathy than savages like the Damaras, for they have a high notion of morality in many points, and seem to be a very inquiring race.³⁴

The journey to Schmelen's Hope took nearly seven weeks, but nothing was seen of Omagunde's warriors. One day Andersson observed that the oxen began to careen about "cutting the most ridiculous capers"³⁵ their antics catalyzed by the arrival of a large flock of yellowbilled oxpeckers that alighted on the beasts to dine royally on the ticks infesting their hides. By the time they arrived at Schmelen's Hope on August 3, the wagons were unfit for overland journey to the Cape. Since the next ship was not expected in Walfisch Bay until December, Galton decided to explore toward the fringes of the Kalahari Desert splitting his party in two. One group led by Hans Larsen headed west to Walfisch Bay while Galton marched eastwards with Andersson toward Elephant Fountain and Tounobis through drought-stricken country with very little grass (Fig. 6-1). His route took him through Eikhams where he was courteously received by Jonker whom he thanked for keeping the peace. Andersson, who had not accompanied Galton on his previous visit, noted that it was very prettily situated on the slope of hill whose summit was bare, but whose base was adorned with fine stands of mimosas. The land was fertile and well-supplied with water from several copious springs.

On August 30 they set out for Elephant Fountain, named for the vast numbers of elephant tusks and bones discovered there, shooting hartebeest, impala, and zebra along the way. After a fortnight of difficult travel, they arrived at Elephant Fountain, a copious spring on a thorn-tree-covered hillside where animal herds came to drink, but from which the elephants were long gone. Amiral and about 40 of his Nama tribesmen were encamped there, returning from a shooting expedition further east where they had bagged 40 rhinoceros, but they decided to retrace their steps with Galton to engage in further sport. On September 19 they left Elephant Fountain with the land soon becoming sandy, bushy, and devoid of prominent landmarks. At Twass they came upon a large encampment and Galton hired an Afrikaner named Saul, an expert shot who spoke perfect Namaquan, to accompany him. On September 24 they left Twass for their "shooting excursion" and two days later camped where Amiral's men had slaughtered the black rhinoceros, seeing skulls all around. On October 1 they started out for Tounobis, which proved to be overrun with game. "The river-bed was trodden like the ground in a cattle fair by animals of all descriptions."³⁶ There were large herds of gnu and troops of zebra, and the hunters slaughtered rhinoceros, both white and black, with abandon, avoiding the elephants for fear of being trampled on. After a week of shooting Amiral's men were agitating to return to their wives and Galton had tired of "massacring the animals."³⁷ By November 5 he was back in Eikhams where he parted with Jonker for the last time. The hunting party arrived in Walfisch Bay in early December, but Galton waited until the next month for a schooner to appear. He sailed first to St. Helena arriving in England on April 5, 1852, two years after his departure on the same day of the same month.

What happened to the *dramatis personae* after Galton departed? Andersson travelled back through Eikhams and Tounobis and thence to Lake Ngami.³⁸ In 1856 he published *Lake Ngami*, chronicling his travels with Galton and his subsequent expedition to the lake. He assiduously collected flora and fauna, subsequently enriching the British Museum among other institutions. While recovering from a serious leg injury suffered in a battle with Jonker and his men, Andersson wrote a book on the birds of Namibia. In 1866 he ventured once again to Ovampoland and succeeded in reaching the Kunene River, but, suffering from poor health, he died on the return trip.

Jonker soon began marauding again and by 1857 his repeated raids had left Damaraland desolate.^{39,40} One day he seized Andersson's entire herd of cattle on the way to the Cape, murdering all but one of his men, so Andersson allied himself with Maherero, a great chief who had begun to rebuild the Damara nation. When the Namas attacked Otjimbingue in 1860, Maherero with Andersson's help defeated Jonker, killing his son Christian. The next year they marched with 3,000 Damaras and stormed Jonker and his Namas in a moun-

tain lur south of Rehoboth, defeating him once again, but they allowed his son Jan to escape. Jonker died that year after contracting a fatal disease following a raid on Ovampoland, but Jan continued the family tradition until an uneasy peace was signed between Jan Jonker and Maherero in 1870. That peace, which lasted for ten years, was brokered by the Reverend Hugo Hahn.

And what happened to Nangoro? In 1857 the missionaries Hahn and Rath endeavoured to extend their good works north into Ovampoland following the trail blazed by Andersson and Galton.⁴¹ Along the way they were joined by a hunter named Green. Just before reaching Nangoro's palace their guide told Green that the king wished their assistance in a war against a small neighboring tribe, but they turned him down so Nangoro refused to see them for five days, after which they got a chilly reception. The missionaries sent beads to Nangoro, which were returned with the demand that all presents be given him at the same time. This annoyed Green and the missionaries, and according to Green, they told Nangoro that this was their custom in sending gifts and "he must conform to it" or else he would appear to be on unfriendly terms. The problem of the presents was settled, but Nangoro failed to show up so three days later the travellers sent him an ultimatum and he appeared.

As the expedition started north, Ovampo tribesmen rushed out and surrounded it. The Reverend Hahn, recognizing one of Nangoro's sons in the crowd, complained about their detention. For a moment they were quiet, but then the son plunged his *assagai* into the back of a Damara. His gun discharged as he fell, killing another of Nangoro's sons and wounding his assailant. Green then shot an Ovampo approaching him with a javelin and took command, holding 800 Ovampo at bay.⁴² There were more deaths and Nangoro, on hearing of the demise of his son and several leading followers, reportedly succumbed after a stroke. Galton was disgusted on hearing Green's account. He believed that Green should have placed himself in the position of the Ovampo who felt their land was "almost invaded" by foreigners, who from their color, language, and intermarriages, must be related to the marauding Namas. Furthermore, "these foreigners are fully armed and dictatorial in their ways; they refuse to give those presents which are well described as taking the place of customs duties in African nations. They show scant courtesy to the king, and they very probably trespass in not a few of the many requirements of the witchcraft ceremonial."⁴³

The Galton who sailed home to England had undergone the transition to maturity. He had planned, paid for, and executed a major expedition and shown bravery and clear thinking when faced with adversity. He also launched his scientific career as he began to write a sober report of his journey for publication in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, to be followed in quick succession by his popular account of the expedition, *Tropical South Africa*. In

fact, throughout his career he would write articles for general audiences as well as more complex manuscripts aimed at professionals. His African experience left him with the prejudice, when he thought about it at all, which was not often, that blacks were in general savages although some like the Ovambo were quite civilized. Even so their chieftains were no match for a European explorer like himself.



Fame and Marriage

The lion-killer certainly seems smitten.

—Emily Butler writing to her brother Arthur Butler¹

On February 23, 1852, while Galton was sailing home, part one of the paper describing his expedition was read before the Royal Geographical Society.² It began by tacitly acknowledging that it was the Society and African exploration that catalyzed his transformation from fun-loving idler to serious scientist. The reading was completed on April 26, shortly after he set foot in England. The paper was workmanlike, describing his journey, the places he visited, and the native peoples he met. Altitudes of mountains were given based on boiling point thermometer readings and there were two dense tables of data extracted from the masses of numbers accumulated in his notebooks. One gave latitudes for many of the towns and landmarks he had visited and the other longitudes for carefully selected locations across the entire East to West transect he had covered. They were calculated by the lunar distance method of Neville Maskelyne, the Fifth Astronomer Royal, and by triangulation with respect to Walfisch Bay whose longitude was known. Galton's presentation of precise data essential for accurate mapping stood in marked contrast to the other two papers on African geography in the same volume of the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*.³ Henry Gassiot's merely summarized a hunting trip to South Africa while that by David Livingstone and W. C. Oswell described their Central African explorations beyond Lake Ngami, but lacked any quantitative data.

Galton's Namibian adventure turned him into an instant celebrity, but he was exhausted from his long African sojourn and desperately desired to escape "being lionised which is exceedingly wearisome to the lion after the first excitement