

towards this cape, one goes along the coast of Africa which is constantly on the left hand; you sail well offshore, however, and do not sight land, because the Isole di Canaria are very far out to sea to the west, each one further than its neighbour. Thus you keep a course far out from land, until you have covered at least two-thirds of the passage from the islands to Capo Bianco and then draw near on the left hand to the coast until land is sighted, in order not to run past the said Cape without recognising it, because beyond it no land is seen for a considerable distance. The coast runs back at this cape, forming a gulf which is called the 'Forna dargin'¹. This name Dargin is derived from an islet in the gulf called Argin by the people of the country. This gulf runs in more than fifty miles, and there are three more islands, to which the Portuguese have given these names: Isola Bianca, from its sands: Isola da le Garze², because the first Portuguese found on it so many eggs of these sea birds that they loaded two boats from the caravels with them: the third Isola de Cuori. All are small, sandy, and uninhabited. On this Dargin there is a supply of fresh water, but not on the others.

Note that when you set out beyond the Strecto de Zibelterra [keeping this coast on the left hand, that is, of Barbary] towards Ethiopia, you do not find it inhabited by these Barbari except as far as the Cauo de Chantin³. From this cape along the coast to Capo Blanco commences the sandy country which is the desert that ranges on its northern confines with the mountains, which cut off our Barbary from Tunis, and from all these places of the coast. This desert the Berbers call Sarra⁴: on the south it marches with the Blacks of lower Ethiopia: it is a very great desert, which takes well-mounted men fifty to sixty days to cross—in

¹ Arguim, discovered in 1443 by Nuno Tristão, where a fort was erected by Prince Henry in 1448 for the protection of merchants. Its good water and safe anchorage quickly made it a valuable *entrepôt*, and it became an important trading centre. The Arab name was 'Ghir', and Azurara calls it 'Gete'.

² Island of Herons (Azurara, I, p. 63, and II, pp. 320-1), one of the Arguim Islands. The big expedition of 1444 rested here and refreshed themselves on the multitude of young birds.

³ Cape Cantin, 32° 36' N., 9° 14' W.

⁴ Sahara. The mountains are the Atlas range.

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some places more, and some less. The boundary of this desert is on the Ocean Sea at the coast, which is everywhere sandy, white, arid, and all equally low-lying: it does not appear to be higher in one place than another, as far as the said Capo Bianco, which is so called because the Portuguese who discovered it saw it to be sandy and white, without signs of grass or trees whatsoever. It is a very fine cape, like a triangle, that is, on its face; it has three points, distant the one from the other about a mile.

On all this coast there are very large fisheries¹ of various and most excellent large fish without number, like those of our Venetian fisheries, and other kinds. Throughout this Forna Dargin there is little water, and there are many shoals, some of sand, others of rock. There are strong currents in the sea, on account of which one navigates only by day, with the lead in hand, and according to the state of the tide. Two ships have already been wrecked upon these banks. The aforesaid Cauo de Chantin stands approximately north-east of Capo Blanco.

You should also know that behind this Cauo Bianco on the land, is a place called Hoden², which is about six days inland by camel. This place is not walled, but is frequented by Arabs, and is a market where the caravans arrive from Tanbutu³, and from other places in the land of the Blacks, on their way to our nearer Barbary. The food of the peoples of this place is dates, and barley, of which there is sufficient, for they grow in some of these places, but not abundantly. They drink the milk of camels and other animals, for they have no wine. They also have cows and goats, but not many, for the land is dry. Their oxen and cows, compared with ours, are small.

They are Muhammadans, and very hostile to Christians. They never remain settled, but are always wandering over these deserts. These are the men who go to the land of the Blacks, and also to our nearer Barbary. They are very numerous, and have

¹ The fishing fields were already being exploited under Prince Henry's licence.

² Wadan, an important desert market about 350 miles east of Arguim. Later, in 1487, when the Portuguese were endeavouring to penetrate the interior they attempted to establish a trading factory at Wadan which acted as a feeder to Arguim, tapping the north-bound caravan traffic and diverting some of it to the west coast.

³ Timbuktu, see Introduction, p. xv.

many camels on which they carry brass and silver from Barbary and other things to Tanbutu and to the land of the Blacks. Thence they carry away gold and pepper¹, which they bring hither. They are brown complexioned, and wear white cloaks edged with a red stripe: their women also dress thus, without shifts. On their heads the men wear turbans in the Moorish fashion, and they always go barefooted. In these sandy districts there are many lions, leopards, and ostriches, the eggs of which I have often eaten and found good.

You should know that the said Lord Infante of Portugal has leased this island of Argin to Christians [for ten years], so that no one can enter the bay to trade with the Arabs save those who hold the licence. These have dwellings on the island and factories where they buy and sell with the said Arabs who come to the coast to trade for merchandize of various kinds, such as woollen cloths, cotton, silver, and 'alchezeli'², that is, cloaks, carpets, and similar articles and above all, corn, for they are always short of food. They give in exchange slaves whom the Arabs bring from the land of the Blacks³, and gold *tiber*⁴. The Lord Infante therefore caused a castle⁵ to be built on the island to protect this trade for ever. For this reason, Portuguese caravels are coming and going all the year to this island.

These Arabs also have many Berber horses⁶, which they trade, and take to the Land of the Blacks, exchanging them with the rulers for slaves. Ten or fifteen slaves are given for one of these horses, according to their quality. The Arabs likewise take articles of Moorish silk, made in Granata and in Tunis of Barbary, silver, and other goods, obtaining in exchange any number of these slaves, and some gold. These slaves are brought

¹ Malaguetta pepper, see Introduction, p. xii.

² Probably the coarse cloth called by El Bekri in the eleventh century 'chigguiza', which was doubtless the 'shigge' purchased by Barth in Timbuktu in the nineteenth century (Barth, *Travels*, IV, p. 443).

³ The Portuguese had now established in West Africa the insidious practice of inciting the coast tribes to raid their neighbours for slaves.

⁴ The Arabic *thubr* or *tibar*, meaning gold dust.

⁵ Built by Prince Henry in 1448.

⁶ Leo Africanus, writing in the sixteenth century, makes several references to the trade in Barbary horses for which there was an excellent market in the Sudan. Later the Portuguese regularly shipped out horses to barter for slaves.

to the market and town of Hoden; there they are divided: some go to the mountains of Barcha¹, and thence to Sicily, [others to the said town of Tunis and to all the coasts of Barbary], and others again are taken to this place, Argin, and sold to the Portuguese leaseholders. As a result every year the Portuguese carry away from Argin a thousand slaves². Note that before this traffic was organized, the Portuguese caravels, sometimes four, sometimes more, were wont to come armed to the Golfo d'Argin, and descending on the land by night, would assail the fisher villages, and so ravage the land. Thus they took of these Arabs both men and women, and carried them to Portugal for sale: behaving in a like manner along all the rest of the coast, which stretches from Cauo Bianco to the Rio di Senega and even beyond. This is a great river, dividing a race which is called Azanaghi³ from the first Kingdom of the Blacks. These Azanaghi are brownish, rather dark brown than light, and live in places along this coast beyond Cauo Bianco, and many of them are spread over this desert inland. They are neighbours of the above mentioned Arabs of Hoden.

They live on dates, barley, and camel's milk: but as they are very near the first land of the Blacks, they trade with them, obtaining from this land of the Blacks millet and certain vegetables, such as beans, upon which they support themselves. They are men who require little food and can withstand hunger, so that they sustain themselves throughout the day upon a mess of barley porridge. They are obliged to do this because of the want of victuals they experience. These, as I have said, are taken by the Portuguese as before mentioned and are the best slaves of all the Blacks. But, however, for some time all have been at peace and engaged in trade. The said Lord Infante will not permit further hurt to be done to any, because he hopes that, mixing with Christians, they may without difficulty be converted to our

¹ Barca in Cyrenaica.

² According to Azurara (II, p. 288), up to the year 1448 the total number of Africans who had been carried captive to Portugal during Prince Henry's time was only 927. This passage indicates how rapidly the slave trade was increasing.

³ The Azanaghi or Azaneguys, as Azurara calls them, were the Sanhaja, historically the most important of the Tuareg tribes, and widely distributed over the western Sahara.

faith, not yet being firmly attached to the tenets of Muhammad, save from what they know by hearsay.

These same Azanaghi have a strange custom: they always wear a handkerchief on the head with a flap¹ which they bring across the face, covering the mouth and part of the nose. For they say that the mouth is a brutish thing, that is always uttering wind and bad odours so that it should be kept covered, and not displayed, likening it almost to the posterior, and that these two portions should be kept covered. It is true that they never uncover it, except when they eat, and not otherwise for I have seen many of them.

There are no lords among them, save those who are richer: these are honoured and obeyed to some degree by the others. They are a very poor people, liars, the biggest thieves in the world, and exceedingly treacherous. They are men of average height, and spare. They wear their hair in locks down to their shoulders, almost in the German fashion—but their hair is black, and anointed every day with fish oil, so that it smells strongly, the which they consider a great refinement.

CHAPTER XI²

The exchange of salt for gold: and the distance it travels

That woman who has the largest breasts is considered more beautiful than the others: with the result that each woman, to increase their size, at the age of seventeen or eighteen when the breasts are already formed, places across her chest a cord, which she binds around the breasts, and draws tight with much

¹ The *liham*, still worn by the Tuareg; hence their name Muleththemim, meaning the Veiled People. In Roman and Byzantine times they appear not to have worn the veil, and when or why they took to it remains a problem to which no acceptable solution has been found. Its use appears always to have been restricted to the men.

² This and subsequent chapters are misnumbered in the original version.

force; in this way the breasts are distended, and frequent pulling every day causes them to grow and lengthen so much that many reach the navel. Those that have the biggest prize them as a rare thing.

You should know that these people have no knowledge of any Christians except the Portuguese, against whom they have waged war for [thirteen or] fourteen years, many of them having been taken prisoners, as I have already said, and sold into slavery¹. It is asserted that when for the first time they saw sails, that is, ships, on the sea (which neither they nor their forefathers had ever seen before), they believed that they were great sea-birds with white wings, which were flying, and had come from some strange place: when the sails were lowered for the landing, some of them, watching from far off, thought that the ships were fishes. Others again said that they were phantoms that went by night, at which they were greatly terrified. The reason for this belief was because these caravels within a short space of time appeared at many places, where attacks were delivered, especially at night, by their crews. Thus one such assault might be separated from the next by a hundred or more miles, according to the plans of the sailors, or as the winds, blowing hither and thither, served them. Perceiving this, they said amongst themselves, 'If these be human creatures, how can they travel so great a distance in one night, a distance which we could not go in three days?' Thus, as they did not understand the art of

¹ It should perhaps be pointed out that hostilities were not provoked by the Azaneguys, or Sanhaja, but by the Portuguese who deliberately raided them to capture slaves. The first had been taken by Antam Gonçalves in 1441, only fourteen years before Cadamosto's first voyage. It was quickly realised that there was money in the enslavement of Africans and thenceforward the character of these voyages altered. Discovery was no longer pursued for its own ends, but as a source of personal gain. Buccaneers regularly descended on the north-west coast of Africa to raid the Azaneguys. All who resisted capture were ruthlessly slain. In Portugal the prisoners were sold at great profit. For the most part they were well treated and adopted the religion of their masters.

Prince Henry has been bitterly censured for permitting this disgraceful trade, which remained the curse of Africa for centuries. He believed it justified, however, as a means of saving the souls of the heathen and he should not be blamed for an attitude which accorded with the thought of his day. Moreover we have no reason to believe that he was in the least influenced by the thought of personal gain.

navigation, they all thought that the ships were phantoms. This I know is testified to by many Portuguese who at that time were trading in caravels on this coast, and also by those who were captured on these raids. And from this it may be judged how strange many of our ways appeared to them, if such an opinion could prevail.

Beyond the said mart of Edon [Oden], six days journey further inland, there is a place called Tagaza¹, that is to say in our tongue 'cargador'², where a very great quantity of rock-salt is mined. Every year large caravans of camels belonging to the above mentioned Arabs and Azanaghi, leaving in many parties, carry it to Tanbutu³; thence they go to Melli⁴, the empire of the Blacks, where, so rapidly is it sold, within eight days of its arrival all is disposed of at a price of two to three hundred *mitigalli*⁵ a load, according to the quantity: [a *mitigallo* is worth about a ducat:] then with the gold they return to their homes.

In this empire of Melli it is very hot, and the pasturage is very unsuitable for fourfooted animals: so that of the majority which come with the caravans no more than twenty-five out of a hundred return. There are no quadrupeds in this country, because they all die, and many also of the Arabs and Azanaghi sicken in this place and die, on account of the great heat. It is said that on horseback it is about forty days from Tagaza to Tanbutu, and thirty from Tanbutu to Melli.

I enquired of them what the merchants of Melli did with this salt, and was told that a small quantity is consumed in their country. Since it is below the meridional and on the equinoctial, where the day is constantly about as long as the night, it is extremely hot at certain seasons of the year: this causes the blood to putrefy, so that were it not for this salt, they would die. The remedy they employ is as follows: they take a small piece of the salt, mix it in a jar with a little water, and drink it every

¹ For description of Taghaza see Introduction, p. xiv.

² 'A load, or charge'; other texts have 'bisaccia d'oro', i.e. wallet of gold, the gold not being obtained locally, but in exchange for salt.

³ Timbuktu, see Introduction, p. xv.

⁴ Mali, see Introduction, p. xv.

⁵ One *mithqal* or *mitkal* equalled about $\frac{1}{8}$ oz. of gold.

day. They say that this saves them. The remainder of this salt they carry away on a long journey in pieces as large as a man can, with a certain knack, bear on his head.

You must know that when this salt is carried to Melli by camel it goes in large pieces [as it is dug out from the mines], of a size most easily carried on camels, two pieces on each animal. Then at Melli, these blacks break it in smaller pieces, in order to carry it on their heads, so that each man carries one piece, and thus they form a great army of men on foot, who transport it a great distance. Those who carry it have two forked sticks, one in each hand: when they are tired, they plant them in the ground, and rest their load upon them. In this way they carry it until they reach certain waters: I could not learn from them whether it is fresh or sea water, so that I do not know if it is a river or the sea, though they consider it to be the sea. [I think however it must be a river, for if it were the sea, in such a hot country there would be no lack of salt.]¹ These Blacks are obliged to carry it in this way, because they have no camels or other beasts of burden, as these cannot live in the great heat. It may be imagined how many men are required to carry it on foot, and how many are those who consume it every year. Having reached these waters with the salt, they proceed in this fashion: all those who have the salt pile it in rows, each marking his own. Having made these piles, the whole caravan retires half a day's journey. Then there come another race of blacks who do not wish to be seen or to speak. They arrive in large

¹ These 'certain waters' were probably the inundated area of the Niger above Timbuktu. If so, it is probable that there is a confusion between two sources of the gold, for this area is not 'a great distance' from Melli. In addition therefore to 'Wangara', in proximity to Melli, gold was probably obtained from another area farther to the south, within the region unsuited to animal transport. Professor Taylor, who has examined this question critically, concludes that this second source was the Lobi district at the headwaters of the Black Volta. The large lower lip (see below, p. 24) suggests the use of the labret. This is worn by the women of the Lobi, who collect the gold. The Lobi males take no interest in this, and gold washing has practically died out. The present inhabitants are relatively new to this district, having driven their predecessors southwards. Their tradition of gold working has therefore survived with the women absorbed by the new-comers. There is also a tradition that salt was formerly obtained from a distant source in the north. (See Taylor, E. G. R., *op. cit.*, and Labouret, H., *Les tribus du rameau Lobi.*)

boats, from which it appears that they come from islands, and disembark. Seeing the salt, they place a quantity of gold opposite each pile, and then turn back, leaving salt and gold. When they have gone, the negroes who own the salt return: if they are satisfied with the quantity of gold, they leave the salt and retire with the gold. Then the blacks of the gold return, and remove those piles which are without gold. By the other piles of salt they place more gold, if it pleases them, or else they leave the salt. In this way, by long and ancient custom, they carry on their trade without seeing or speaking to each other. Although it is difficult to believe this, I can testify that I have had this information from many merchants, Arab as well as Azanaghi, and also from persons in whom faith can be placed¹.

CHAPTER XII

*How the EMPEROR sought to take one
of these traders prisoner*

Reflecting upon this, I asked the merchants how it came to be that the Emperor of Melli, who, they said, was so great a lord, had not wished so to proceed as to find out by love or by other means what people these were who did not wish to speak or to be seen. They replied that, not many years previously, an Emperor of Melli determined at all costs to get one of them in his power, and having taken counsel about it, ordered some of his men to leave a few days before the salt caravan, and proceed to the place where it was customary to pile the salt, to dig trenches near by, in which to conceal themselves. When the

¹ See Introduction, p. xvi. Valentim Ferdinand, it is interesting to note, quotes João Rodriguez to the effect that the story of the 'silent trade' was a commercial device to protect a monopoly. 'It is said that the merchants who bring the salt do not see the negroes, but leave their goods behind, for which the negroes then substitute gold. But this is not correct; for the Wangaros say that the people are unknown to them only that they alone may enjoy the profit from daring to go to them. The big-lipped negroes likewise do not wish another people to come to them; one is therefore unable to learn their requirements.' Kunstmann, F., *V. Ferdinands Beschr.* p. 270.

Blacks returned to set the gold by the salt, they were to attack them and to take two or three, whom they were to convey under close guard to Melli. To be brief, this was done. They seized four, the others taking to flight: of the four they released three, surmising that one would satisfy the desires of the lord, and not wishing to anger these Blacks more. They spoke to this man in several negro languages, but he would not reply, or speak at all, neither would he eat. He lived four days and then died. For this reason these blacks of Melli are of the opinion, after the experience they had with him who would not speak, that they are dumb. Others think that they behave thus from disdain [of doing what their ancestors had never done]. This death vexed all the blacks of Melli, for on account of it their lord could not achieve his intention. On returning to him they related the incident in due order.

Then the lord was very displeased with them, and asked what the blacks looked like. They replied they were very black in colour, with well-formed bodies, a span higher than they themselves. The lower lip, more than a span in width, hung down, huge and red, over the breast, displaying the inner part glistening like blood¹. The upper lip was as small as their own. This form of the lips displayed the gums and teeth, the latter, they said, being bigger than their own: they had two large teeth on each side, and large black eyes. Their appearance is terrifying, and the gums exude blood, as do the lips.

Because of this incident, none of the emperor's men have since been willing to embroil themselves in similar affairs, since, as a result of the capture and death of this one negro, it was three years before the others would resume the customary exchange of gold for salt. It was thought that their lips became putrid, being in a warmer country than ours: so that these blacks, having borne much sickness and death [for this space of time], and having no other way of obtaining the salt to cure themselves, resumed the accustomed trade. On this account, it is our opinion, being unable to live without salt, they set off their plight against our action, just as the Emperor did not care

¹ This suggests the use of the labret, which is still worn by the Lobi women.

whether these blacks spoke or not, so long as he had the profit of the gold. This is what I understood from this incident, and since it is related by so many we can accept it. Because I have seen and understood such things in the world, I am one of those who are willing to believe this and other matters to be possible.

The gold thus brought to Melli is divided in three parts: one portion goes with the caravan which takes the road from Melli to a place that is called Cochia.¹ This is the route which runs towards Soria² [and il Cairo]: the second and third portions go with a caravan from Melli to Tanbutu. There they are separated: one portion goes to Atoet³, whence it is carried to Tunis in Barbary through all the coast beyond: the other part goes to the above mentioned Hoden, whence it spreads towards Orā and Hona⁴, towns in Barbary within the Strecto de Zibelterra, Afezes, Amarochos, Arzib, Azafi, and Amessa⁵, towns in Barbary beyond the Straits. In these places it is bought by us Italians and other Christians from the Moors with the various merchandize we give them.

To return to my first subject, this is the best thing that is brought from the said land and country of the Azanaghi, that is, the brown men. Of that portion of the gold which is brought every year to Hoden, as described already, some quantity is carried to the sea coast, and sold to the Spaniards⁶ who are continuously stationed on the said island of Argin for the trade of merchandize, in exchange for other things.

In this land of the brown men, no money is coined, and they have never used it. Nor, formerly, was money to be found in any of their towns. Their sole method is to barter article for article, or two articles for one, and by such means they live. It is true that I understand that inland these Azanaghi, and also the Arabs in some of their districts, are wont to employ white

¹ Gao, see Introduction, p. xvii.

² 'Soria' is Syria.

³ Toet or Tuat, a group of oases in the north central Sahara on which several important caravan routes converged. At this time it was the home of a prosperous Jewish community who were the victims of a cruel massacre at the end of the century.

⁴ Oran and One or Honein, the port of Tlemcen south-west of Oran.

⁵ Fez, Morocco, Arzila, Saffi, and Massa, situated north of Tiznit, now no more than a ruin.

⁶ 'Spain', at this period, signified the Iberian peninsula as a whole.

cowries¹, of those small kinds which are brought to Venice from the Levant. They give certain numbers of these according to the things they have to buy. I should explain that the gold they sell they give by the weight of a *mitigallo*; according to the practice in Barbary, this *mitigallo* is of the value of a ducat, more or less.

CHAPTER XIII

The respect paid to rich men; the clothes of their women; and their weapons

Those who inhabit this desert have no religion, nor any natural king. It is true that they recognize and do reverence to one more than to another, and the richer are more sought after, as in many other places; thus they have greater followings of people, but they are not lords. The women of this country are light brown, and those of higher rank are wont to wear coarse cotton cloth, which comes from the land of the Blacks, and some the above mentioned headgear, to which they give the name of Alchizel². They do not wear shifts.

They ride horses in the Moorish fashion: but they have not many, since, the country being sterile, they cannot support them, and also because of the great heat, they do not live long. The districts of this desert are very hot; this heat, and the lack of water, make the land arid and infertile. In these parts it never rains except for three months in the year, August, September, and October.

I have also seen in these parts that in certain years very great numbers of locusts appear; they are like grasshoppers, but larger, and red in colour: [they are like the grasshoppers which breed and jump in the meadows, but larger, and red and yellow in colour]. They appear in the air at certain seasons in such

¹ According to El Bekri cowry shells were used as currency in Mauritania in the eleventh century. Probably then, and certainly during succeeding centuries, they were imported into Western Africa from Cairo.

² See note 2, p. 17 above.

numbers that they cover it so that the sun cannot be seen. As far as one can see, from twelve and more miles around, all is covered by these animals, both air and earth. This is a stupendous sight. Wherever they settle, nothing remains above ground, for they destroy everything. [To be visited by them is considered to be a great plague.] If they were to come every year, it would be impossible to dwell in this land—but they do not come more than once in every three or four years. On one occasion when I was passing through this land I saw them on the coast—their numbers were incalculable.

CHAPTER XIV

*The RIO DE SENEGA, which divides the desert
from the fertile land*

When we had passed in sight of this Cauo Bianco, we sailed on our journey to the river called the Rio de Senega, the first river of the Land of the Blacks, which debouches on this coast. This river separates the Blacks from the brown people called Azanaghi, and also the dry and arid land, that is, the above mentioned desert, from the fertile country of the Blacks. The river is large; its mouth being over a mile wide, and quite deep. There is another mouth a little distance beyond, with an island between. Thus it enters the sea by two mouths, and before each of them about a mile out to sea are shoals and broad sand-banks. In this place the water increases and decreases every six hours, that is, with the rise and fall of the tide. The tide ascends the river more than sixty miles, according to the information I have had from Portuguese who have been [many miles] up it [in caravels]. He who wishes to enter this river must go in with the tide, on account of the shoals and banks at the mouth. From Cauo Bianco it is 380 miles to the river: all the coast is sandy to within about twenty miles of the mouth. It is called Costa de Antte rotte, and is of the Azanaghi, or brown men.

It appears to me a very marvellous thing that beyond the river all men are very black, tall and big, their bodies well formed; and the whole country green, full of trees, and fertile: while on this side, the men are brownish, small, lean, ill-nourished, and small in stature: the country sterile and arid. This river is said to be a branch of the river Nile, of the four royal rivers: it flows through all Ethiopia, watering the country as in Egypt: passing through 'lo caiero'¹, it waters all the land of Egypt. This river has many other very large branches, in addition to that of Senega, and they are great rivers on this coast of Ethiopia, of which more will be related later².

¹ Cairo.

² This passage appears somewhat expanded in Ramusio:

'This river, according to what learned men say, is a branch of the river Gihon, which flows from the terrestrial paradise. This branch was called by the ancients, Niger, which waters all Ethiopia: and drawing near to the Ocean Sea towards the west where it debouches, it forms many other branches and rivers, as well as this Senega. Another branch of the Gihon is the Nile, which flows through Egypt, and falls into our Mediterranean Sea. And this is the opinion of those who have known the world.'

This is an example of the difficulties encountered by renaissance students in attempting to fit observed facts into the framework of traditional geography. The four rivers are the Gyon (identified with the Nile), the Tigris, the Euphrates, and the Phison, which were considered by medieval cosmographers to have their common source in the terrestrial paradise, placed in the East. Some classical geographers had made the Niger a western tributary of the Nile. The confusion between the westward flowing Senegal and the Niger led to these two rivers being combined to give the 'Nile' a second outlet in the Atlantic, as set out above. It is strange that Ramusio should have accepted this account, for fifteenth-century cartographers, e.g. Fra Mauro and the draughtsman of the Estense map of 1450, distinguish a number of westward flowing rivers from the Niger, and in Diogo Gomes's time, a more correct idea of the hydrography had been gained. (See below, p. 93.) Ramusio was no doubt misled by Leo Africanus's statement that the Niger flowed westwards to the ocean.

CHAPTER XV

The LORDS who rule on the COAST of CAPO VERDE

The country of these first blacks of the Kingdom of Senega is at the beginning of the first Kingdom of Ethiopia. It is all low-lying country, and many people live on the banks of this river. They are called Zilofi¹. For a great distance beyond, it is low country, and beyond the river likewise, except for Cauo Verde, which is the highest land on all this coast, for 400 miles beyond this Cauo Verde, and for 900 miles on this side of the said cape, the whole coast is flat. [and the people who dwell along its banks are called Gilofi. And all this coast and the known country behind is all lowland as far as the river, and also beyond this river to Capo Verde. This Cape is the highest land on the whole coast, that is for four hundred miles beyond the said Cape.]

The King of Senega in my time was called Zuchalin [Zucolin —a youth of twenty-two years. This Kingdom does not descend by inheritance:] but in this land there are divers lesser lords, who [three or four of whom,] through jealousy, at times agree among themselves, and set up a King of their own, if he is in truth of noble parentage. This King rules as long as is pleasing to the said lords [that is, according to the treatment they receive from him]. Frequently [they banish him by force: and as frequently] the King makes himself so powerful that he can defend himself against them. Thus his position is not stable and firm, as is that of the Soldan of Babilonia²: but he is always in dread of deposition [death or exile].

You must know that this King is lord of a very poor people, and has no city in his country, but villages with huts of straw only. [They do not know how to build houses with walls:] they

¹ The Jalof, or Wolof, a branch of the true negro race of Africa. 'They are said to be the blackest and most garrulous of African peoples (their name being variously explained as meaning 'speaker' or 'black').' Seligman, C. G., *Races of Africa*, p. 59. The accuracy of Cadamosto's description of the negroes is substantiated by later writers.

² Cairo, or perhaps Baghdad.

have no lime with which to build walls, and there is great lack of stones. This Kingdom, also, is very small; it extends no more than two hundred miles along the coast, and, from the information I had, about the same distance inland or a little more. The king lives thus: he has no fixed income [from taxes]: save that each year the lords of the country, in order to stand well with him, present him with horses, which are much esteemed owing to their scarcity¹, forage, beasts such as cows and goats, vegetables, millet, and the like. The King supports himself by raids, which result in many slaves from his own as well as neighbouring countries. He employs these slaves [in many ways, mainly] in cultivating the land allotted to him: but he also sells many to the Azanaghi [and Arab] merchants in return for horses and other goods, and also to Christians, since they have begun to trade with these blacks.

The King is permitted to have as many wives as he wishes, as also are all the chiefs and men of this country, that is, as many as they can support. Thus this King has always thirty of them, though he favours one more than another, according to those from whom they are descended. This is his manner of living with his wives: he has certain villages and places, in some of which he keeps eight or ten of them. Each has a house of her own, with young servants to attend her, and slaves to cultivate the possessions and lands assigned by the lord, [with the fruits of which they are able to support themselves]. They have also a certain number of beasts, such as cows and goats, for their use; in this way his wives have the land sown and the beasts tended, and so gain a living. When the King arrives at one of these villages, he goes to the house of one of his wives, for they are obliged to provide, out of this produce, for him and those accompanying him. Every morning, at sunrise, each prepares three or four dishes of various foods, either meat, fish, or other Moorish foods according to their practice. These are sent by their slaves to be put at the disposal of their lord, so that within an hour forty or fifty dishes are assembled; when the time at which the lord wishes to eat has arrived, he picks out whatever tempts him, and gives the remainder to those in his train. But

¹ See note 3, p. 35 below.

he never gives his people abundance to eat, so that they are always hungry. In this fashion he journeys from place to place without giving any thought to his victuals, and lodges sometimes with one wife, sometimes with another, so that he begets numerous sons, for when one is pregnant he leaves her alone. All the other chiefs of this country live in this same fashion.

CHAPTER XVI

The CUSTOMS of the BLACKS, and their BELIEFS

The faith of these first Blacks is Muhammadanism: they are not however, as are the white Moors, very resolute in this faith, especially the common people. The chiefs adhere to the tenets of the Muhammadans because they have around them priests of the Azanaghi or Arabs, [who have reached this country]. These give them some instruction in the laws of Muhammad, enlarging upon the great disgrace of being rulers and yet living without any divine law, and behaving as do their people and lowly men, who live without laws; and since they have converse with none but these Azanaghi and Arab priests, they are converted to the law of Muhammad. But since they have had converse with Christians, they believe less in it, for our customs please them, and they also realise our wealth and ingenuity in everything as compared with theirs. They say that the God, who has bestowed so many benefits, has shown his great love for us, which could only be if his law were good—but that, none the less, theirs is still the law of God, through which they will find salvation, as we through ours.

These people dress thus: almost all constantly go naked, except for a goatskin fashioned in the form of drawers, with which they hide their shame. But the chiefs and those of standing wear a cotton garment—for cotton grows in these lands. Their women spin it into cloth of a span in width. They are unable to make wider cloth because they do not understand how to card it for weaving. When they wish to make a larger

piece, they sew four or five of these strips together¹. These garments are made to reach half way down the thigh, with wide sleeves to the elbow. They also wear breeches of this cotton, which are tied across, and reach to the ankles, and are otherwise so large as to be from thirty to thirty-five, or even forty *palmi* round the top; when they are girded round the waist, they are much crumpled and form a sack in front, and the hinder part reaches to the ground, and waggles like a tail—the most comical thing to be seen in the world. They would come in these wide petticoats with these tails and ask us if we had ever seen a more beautiful dress or fashion: for they hold it for certain that they are the most beautiful garments in the world. Their women, both married and single, all go covered with girdles, below which they wear a sheet of these cotton strips bound across, half way down their legs. Men and women always go barefoot. They wear nothing on their heads: the hair of both sexes is fashioned into neat tresses arranged in various styles, though their hair by nature is no longer than a span. You must know also that the men of these lands perform many women's tasks, such as spinning, washing clothes and such things. It is always very hot there, and the further one goes inland, the greater the heat: by comparison, it is no colder in these parts in January than it is in April in our country of Italy.

CHAPTER XVII

Men clean in their persons and filthy in eating

The men and women are clean in their persons, since they wash themselves all over four or five times a day: but in eating they are filthy, and ill-mannered. In matters of which they have no experience they are credulous and awkward, but in those to which they are accustomed they are the equal of our skilled men. They are talkative, and never at a loss for something to say: in

¹ This is still a common practice in the western Sudan. See note 2, p. 17 above.

general they are great liars and cheats: but on the other hand, charitable, receiving strangers willingly, and providing a night's lodging and one or two meals without any charge¹.

CHAPTER XVIII

*How the LORDS of the BLACKS of the
KINGDOM of SENEGA² fight*

These negro chiefs are continually at war, the one with the other, and also frequently with their neighbours. They wage their wars on foot, for they have very few horses, as these cannot live on account of the great heat, as I have already said. They do not wear armour, for they have none, save round, broad shields [which they make from the skin of an animal called *danta*³, which is very hard to penetrate:] for the attack they carry numerous 'Azanage', which are their spears. They hurl these very swiftly, for they are great masters at throwing them. These darts have a tip of iron wrought with barbs, made in various styles: so that when they strike, it lacerates the flesh to withdraw them. They also carry some Moorish weapons, in the style of a short scimeter, that is, curved: they are made of iron, not of steel, for they obtain iron from the kingdom of Gambia of the Blacks beyond, but they cannot make steel. If there is iron in their land, they do not know of it, or are not skilled in working it. They carry also another weapon, a kind of lance similar to our javelin, but they have no other arms. Their combats are very fatal; since their bodies are unprotected, many are slain. They are very courageous and brutal, for in danger

¹ A striking and no less pleasing feature of the history of the exploration of western Africa is the frequent tributes paid by the great explorers, irrespective of race or creed, to the hospitality of the negroid peoples of the western Sudan. Ibn Battuta, Leo Africanus, Mungo Park and Henry Barth all join with Cadamosto in remarking upon the kindness of these people, which was in such marked contrast to the barbarity of the light-skinned desert tribes.

² Misprinted 'Gambia' in the *Paesi*.

³ Addax gazelle, called by Leo Africanus 'Elamt' (*The History and Description of Africa*, II, p. 309).

they prefer to be killed rather than to seize the opportunity of fleeing. They are not terrified at seeing their companions fall, as though, being accustomed to this, they are not grieved by it; and they have no fear whatever of death.

CHAPTER XIX

Of the great SWIMMERS and of the KINGDOM of SENEGA

They have no ships: nor had they seen any from the beginning of the world until they had knowledge of the Portuguese. It is true that those who live on the banks of this river, and others along the sea coast, have canoes [called *almadie*, made from tree-trunks], the larger of which carry three or four men. In these they constantly fish, ferry across the river, or paddle from place to place. These same Blacks are the most expert swimmers in the world, as I know from my experience of the peoples of these parts. According to what I have been able to learn, this Kingdom of Senega marches inland on the east with the country known as Tuchuror¹; on the south with the Kingdom of Gamba: on the west with the Ocean Sea: and on the north with the already mentioned river, which divides the Tawny men from these first Blacks.

About five years before I made this voyage, this river was discovered by three caravels of the lord Infante². These ascended it and made peace with the Blacks, with whom they commenced to trade. Thus ships were lying there from year to year down to my visit.

¹ Tucolor or Tekrur, a negro kingdom on the Senegal, first mentioned as far back as the eleventh century. The Tucolors were eventually driven by Berber invaders from the desert southward across the Gambia to their present home in Futa, where they are now known as Takarir.

² The Senegal river, which had been discovered by Dinis Dias in 1445, that is to say ten years before Cadamosto's visit, not five as he says. Perhaps for 'discovered' we should read 'explored'. The Portuguese regarded the Senegal as the frontier separating the Sanhaja (Azaneguys) or Tawny Moors from the Negroes or Black Moors.

CHAPTER XX

*The TRADE between ALOUISE DA MOSTO
and the LORD BUDOMEL*

I passed beyond this river of Senega in my caravel and sailed to the country of Budomel,¹ fifty miles² by the coast from the said river: all this coast is low, without mountains. This name Budomel is the title of the ruler [not the name of the country]. It is called 'Terra de Budomel', that is to say the land of that lord, or count.

At this place I made my caravel fast, in order to have converse with this ruler, for certain Portuguese who had had dealings with him had informed me that he was a notable and an upright ruler, in whom one could trust, and who paid royally for what was brought to him. Since I had with me some Spanish horses, which were in great demand in the country of the Blacks³, not to mention many articles such as woollen cloth, Moorish silk⁴ and other goods, I made up my mind to try my fortune with this lord.

Accordingly, I cast anchor at a place on the coast of this country, called 'le Palme de Budomel', which is a roadstead, not a port. This done, I caused my negro interpreter to announce my arrival, with horses and goods for his service if he had need of them. To be brief, this lord, being informed of this, took horse and rode down to the sea-shore, accompanied by fifteen horsemen and one hundred and fifty footmen. He sent to me to say that it would please him if I would go ashore to see him, and that he would treat me with honour and esteem. Having heard of his high reputation I went thither. He entertained me

¹ The elective sovereign of Cayor is known as the Damel. Cayor formerly extended over a considerably greater area to the north-east of Cape Verde than is designated by the name at present. The inhabitants are Jalof.

² 80 miles, in Codex Marciana (*Ital.* vi. 485).

³ Horses were a regular article of the trans-Saharan caravan trade. Leo Africanus tells us that in Gao, the Songhai capital, which he visited about 1513, horses bought in Europe for ten ducats and transported across the desert were selling for forty and sometimes fifty ducats (*Leo*, III, p. 827).

⁴ Silk had long been an important article of trans-Saharan trade.

to a great feast, and after much talk I gave him my horses, and all that he wished from me, trusting to his good faith. He besought me to go inland to his house, about two hundred and fifty [twenty-five] miles from the shore. There he would reward me richly, and I might remain for some days, for he had promised me 100 slaves in return for what he had received. I gave him the horses with their harness and other goods, which together had cost me originally about three hundred ducats. I therefore decided to go with him, but before I left he gave me a handsome young negress, twelve years of age, saying that he gave her to me for the service of my chamber. I accepted her and sent her to the ship. My journey inland was indeed more to see interesting sights and obtain information, than to receive my dues¹.

CHAPTER XXI

How ALOUISE DA MOSTO went inland with the LORD BUDOMEL

I accompanied Budomel into the interior, being provided by him with horses, and all I required. When we had approached within perhaps four miles of his dwelling, he placed me in the charge of a nephew of his, called Bisboror, the lord of a village at which we had arrived. He took me into his house, and rendered me all honour and good company, and I remained there about 28 days in the month of November². During this time I frequently visited the lord Budomel, always in the company of his nephew.

I also saw much of the manner of life in this land, to which I shall refer later. I had the more occasion to see it for it was necessary to return by land to the river of Senega, for there was so much bad weather on this coast that I was obliged when I wished to embark to have my ship brought round to this river, and to go thither myself by land. Among the things I witnessed

¹ It was this spirit which distinguished Cadamosto from his contemporaries, with whom commercial gain seems generally to have been uppermost.

² This appears to be an error, as the next month mentioned is June.

was an incident when I wished to send a letter to those on board, warning them that to take me off they must put into this river, whither I was going by land. I asked these blacks if there was anyone who could swim well and was bold enough to carry my letter to the ship, three miles off shore. At once many said they were. As the sea was high and there was much wind, I said it appeared to me almost impossible that any man could succeed—principally because at a bowshot from the shore there were sandbanks and likewise farther out to sea at another bowshot more banks, between which the current was so strong, now rising, now falling, that it would be very difficult for any swimmer to keep from being swept away. The sea was breaking so heavily over these banks that it appeared impossible to pass them. However that might be, two negroes presented themselves as willing to go. I asked them what I must give them, to which they replied ‘Two maoulgis [maulie] of tin each’, which are worth a grosson each. Thus for this reward each agreed to take my letter to the ship, and entered the water.

I cannot narrate the difficulties they encountered in attempting to pass those banks in that sea. Whenever they disappeared from sight for a considerable time I thought that they must have been drowned. At last one could no longer withstand such buffeting from the waves, so many were breaking over him, and turned back: but the other stood firm, and fought for a long hour on the bank. In the end, he crossed it, and bore the letter to the ship, returning with a reply. This was to me a marvellous action, and I concluded that these coast negroes are indeed the finest swimmers in the world.

This is what I was able to observe of this lord and his manners, and his house. First, I saw clearly that, though these pass as lords, it must not be thought that they have castles or cities, as I have already explained. The King of this realm had nothing save villages of grass huts, and Budomel was lord only of a part of this realm—a thing of little account. Such men are not lords by virtue of treasure or money, for they possess neither, nor do they expend any money: but on account of ceremonies and the following of people they may truly be called lords: indeed they receive beyond comparison more obedience than our lords.

CHAPTER XXII

*The HOUSES and VILLAGES of BUDOMEL
and his many WIVES*

It must be understood that the dwelling of such a King is never fixed: he has a number of villages to support his wives and families. In the village where I was, which was called 'Casa sua', there were from forty to fifty grass huts close together in a circle, surrounded by hedges and groves of great trees, leaving but one or two gaps as entrances. Each hut has a yard divided off by hedges, and thus one goes from yard to yard, and from house to house.

In this place Budomel had nine wives: and likewise in his other dwellings, according to his will and pleasure. Each of these wives has five or six young negro girls in attendance upon her, and it is as lawful for the lord to sleep with these attendants as with his wives, to whom this does not appear an injury, for it is customary. In this way the lord changes frequently.

These negroes, both men and women, are exceedingly lascivious: Budomel demanded of me importunately, having been given to understand that Christians knew how to do many things, whether by chance I could give him the means by which he could satisfy many women, for which he offered me a great reward. They are also very jealous, and allow no one to enter the huts where their wives live—not even trusting their own sons.

CHAPTER XXIII

The HOUSEHOLD always in attendance on BUDOMEL

This Budomel always has at least two hundred negroes with him, who constantly follow him, though it is true they are always coming and going: and in addition there is no lack of people who come to meet him from divers places. At the

entrance of the house, before one reaches his living and sleeping quarters, there are seven large and enclosed courtyards, leading from one to another. In the midst of each is a great tree, so that those in attendance may sit in the shade. His household are divided among these courts according to their rank, so that in the first by the entrance are those of least account, and the nearer one approaches the apartment of Budomel, the greater is the dignity of those living in these courts, up to the door of Budomel. Very few men are bold enough to penetrate thither, save Christians, who are allowed to go about freely when they are present, and also the Azanaghi priests, that is those who are learned in the law—for more liberty is bestowed upon these two classes than upon his own negro subjects.

CHAPTER XXIV

*The CUSTOMS of BUDOMEL and of those
who HONOUR and SALUTE HIM*

This Budomel exhibits haughtiness, showing himself only for an hour in the morning, and for a short while towards evening. At these times he places himself in the court before the door of the first dwelling, to which as I have said none save the two classes mentioned and some men of standing are admitted.

Such lords as he, when granting audience to anyone, display much ceremony: however considerable he who seeks audience may be, or however high born, on entering the door of Budomel's courtyard he throws himself down on his knees, bows his head to the ground, and with both hands scatters sand upon his naked shoulders and head. This is their manner of greeting their lord. No man would be bold enough to come before him to parley, unless he had stripped himself naked save for the girdle of leather they wear. The client remains in this posture for a good while, scattering sand over himself; then, without rising, but grovelling on hands and knees, he draws nearer. When within two paces, he begins to relate his business, without

ceasing to scatter sand, and with head bowed as a sign of the greatest humility. The lord scarcely deigns to take notice of him, continuing to speak with others: then, when his vassal has done, he replies arrogantly in few words: thus by this act he shows much haughtiness and reserve: if God himself came to earth I do not think that they could do Him greater honour and reverence.

All this appears to me to proceed from the great fear and dread in which these people hold their lord, since for the most trivial misdeed he seizes and sells their wives and children. Thus it appears to me that his power exacts obedience and fear from the people by selling their wives and children. [In two ways they exercise the rights of lords, and display power, that is, in maintaining a train of followers, in allowing themselves to be seen rarely, and in being greatly revered by their subjects.]

CHAPTER XXV

The MOSQUE of BUDOMEL, and the manner of WORSHIP and of LIVING

Through the great familiarity which Budomel showed me, I was permitted to enter the mosque where they pray: arriving towards evening, and having called those of his Azanaghi, or Arabs, who are constantly on duty in the mosque—we would call them priests (they are those who are learned in the laws of Muhammad)—he entered with some of his chief lords into a certain place [where the mosque stood. There they prayed in this fashion:] standing upright and frequently looking up to the sky, [they took two paces forward, and recited some words in a low voice:] then bowed down very often and kissed the earth. Everything that the priest did, the lord and the others did also; standing upright and bowing to the earth [ten or twelve times]. And thus they continued for the space of half an hour.

When he had finished, he asked me what I thought of it. As he was very anxious to hear the articles of our faith recited, he

frequently asked me if I would consent to repeat some of them for him. Finally I told him that his faith was false, and that those who had instructed him in such things were ignorant of the truth. On many grounds I proved his faith to be false and our faith to be true and holy—thus getting the better of his learned men in argument.

The lord laughed at this, saying that our faith appeared to him to be good: for it could be no other than God that had bestowed so many good and rich gifts and so much skill and knowledge upon us [but that he had not given us good laws]. He, on the contrary, had given them good laws, and he considered it reasonable that they would be better able to gain salvation than we Christians, for God was a just lord, who had granted us in this world many benefits of various kinds, but to the negroes, in comparison with us, almost nothing. Since he had not given them paradise here, he would give it to them hereafter.

In this he showed good powers of reasoning and deep understanding of men. He was much pleased with the actions of the Christians, and I am certain it would have been easy to have converted him to the Christian faith, if he had not feared to lose his power, for his nephew, in whose hut I lodged, often told me so. He himself was exceedingly willing that I should explain our laws to him, saying that it was good to listen to the word of God.

In his way of living [that is, of eating] he conducts himself similarly to the King of Senega, as I have described above. Each of his wives sends him a certain number of dishes of food every day. All the negro lords and men of this land follow this fashion, their women supplying them with food. They eat on the ground, like animals, without manners. No one eats with these negro rulers, save those Moors who teach the law, and one or two of their chief men. All the other lesser people eat ten or twelve together, all helping themselves from a dish of food placed in their midst. They eat little at a time, but frequently, some four or five times a day.

CHAPTER XXVI

*The GRAIN and the WINE which are produced
in the KINGDOM of SENEGA*

No corn, rye, barley, spelt¹, or vines grow in this Kingdom of Senega, nor from thence onwards, in any regions of the land of the Blacks. This is because the country is very hot and without rain for nine months in the year, that is from October to the end of June. Although they have attempted to sow these grains [which they have obtained from us Christians], they will not grow because of the great heat. [Corn requires a temperate land and frequent rain, which this country lacks.] It appears that they grow various kinds of millet, small and large, beans, and kidney beans, which are the largest and finest in the world. The kidney beans are as big as the long hazel nuts familiar to us, all spotted with different colours, as though painted, and very beautiful to the eye. The beans are broad, thin, and of a bright red colour, though there are others white in colour, very beautiful². They are sown in the month of July, and harvested in September, because during the period of the rains they till the land. They sow and harvest within the space of three months. They are very bad labourers—unwilling to exert themselves to sow more than will barely support them throughout the year. Few trouble to raise supplies for market.

Their method of working is as follows: four or five of them take their places in the field equipped with certain small spades fashioned like mattocks, and advance throwing the soil before them, a practice contrary to that of our labourers who when tilling the soil draw it towards them. These throw it forward with their mattocks, and do not penetrate more than four inches or so. This is their method of agriculture, and since the ground is fertile and rich, it brings forth those things described above. They drink water, milk, or palm wine. This wine is a liquid which flows from a tree similar to, but not identical with, that which bears dates. There are not many of

¹ A kind of wheat.

² See Appendix.

these trees: they give forth this liquid, which the negroes call 'mignol', almost the whole year. They proceed in this manner: they make three or four gashes at the foot of the tree, from which flows a brownish liquid like the whey of milk, and place gourds beneath to collect it. A tree does not yield a large quantity, about two gourds in a day and a night. It is very good to drink, and is as intoxicating as wine if water is not added. When first collected it is as sweet as the sweetest wine in the world, but day by day it loses its sweetness and becomes sour. It is better after three or four days than at first. I drank it many times during my sojourn in this country, and preferred it to our own. There is not a sufficient quantity of this *mignol* for everyone to have it in abundance, but all have a reasonable amount, the chiefs the greatest. The trees which yield this wine are common to all [that is, they are not the property of a particular person], for they do not have orchards, or own such trees individually. They are all in the forest, common to everyone to tap and to avail himself of the liquor.

CHAPTER XXVII

FRUITS of various kinds, and a marvellous OIL

There are fruits of various kinds, similar to ours, and also others, which are good and which they eat. All are forest trees, that is, wild, for they do not cultivate orchards as we do, and I think that if they were cared for, as ours are, they would bear good and perfect fruit [for the air and soil are excellent].

His country is all productive land, with good pastures, and innumerable great and very beautiful trees, unknown to us. There are also many lakes of sweet water, not large, but very deep, in which many good fish, of other species than ours, are to be found, also many water serpents, called cockatrice.

In this country they use a certain oil in their food, [the making of which I do not know]. It has three properties, the

scent of violets, the taste of our olive oil, and a colour which tinges the food like saffron, but is more attractive¹.

There is also to be found in this country a species of tree which bears red nuts with black 'eyes' in great quantities—but they are small².

CHAPTER XXVIII

GREAT SERPENTS *which can* SWALLOW A GOAT, *and* CHARMERS *of them*

There are divers sorts of animals, and large numbers of snakes, great and small: some are poisonous, others not. Of the bigger, some are two paces and more in length, but without wings or feet which serpents [are said to] possess. They are so large that snakes are found which swallow a goat whole, without tearing it to pieces. It is said that these great ones are found in swarms in some parts of the country, where there are also enormous quantities of white ants, which by instinct make houses for these snakes with earth which they carry in their mouths. When these are made they resemble ovens. Of these houses they make a hundred or a hundred and fifty in one spot, like fine towns.

These negroes are very great charmers of all things, and especially of these serpents. I have heard it said by a Genoese, a man worthy of credence, that having found himself the year previous to me in the country of this Budomel, and being asleep one night in the house of his nephew, Bisboror, where I lodged, he heard in the middle of the night much hissing outside the house. On rousing himself, he saw that the said Bisboror had arisen, and having summoned two of his negroes was preparing to mount a camel and to depart. The Genoese demanded of him whither he wished to go at such an hour. He

¹ Probably ground-nut oil.

² Probably kernels from the oil palm.

replied it was on one of his duties—and suddenly made off. After an interval he returned to the house. The Genoese again questioning him, he replied: “Did you not hear hissing a while ago—hisses outside the house?” The Genoese replying in the affirmative, this is what Bisboror told him: “They were serpents, which, if I had not gone to perform a certain incantation which we of these parts employ, and by which I have turned them away, would have slain many of my animals this night.”

The Genoese said that he marvelled at such a thing, for no Christian would credit it. Bisboror replied that there was nothing marvellous in it, because his uncle Budomel could work much more powerful spells—for when he wished to collect venom to poison his weapons he made a great circle into which by a charm he drew all the snakes of the surrounding country. That which appeared to him to be the most poisonous he killed with his own hands, the rest he allowed to go. Squeezing out the blood, he mixed it with the juice from a certain tree, which I have seen, and prepared a compound with which he poisoned his weapons. A wound from these, drawing a little blood, although it might be small, would kill the wounded person in a quarter of an hour. This Genoese told me that Bisboror wished him to see the incantation put to the proof, but that he did not care to learn more.

Thus I conclude that all these negroes are great magicians; [and others could bear witness to the truth of this charming of the snakes¹, because I am given to understand] in these our parts of Christendom people are also to be found who can charm snakes.

¹ Snake charmers are still commonly found in the principal market-places of western Africa.

CHAPTER XXIX

*Great numbers of WILD ANIMALS, especially
ELEPHANTS and GIRAFFES*

In this Kingdom of Senega there are no domestic animals other than bulls, cows, and goats: no sheep are bred, nor could they live there on account of the great heat [for the sheep is an animal which prefers the temperate climes, and would sooner live in cold countries than in hot: therefore the Lord our God has in this world provided for each according to his wants: we who dwell in the cold, would be unable to live without wool: and to these negroes who are born in the hot climes, and have no need of garments, God has given, not sheep, but cotton]. The cows and bulls of this country [and also of all the land of the Blacks,] are very much smaller than ours. [I believe this is a result of the heat.] Occasionally one sees a cow with a red hide: most are black or white, or black and white mixed. Wild beasts of prey are lions and lionesses, and leopards in great numbers, also wolves¹, deer, and hares. There are also wild elephants, though they do not domesticate them, as in other parts of the world. These animals go in herds, as our swine do in the forests. [Of their size I shall say nothing, for I believe that everyone must know that the elephant is an animal with a very large body and short limbs. His size may be gathered from the teeth of ivory which are brought to our parts.] These elephants have two large teeth at each side of their mouths, [that is, one on each side,] like the wild boar, [but set in the lower jaw². There is no other difference,] save that the points of the teeth of the boar are turned upwards, while those of the elephant are turned downwards towards the ground. [I must explain that these animals have knees, which they bend when walking. I say this because I have heard others who have formerly been in these parts declare that the elephant is unable to kneel down; and that they sleep standing on their feet. This is a great lie, for they lie down on the ground and rise up like any other animal.]

¹ ? Jackals or hyenas.

² This, of course, is incorrect.

They never shed their great tusks, until death. The elephant is an animal that does not attack man unless man attacks him. The method of the elephant in attacking a man is to overtake him and deal him so strong an upward blow with his long trunk of a snout, which is like a kind of very long nose, and which he can withdraw and extend as he pleases, that the man falls to the ground as though hit by a bolt from a cross-bow. There is no man so swift that the elephant cannot overtake him in open country, the elephant going at a swift walk only, since for their great size they have a very rapid pace. They are much more dangerous when with their young than at other times. They do not have more than three or four at a time¹. They live upon leaves and fruits from the trees, which they break down on great branches with their snouts, which are very big and strong. The trunk is on the lower jaw, and they can lengthen and shorten it at will. With it they gather all their food, and drink water, putting it in their mouths, which are in their breasts. They frequent thick woods, where they wallow in the marshes like swine.

I understand that in these lands there are giraffes, and other animals of the most savage kinds.

CHAPTER XXX

PARROTS *and* BIRDS *of various kinds*

The birds in these parts are of many species, mainly parrots in great numbers, which fly everywhere. The negroes dislike them intensely, for they damage the millet and vegetables in their fields. There are [not, as is said,] many varieties of them, but I have only seen two:—large and small, and they are of divers colours—green, brownish and yellow. [One, similar to those brought from Alessandria, only apparently somewhat smaller. The other kind are much larger, with a brownish head, neck, beak, and feet, and a yellow and green body.]² I took many from their nests, of which a large number died, but I brought

¹ Cow elephants usually have only one calf.

² See Appendix.

many others back to Spain, above one hundred and fifty, selling them for half a ducat each. These parrots are very industrious in building their nests, which they make with rushes, round like a ball, in this fashion: settling on a palm, or any other tree with branches as thin and as fragile as possible, they weave a rush from the tip of the branch which hangs down two hand-breadths and at the end of this they build their nest, marvellously woven, so that when it is completed, it remains a ball hanging from the rush, in which there is only one hole for entrance¹. They build thus so that the snakes, who eat the young birds, are unable to go on to the branch, as it is not strong enough to bear their weight. In this manner they secure their nests.

There are also other large birds in these countries, called by us Guinea hens, 'galine de faraon', which are brought from the Levant. There are many of these hens, and geese, which do not resemble ours, having different feathers, and also divers other beautiful birds, large and small, of other species than ours.

CHAPTER XXXI

A MARKET, and the PEOPLE who went thither

Since it fell to me to spend many days on shore, I decided to go to see a market, or fair, at no great distance [from the spot where I was lodged]. This was held in a field, on Mondays and Fridays, and I went two or three times to it. Men and women came to it from the neighbourhood country within a distance of four or five miles, for those who dwelt farther off attended other markets. In this market I perceived quite clearly that these people are exceedingly poor, judging from the wares they brought for sale—that is, cotton, but not in large quantities, cotton thread and cloth, vegetables, oil and millet, wooden bowls, palm leaf mats, and all the other articles they use in their daily life. Men as well as women came to sell, some of the men offering their weapons, and others a little gold, but not in any quantity.

¹ Weaver birds, not parrots. See Appendix.

They sold everything, item by item, by barter, and not for money, for they have none. They do not use money of any kind, but barter only, one thing for another, two for one, three for two.

These negroes, men and women, crowded to see me as though I were a marvel. It seemed to be a new experience to them to see Christians, whom they had not previously seen. They marvelled no less at my clothing than at my white skin. My clothes were after the Spanish fashion, a doublet of black damask, with a short cloak of grey wool over it. They examined the woollen cloth, which was new to them, and the doublet with much amazement: some touched my hands and limbs, and rubbed me with their spittle to discover whether my whiteness was dye or flesh. Finding that it was flesh they were astounded.

To this market I went to see further strange sights, and also to find out whether any came thither with gold for sale, but altogether, as I have said, there was little to be found.

CHAPTER XXXII

Of the HORSES they buy, their FODDER and the HORSE CHARMERS

Horses are highly prized in this country of the Blacks, because they are to be had only with great difficulty, for they are brought from our Barbary by the Arabs and Azanaghi and cannot withstand the great heat, growing so fat that the greater part of them die from a malady in which they are unable to make water and so burst. Their forage in these parts is the leaves of the beans which are left in the fields after harvest. These are chopped very fine and dried like hay, and given to the horses for fodder in place of corn. They also give them millet, upon which they fatten greatly. A horse with its trappings is sold for from nine to fourteen negro slaves, according to the condition and breeding of the horse. [When a chief buys a horse] he sends for his horse-charmers, who have a great fire of certain

herbs lighted after their fashion, which makes a great smoke. Into this they lead the horse by the bridle, muttering their spells. Then they have it rubbed all over with an ointment, and keep it for fifteen to twenty days without anyone seeing it. Then they fasten to its neck charms compressed into a small space and covered with red leather¹. They believe that with these they are safer in battle.

CHAPTER XXXIII

The WOMEN who DANCE by night

The women of this country are very pleasant and light-hearted, ready to sing and to dance, especially the young girls. They dance, however, only at night by the light of the moon. Their dances are very different from ours.

These negroes marvelled greatly at many of our possessions, particularly at our cross-bows, and, above all, our mortars. Some came to the ship, and I had them shown the firing of a mortar, the noise of which frightened them exceedingly. I then told them that a mortar would slay more than a hundred men at one shot, at which they were astonished, saying that it was an invention of the devil's. The sound of one of our country pipes, which I had played by one of my sailors, also caused wonderment. Seeing that it was decked out with trappings and ribbons at the head, they concluded that it was a living animal that sang thus in different voices, and were much pleased with it. Perceiving that they were misled, I told them that it was an instrument, and placed it, deflated, in their hands. Where-

¹ These charms, usually containing texts from the Quran, are still very commonly worn on horses. Richard Jobson (*Golden Trade*, p. 63) gives a very similar description of them: 'The Gregories be things of great esteeme amongst them, for the most part they are made of leather of severall fashions, wouderous neatly, they are hollow, and within them is placed, and sowed up close, certaine writings, or spels, which they receive from their Mary-buckles, whereof they conceive such a religious respect, that they do confidently beleieve no hurt can betide them, whilst these Gregories are about them, and it seemes to encrease their superstition.'

upon, recognising that it was made by hand, they said that it was a divine instrument, made by God with his own hands, for it sounded so sweetly with so many different voices. They said they had never heard anything sweeter.

They were also struck with admiration by the construction of our ship, and by her equipment—mast, sails, rigging, and anchors. They were of opinion that the portholes in the bows of ships were really eyes by which the ships saw whither they were going over the sea. They said we must be great wizards, almost the equal of the devil, for men that journey by land have difficulty in knowing the way from place to place, while we journeyed by sea, and, as they were given to understand, remained out of sight of land for many days, yet knew which direction to take, a thing only possible through the power of the devil. This appeared so to them because they do not understand the art of navigation [the compass, or the chart].

They also marvelled much on seeing a candle burning in a candlestick, for here they do not know how to make any other light than that of a fire. To them the sight of the candle, never seen before, was beautiful and miraculous. As, in this country, honey is found, they suck the honey from the comb, and throw away the wax. Having bought a little honeycomb, I showed them how to extract the honey from the wax, and then asked whether they knew what it was that remained. They replied that it was good for nothing. In their presence, therefore, I had some candles made, and lighted. On seeing this, they showed much wonderment, exclaiming that we Christians had knowledge of everything.

In this country they have no musical instruments of any kind, save two: the one is a large Moorish 'tanbuchi', which we style a big drum; the other is after the fashion of a viol; but it has, however, two strings only, and is played with the fingers, so that it is a simple rough affair and of no account.

CHAPTER XXXIV

*How ANTONIOTTO and ALOUISE sailed
in company towards CAPO VERDE*

As I have said, I had occasion to remain several days in the country of the lord Budomel, that is, to see and to understand everything, and to trade. When I had despatched my business, and had acquired a certain number of slaves, I decided to continue beyond Capo Verde, to discover new lands, and to make good my venture: for before my departure from Portugal, I had understood from the Lord Infante, (as a person who from time to time had reflected upon the question of these countries of the Blacks which the caravel had reached, and upon other information,) that not very far beyond this first kingdom of Senega there was another kingdom called Gamba¹, where the negroes who had been carried off to Spain, or rather to Portugal, said, there was gold in large quantities: and that the Christians who should go thither would become rich. Hence I, moved by the desire to find this gold, and to see further novelties, despatched my business with Budomel, and returned to the caravel.

After making sail at once to leave this coast, I beheld one morning two vessels in the offing. Having sighted each other, we drew near to hail them, knowing that they could only be Christians. We learnt that one ship belonged to Antoniotto Uso da mār², a Genoese, the other to certain squires of the said Lord Infante, who were sailing in company on a voyage of discovery and trade beyond the said Capo Verde. When I found that their plans were similar to mine, I joined them. With this object in common, our three caravels set a course for this Cape, maintaining a southerly direction along the coast, always within sight of land. Accordingly the next day,

¹ Gambia.

² For Usodimare's letter to his creditors, see Magnaghi, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

aided by a favourable wind we sighted the Cape, which is distant about forty¹ of our [Italian] miles from my place of departure.

CHAPTER XXXV

CAPO VERDE; *the meaning of the name, and the customs of its inhabitants*

This Capo Verde is so called because the first to discover it (who were Portuguese) about a year before² I was in these parts found it all green with great trees, which remained in leaf throughout the year. For this reason they gave it the name of Capo Verde: just as Capo Bianco, of which we have already spoken, was found entirely sandy and white and was therefore called 'Capo bianco'. This Capo Verde is very beautiful and lofty: on the point there are two hillocks³. It runs far into the sea, and on the cape and in its vicinity there are many dwellings of negro peasants, huts of straw, close to the sea, and visible to those who pass. These negroes belong to the said Kingdom of Senega.

[Off the cape there are dry patches which extend about half a mile out to sea.] Off it we found three small islands, not very far from the land, uninhabited and covered with tall green trees. Being in need of water, we anchored off one of them⁴, which appeared the largest and most fruitful, to ascertain if any springs were to be found there. On landing we found no water, except in one spot where there was a little water, but which was of no use to us. We found many nests on the island, and eggs

¹ From this it appears that he did not travel overland to rejoin his ship on the Senegal.

² Cape Verde was reached by Nuno Tristão in 1443, twelve years before Cadamosto's visit.

³ 'The peninsula of Cape Verde is composed of moderately high land rising gradually to the Paps, two conical hills above Cape Verde itself.... The Paps are quite distinct and are visible a good sixteen miles; during the rainy season they are covered with stunted vegetation' (*Africa Pilot*, Pt. 1, p. 195).

⁴ Madeleine Islands: once covered with vegetation, though now desert. Azurara, p. 324.

of various birds [un]known to us. While we remained here we all fished with lines and large hooks and caught a great number of fish: among them shell fish and very large mature dories, weighing from twelve to fifteen pounds each. This was in the month of June.

Thence, the following day, we continued to sail on our voyage, always within sight of land. Beyond Capo Verde there is a gulf inland¹. All the coast is low, covered with very fine, tall, green trees, which never shed their leaves throughout the year, [that is they never wither, as do ours,] for new leaves appear before the old fall. These trees come right down to within a bowshot of the beach, so that it appears as though they flourished in the sea—a very beautiful sight². In my opinion, who have sailed to many places in the Levant and in the west, I have never seen a more beautiful coast than this appeared to me—watered by many rivers, and streams of little account, since large vessels cannot enter them.

Beyond this small gulf, the whole coast is inhabited by two races, the one called Barbazini³, the other, Sereri⁴: they are negroes, but not subject to the King of Senega. They have neither king nor lord of their own, but they nevertheless honour one more than another according to their birth and estate. They will not recognize any lord among them, lest he should carry off their wives and children and sell them into slavery, as is done by the kings and lords of all the other lands of the negroes. They are exceedingly idolatrous, have no laws, and are the cruellest of men. They use bows and poisoned arrows⁵; should an arrow touch the bare flesh and draw blood, the wound is at once fatal. They are very black, and well built. Their country is closely wooded, full of lakes and streams: from these they derive great security, because it is impossible to penetrate thither except by narrow tracks. They have therefore no fear of any

¹ Gorée Bay.

² Mangrove swamps.

³ The Barbacenes.

⁴ The Serer: closely allied to the Jolof. 'The Serer have the reputation of being extraordinarily tall, but actual measurements hardly bear this out. They are less black than the Wolof, but have coarser features' (Seligman, C. G., *op. cit.*, p. 59).

⁵ The most common arrow poison in this part of Africa is *strophanthus*.

neighbouring lord: it has frequently happened that kings of Senega in the past have sought to wage war to subdue them, and each time they have been roughly handled by these two races[, either through the poisoned arrows they use, or from the natural strength of the country].

Running with the wind along this coast, still voyaging southwards, we discovered the mouth of a river, perhaps a bowshot wide, and of no great depth. To this river we gave the name of Rio di Barbazini¹, and thus it is named on the 'carta da navigar' of this country made by me². It is distant sixty miles from the Capo Verde. We always navigated this coast and beyond by day, anchoring each evening at a deserted spot in ten or twelve *passa*³ of water, and four or five miles from the shore. At dawn we made sail, always stationing one man aloft and two men in the bows of the caravel to watch for breakers which would disclose the presence of shoals.

Sailing thus we reached the mouth of another large river, which appeared to be no smaller than the Rio de Senega. When we saw this fine river⁴, and the beautiful country, we cast anchor, and debated whether we should send ashore one of our interpreters—for each of our ships had negro interpreters on board brought from Portugal, who had been sold by the lords of Senega to the first Portuguese to discover this land of the Blacks.

These slaves had been made Christians in Portugal, and knew Spanish well: we had had them from their owners on the understanding that for the hire and pay of each we would give one slave to be chosen from all our captives. Each interpreter, also, who secured four slaves for his master was to be given his freedom. Lots were drawn to decide whose interpreter was to go ashore, and it fell to the Genoese. Whereupon having fitted out his boat, he sent off his man, with orders that the boat was not to be run ashore except in as far as was necessary to land the slave. He was instructed to ascertain the condition of the

¹ The Joal.

² This reference to a chart made on the voyage occurs in the Marciana MS. (*Ital.* vi. 485) and in the first printed edition, but is omitted by Ramusio.

³ Two *passa* equal approximately one fathom.

⁴ The estuary of the Solum and Jumbas rivers.

country, to whom it was subject, and whether gold and other objects of use to us were to be obtained there. Accordingly, when he had landed, and the boat had withdrawn a short distance, he suddenly encountered a great number of negroes who, having observed the ships approaching, had lain in wait with bows and arrows and other weapons to accost any of our men who might land. They conversed for a short while; what he said to them we do not know, but they began furiously to strike at him with their short Moorish swords, and quickly put him to death, those in the boat being unable to succour him.

When we were informed by our men of this, we were left stupified, realising that they must be very cruel men to do such a thing to a negro of their own race, and that they might reasonably be expected to treat us much worse. On this account, we set sail, still holding our southerly course within sight of the shore, which appeared to us continually more beautiful, more thickly covered with green trees, and always low, until at length we reached the mouth of the river of Gambia¹. Perceiving it was very wide, not less than three or four miles in the narrowest reach, so that our ships could enter in safety, we decided to lie there with the intention of ascertaining on the following day whether this was the country of Gambia, which we so greatly desired to find.

CHAPTER XXXVI

A GREAT RIVER, NAVIGATED by CANOES

On entering the river, which at its mouth is no less than six to eight miles wide, we concluded that the country must be Gambia, so ardently sought by us, and that along the river it would not be surprising to find some favourable spot where we might easily chance upon profitable business in gold or in other valuable commodities. The wind on the next day being very favourable, we sent the small caravel ahead, well manned by men from our vessels, with orders that, as the caravel was small

¹ The Gambia; Nuno Tristão had passed its mouth on his voyage of 1446.

and drew little water, they were to advance as far as possible, and if they should encounter any banks in the estuary, to take soundings. If they should find sufficient depth of water for our vessels, they were to withdraw and, after signalling, to us to anchor.

These instructions were followed out by her, for, finding about two fathoms of water at the mouth, she anchored according to orders. When the caravel had come out, it was decided to send our boat, armed, in company with hers, farther up the river, since they were small. Their instructions were that, should the negroes come in their boats to assail them, they must return at once to the ship without attempting to fight. This was because we had come thither to trade in the country peacefully and with their approval, which would be more fittingly accomplished by tact than by force. The boats having proceeded ahead, they took soundings in many places and finding nowhere less than eight fathoms of water, continued for two miles. The banks of the river proved to be very beautiful, bordered with high green trees; since the river made many turns higher up, it appeared unnecessary to them to proceed farther.

On the return, there issued from the mouth of a stream which flows into this great river, three canoes (we call them *xopoli*) which, from what I observed later, are all made of a single portion of a large tree hollowed out, fashioned like the little boats which are towed behind our ships. When our boats saw these canoes, being doubtful whether they might not have come to do them injury, and having been warned by other negroes that in this country of Gambia all the bowmen used poisoned arrows, they took to their oars in obedience to their instructions [and to avoid a quarrel], although they were sufficiently numerous to defend themselves, and returned with all possible speed to the ship. They did not return so rapidly however but that the canoes were close behind, within a bowshot of them, when they reached the ship, for they are very swift. When our men had boarded their ship, they began to gesticulate and to make signs to the canoes to draw near. These slowed down, and approached no nearer. There were about twenty-five to thirty negroes in each; these remained for a while gazing upon a thing which

neither they nor their fathers had ever seen before, that is ships and white men, without showing any wish to parley, despite all that was said to them, and then went about their own affairs. And so that day passed without further incident.

CHAPTER XXXVII

How the BLACKS ATTACKED the SHIPS in the RIVER

The following morning, at about the third hour, we on the other two ships, made sail with a favourable wind and tide to seek our consort and in God's name to enter the river, hoping that in the country farther upstream we might find more civilized people than those we had seen in the canoes. Having joined our consort, she made sail in company and we began to enter the river: the small caravel led the way over the shallows, we following one behind the other.

Having sailed about four miles upstream, we suddenly perceived several canoes coming up behind us (I do not know from whence they came) as fast as they were able. Seeing this, we turned upon them, and being dubious of their poisoned arrows of which we had been informed we protected our ships as best we could, and stood to arms at our stations, although we were poorly equipped. In a short time they reached us. I, being in the leading ship, split the canoes into two sections, and thrust into the midst of them: on counting the canoes, we found they numbered seventeen, of the size of considerable boats. Checking their course and lifting up their oars, their crews lay gazing as upon a marvel. We estimated on examination that there might be about one hundred and fifty at the most; they appeared very well-built, exceedingly black, and all clothed in white cotton shirts: some of them wore small white caps on their heads, very like the German style, except that on each side they had a white wing with a feather in the middle of the cap, as though to distinguish the fighting men. A negro stood in the prow of each canoe, with a round shield, apparently of

leather, on his arm. They made no movement towards us, nor we to them; then they perceived the other two vessels coming up behind me, and advanced towards them. On reaching them, without any other salute, they all threw down their oars, and began to shoot off their arrows.

Our ships, seeing the attack, at once discharged four bombards: hearing these, amazed and confounded by the roar, they threw down their bows, and gazing some here, some there, stood in astonishment at the sight of the shots falling into the river about them. After watching thus for a considerable while, and seeing no more they overcame their fear [of the thunder claps after many shots had been fired], and taking up their bows, began afresh to shoot with much ardour, approaching to within a stone's throw of the ships. The sailors began to discharge their cross-bows at them: the first to do so was a bastard son of the Genoese, who hit a negro in the breast so that he immediately fell dead in the canoe. His companions perceiving this pulled out the arrow and examined it closely, in astonishment at such a weapon: but this did not restrain them from shooting vigorously at the ships, the crews of which replied in like fashion so that in a short space a great number of negroes were wounded. By the grace of God, however, not one of the Christians was hit.

When they saw the wounded and dead, all the canoes with one accord made for the stern of the small caravel, where a stiff fight was waged, for her crew were few and ill armed. Seeing this I made sail for the small vessel and towed her between our two larger ships amidst a discharge of bombards and cross-bows. At this, the negroes drew off: we, lashing our three ships together by chains, dropped anchor, which, [as the water was calm] held all three.

We then attempted to parley with the negroes.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

The COUNCIL which was held on the river of GAMBRA

After much gesticulating and shouting by our interpreters one of the canoes returned within bowshot. We asked of those in it the reason for their attack upon us notwithstanding that we were men of peace, and traders in merchandize, saying that we had peaceful and friendly relations with the negroes of the Kingdom of Senega, and that we wished to be on similar terms with them, if they were willing: further, that we had come from a distant land to offer fitting gifts to their king and lord on behalf of our king of Portugal, who desired peace and friendship with them. We besought them to tell us in what country we were, what lord ruled over it, and the name of the river, and told them they might come in peace and confidence to take our wares, for we were content that they should have as much or as little as they pleased.

They replied that they had had news of our coming and of our trade with the negroes of Senega, who, if they sought our friendship, could not but be bad men, for they firmly believed that we Christians ate human flesh, and that we only bought negroes to eat them: that for their part they did not want our friendship on any terms, but sought to slaughter us all, and to make a gift of our possessions to their lord, who they said was three days distant. Theirs was the country of Gambia, and to the river, which was very large, they gave a name which I do not recall.

At this moment the wind freshened; realizing the ill will they bore us, we made sail towards them. They, anticipating this move, scattered in all directions for the land, and thus ended our engagement with them.

Thereupon, we debated [took the advice of our chief men, who formed the ship's council,] whether we should proceed farther up the river, if possible for at least one hundred miles, in the hope of finding better disposed peoples. But our sailors, who wished to return home and not to essay further dangers,

began with one accord to murmur, declaring that they would not consent to such a course, and that what had been done was sufficient for that voyage.

When we saw that this was their general desire we agreed to give way in order to avoid dissention, for they were pig-headed and obstinate men. Accordingly on the following day, we departed thence, shaping our course for Cape Verde to return, in God's name, to Spain.

CHAPTER XXXIX

*The elevation of our NORTH STAR;
and the six stars opposite*

During the days we spent at the mouth of this river, we saw the pole star once only; it appeared very low down over the sea, therefore we could see it only when the weather was very clear. It appeared about a third of a lance above the horizon. We also had sight of six stars low down over the sea, clear, bright, and large. By the compass, they stood due south, in the following fashion¹—

* * * * *
* * * * *

This we took to be the southern wain, though we did not see the principal star, for it would not have been possible to sight it unless we had lost the north star. In this place we found the night to be 13 [eleven and a half] hours, and the day 11 [twelve

¹ This figure is omitted from the printed text of the *Paesi*, 1507; the above diagram is from the Marciana MS. Ramusio's diagram differs slightly. As the Marciana MS. probably dates from *circa* 1470, it appears that as early as that date the constellation was given the form of a cross, although the first authentic drawing of it in that form was made by Mestre Joanes, who accompanied Cabral on his voyage of 1500. Fontoura da Costa does not doubt the possibility of Cadamosto having seen the Cross in June 1455: 'At 7 o'clock, at the beginning of the night, the α of the Cross would be about $8\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ above the horizon, and the γ $12\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$, so that all the Cross would have been well visible to the south-west of the South Pole' (*A marinharia dos descobrimentos*, p. 113). Cadamosto's is the first recorded notice of the Southern Cross, though doubtless it had been seen by the Portuguese mariners who had preceded him.

and a half] hours, that is, in the first days of July, or more accurately on the second of the month.

This country is hot at all seasons of the year. It is true that there is some variation, and what they call a winter: thus beginning in the aforesaid month [of July] until the end of October it rains continuously almost every day from noon¹, in the following way: clouds rise continually over the land from the E.N.E., or from the E.S.E., with very heavy thunder, lightning and thunderbolts. Thus an excessive quantity of rain falls, and at this season the negroes begin to sow in the same manner as those of the kingdom of Senega. Their sustenance is entirely millet and vegetables, flesh and milk.

I understand that in the interior of this country, [on account of the great heat of the air] the rain which falls is warm. In the morning, when day breaks, there is no dawn at the rising of the sun, as in our parts, where between dawn and sunrise there is a short interval before the shadows of night disperse: the sun appears suddenly, though it is not light for the space of half an hour, as the sun is dull and, as it were, smoky on first rising. The cause of this appearance of the sun early in the morning, contrary to what happens in our country, cannot, I think, arise from any other circumstance than the extreme lowness of the land, devoid of mountains, and all my companions were of this opinion.

CHAPTER XL

How ANTONIOTTO the GENOESE and ALOUISE DA MOSTO discovered new islands

Little or nothing can be said of the features of this country of Gambra from what we were able to see and to learn on my first voyage—particularly from our own observations—for, as will have been understood, the people of the coast were so rude and

¹ The rains in this region last from June to October. At Gorée the mean annual range of temperature is 16° F., the coolest month being February. The tornadoes 'almost always travel from east to west, and are especially frequent at the beginning and end of the rains' (Kendrew, W. G., *Climates of the Continents*, p. 37).

savage that we were unable to have speech with them on land, or to treat about anything. We were then forced to return to Spain, without advancing further, for as I have already said, our sailors refused to proceed.

Thus, the following year¹, the same Genoese gentleman² and I, once again in agreement, fitted out two caravels with the purpose of exploring this river. Having informed the said Lord Infante (without whose licence we could not have gone) that we had reached this decision, he was greatly pleased, and had one of his caravels equipped to sail in our company. Rapidly furnished with all necessaries, we left the place called Lanchus³, near Capo San Vincenzo in the beginning of the month of March⁴, with a favourable wind, and laid our course for the Canaries, which we reached in a few days. The season being favourable, we did not think it worth while to touch at these islands, but sailed steadily southwards on our voyage. And, with the assistance of a current [the waters] that flowed strongly to the south-west, we sped along very rapidly. Finally we reached Capo Bianco: Having picked it up, we stood off to sea a little. The following night there arose a storm from the south-west with a strong wind: upon which, in order not to turn back we held our course towards west-north-west, to the best of my belief, to sail as near the wind as possible⁵, for two nights and three days.

The third day we sighted land, everyone shouting 'Land, land', and marvelling exceedingly, because we were not aware of any land in these parts. Two men ordered aloft descried two large islands⁶. When we heard of this we gave thanks to our Lord God, who had led us to see new things, for we knew well that no such islands as these had been reported in Spain. [We judged that these might be inhabited.] To ascertain further and to test our fortune we made for one of them, and in a short time

¹ That is to say 1456.

² I.e. Usodimare.

³ Lagos.

⁴ The printed text of the *Paesi* has 'May': I have followed the Marciana MS. here, as March appears more probable.

⁵ Literally 'in order to parry and go by the side of the weather [or storm]'.
⁶ The Cape Verde Islands; for a discussion of priority in their discovery see Introduction, p. xxxvi.

drew near it¹. As, on arrival, it seemed large, we coasted for a short distance within sight of the shore until we reached a place which appeared to be a good anchorage: there we dropped anchor, and as the weather was calm, hoisted out the boat: this, well manned, was sent away to the land, to ascertain if there were any people on the island. The boat put off, and reconnoitred much, but found no tracks nor signs from which it might be concluded that there were inhabitants. When they had reported this to me, in order to satisfy myself completely, I sent the following morning ten men, well equipped with weapons and cross-bows, with orders to climb a mountainous and high part of the island², to see whether they could find anything, or catch sight of other islands. This they did, without ascertaining anything except that the island was uninhabited, and that there was an exceeding number of doves, which allowed themselves to be taken by hand, being unused to man. They brought back to the caravels many which they had taken with staves and clubs. From the farther shore they had sighted three other large islands, which we had not seen. One of these lay to the leeward towards the north: the other two were in line to the south, on our course, all being in sight of each other. They could also see in the western quarter, far out to sea, what appeared to be other islands, but they could not make these out clearly on account of the distance. I did not choose to go to these, as I wished to lose no time in continuing my voyage, and as I judged that they would be uninhabited and wild like the others: but afterwards when others were drawn thither by the news of the four islands I had found, these others were sought out: they proved to number ten, both large and small. They were uninhabited and nothing was found there but doves, strange species of birds, and large shoals of fishes.

But to return to my narrative: leaving this island and resuming our course, we sighted the other two islands. Then, sailing along the coast of one of them³, which appeared well-

¹ The island afterwards called Bonavista (see below, p. 65), and by the Portuguese, S. Cristovão.

² The highest point on the island is the Pic Estancia, 387 m.

³ Called by Cadamosto 'San Iacomo', and by the Portuguese Santiago (see below, p. 101). It is the largest island of the archipelago.

wooded¹, we discovered the mouth of a river issuing from it. Judging that there the water would be good, we anchored to replenish our supplies. Some of my men, having landed, went along by the bank to the mouth of this river, where they found small quantities of very white, pure salt, some of which they brought back to the ship. Of this we took as much as we required: also, finding the water very good, we replenished our supply. I should also explain that we found here large numbers of turtles (what we call *gajandre*), some of which we caught². Their shells are larger than good-sized bucklers. These the sailors killed and added to our victuals, for they said that on other occasions in the Golfo de Argin, where they are also found but not of such size, they had eaten them. I may also say that, to test everything, I ate some, and found them good, not unlike the white flesh of veal, so good was their smell and taste. We accordingly salted many of them, because they made good supplies for the voyage. I also ate on my first voyage the flesh of the elephant, which I did not consider very good. We also fished at the mouth of this river and higher up, where we found so great a quantity of fish that it is incredible to record. Many species we had never before seen were large and of fine flavour. The river was sufficiently deep for a vessel of 150 tons burthen to enter with ease—a good bowshot in width. We stayed there for two days to rest, laying in the aforementioned supplies, including many doves, of which we killed immense quantities. It is to be noted that to the first island upon which we landed we gave the name 'Isola de Bonauista', as it was the first land sighted in these parts: to this other island, which appeared to be the largest of the four, we gave the name 'Isola de San Iacomo', because it was on San Philippo Iacomo's Day that we came to anchor there³.

¹ This is correct; the forests were practically all destroyed by the early colonists, but small remnants of the original covering are still to be seen. A recent visitor mentions *Faidherbia albida*, a member of the mimosa family, and *Ficus gnaphalocarpa*, a wild fig, as being most characteristic of this (Chevalier, A., *Iles du Cap Verd*, p. 757).

² Turtles are numerous on the island, the commonest marine turtle being *Testudo midas*. Large quantities were salted down and sent to feed slaves at S. Vicente in the seventeenth century (Chevalier, A., *op. cit.*, p. 788).

³ The Feast of St Philip and St James is on May 1st. There is no explanation in the text, however, why they had spent over a month in sailing from the Canary Islands.

CHAPTER XLI

‘LE DO PALME’, *and the navigation of the
river of GAMBRA*

Having done what I have written above, we left these four islands, setting a course for Capo Verde; whither in a few days, with God’s help, we came close in shore, in sight of land at a place called ‘Le do palme’¹ between Capo Verde and Rio de Senega. As we had good knowledge of the land, we continued towards the Cape, and on the following morning passed it. We sailed on until we arrived for the second time at the aforementioned river of GAMBRA, which we entered at once, and without coming into further contact with the Blacks or their canoes, we sailed up river by day, with the lead always ready. The canoes of the negroes, a few of which we came across, kept along the river banks[, not daring to accost us]. About ten miles upstream we came upon an islet, similar to a *polesine*², formed by the river³. When we had cast anchor by it, on a Sunday, one of our sailors, who had been prostrated many days by fever, departed this life, and though his death depressed us all, nevertheless, wishing to do that which would be pleasing to God, we buried him on this island. His name was Andrea; for which reason we decided that the island should in future be called ‘Isola di Sancto Andrea’, and thus it has always been known.

Leaving the island and sailing always upstream, we were followed at a distance by some canoes of the negroes. Attracting their attention, our interpreters called to them, displaying silken

¹ These were a notable landmark near the mouth of the Senegal river. Azurara, referring to Lançarote’s expedition, says: ‘Now these caravels, having passed by the land of Sahara, as hath been said, came in sight of the two palm trees that Dinis Diaz had met with before, by which they understood that they were at the beginning of the land of the Negroes’ (Hakluyt Soc., c, p. 176). The text is in error in implying that they were south of the Senegal.

² A marshy area near a river, derived from the regional name for the lower Po valley.

³ If the ten miles are taken from the mouth of the estuary, this may be the islet off Dog Island Point.

stuffs and other articles, and gave them to understand that they might with safety draw near, that we would give them these garments, and that they need have no fear, for we were humane and well disposed men. Little by little the negroes drew nearer, gaining confidence in us, until at last they drew alongside my caravel, and one of them who could understand my interpreter boarded the ship. He marvelled greatly at her, and at the method of navigating by means of sails, for they knew no method except by rowing their canoes with oars, and considered no other way possible. He was overcome with astonishment at the sight of us white men, and marvelled no less at our clothing, so different to his—principally in that most of them went naked, or, if clothed, in a white cotton singlet. We made much of the negro, giving him many trifles of little value, with which he was exceedingly pleased, and asked many questions.

At last I ascertained that this was the land of Gambia, and that the principal lord was Farosangoli¹, who, he said, dwelt far from the river inland towards the south-south-east, according to his directions, at nine or ten days' journey. This Farosangoli was subject to the Emperor of Melli, the great Emperor of the Blacks, but nevertheless, there were many lesser lords who dwelt near the river, some on one bank, some on the other: he offered, if I were willing, to bring me to one of them, called Batimaussa², and to treat with him to enter into friendship with us, since it seemed to him that we were well disposed persons. This offer was very acceptable to me: so, taking him on board and treating him hospitably, we sailed up the river until we reached the place of the said Batimaussa, which according to our estimate was about sixty miles and more from the river mouth.

¹ According to Delafosse (*Haut-Sénégal-Niger*, II, p. 21), *faran* was a Songhai name for a chief.

² *Mansa* in the Mandingo language means king or chief, cf. Mansa Musa.

CHAPTER XLII

*How the LORD BATIMAUSSA offered
friendship to us*

Note that while ascending this stream we were going eastwards and that at the spot where we dropped anchor the stream was much narrower than at the mouth, being in our judgment no more than a mile in width. This river has many branches which join together.

Arrived at this place, we decided to send one of our interpreters with the negro into the presence of this lord Batimaussa, with a present for him, a *zuba* [*alzimba*] of Moorish silk—as we should say a surcoat—which was quite fine and made in the land of the Moors. He was to say that we had come by command of our lord King of Christian Portugal, to establish firm friendship with him, and to inform him that if he had need of the products of our country, our King would send them to him each year, and many other messages.

The interpreter went with the negro to this lord, and, in brief, we treated so with him that when we parted from him we had not only secured his friendship, but had bartered many articles, for which we received in exchange negro slaves and a certain quantity of gold, but not of much account with respect to what we had anticipated, because the rumour of it had been much greater in the reports of negroes of Senega: indeed we found very little by our standards, but by those of these very poor people it was considerable. Gold is much prized among them, in my opinion, more than by us, for they regard it as very precious: nevertheless they traded it cheaply, taking in exchange articles of little value in our eyes.

We remained here about fifteen days¹, and in this time many negroes dwelling on a part of the border of this river came to our ships—some to gaze upon a sight so strange to them: others to sell some trifle of theirs, or little rings of gold. The articles

¹ Thus in the '*Paesi*'; the Marciana MS. has 'about two days'; Ramusio 'about eleven days'.

they brought were cotton cloth and thread, cotton cloths woven in their fashion, some white, others variegated, white and blue striped, or red, blue, and white, excellently made. They also brought many apes, and baboons of various species large and small, of which there are very large numbers in these parts. These they bartered for objects of little worth, giving ten *marchetti* for the value of one. They also brought for sale civet, and the skins of cats from which civet is obtained. They gave an ounce of civet in exchange for an article not worth forty or fifty *marchetti*, not that they sold by weight, but as I say by estimation. Others brought fruits of various kinds, among them many small wild dates, which they eat. Many of our sailors ate them, and found them of a different flavour to ours, but I had no desire to eat them, for fear of dysentery. In this way we had each day fresh people of various tongues down at the ships. They are constantly journeying from place to place up and down the river in their canoes, with women and men, as with us our boats do on the floods.

But all their navigation is by means of oars: they row standing up, so many on each side. They always have one extra rower at the stern, who rows now on one side, now on the other, to keep the boat straight. They do not use rowlocks for their oars, but hold them steady with their hands. The oars are fashioned thus: they have a shaft, like a short lance, a yard and a half in length: at the head of this shaft they nail, or rather bind after their fashion, a round disc: with this style of oar they row their boats exceedingly swiftly along the shore from point to point. There are many mouths of streams which they enter and leave in safety, but they do not commonly venture far outside their own country, for they are not safe from one district to the next from being taken by the Blacks and sold into slavery.

At the end of a certain time¹ we resolved to depart thence, and to proceed to the mouth of the river, because many of our men began to suffer from a high fever, sharp and continuous: thus we left suddenly.

¹ 'Two days' in Marciana MS.

CHAPTER XLIII

WILD ELEPHANTS *and the method of hunting them*

Of the things to be recounted of this country, from our own observations, and from the information we gathered during the short time we were there, we shall deal first with their faith. It is, in general, idolatry in various forms: great credence is placed in spells, and other diabolical methods with which they are acquainted, but all recognize one God, and some of them hold the tenets of Muhammad. The latter are men who frequent other countries, not remaining tied to their homes, for the peasantry know nothing of such things.

In their way of life they conduct themselves in almost all respects similarly to the negroes of the kingdom of Senega; they eat the same foods, except that they have more varieties of rice than grow in the country of Senega: also they eat the flesh of dogs, which I have never heard is eaten elsewhere. Their garments are of cotton, whereas almost all the negroes of Senega go naked. They are clothed because of the great abundance of cotton. The women are also clothed in a similar style, except that they delight in their youth to work designs upon their flesh with the point of a needle, either on their breasts, arms, or necks. These appear like those designs of silk that are often made on handkerchiefs: they are made with fire, so that they never disappear.

This region is very hot, and the more one advances towards the south, the hotter these countries become. On this river particularly it is very much hotter than on the sea, because it is covered with numerous and very large trees which are everywhere throughout the country. Concerning the size of these, I may say that, at a spring near the river bank from which we drew water, there was a very great and broad tree; its height, however, was not in proportion to its size, for while we judged it to be about 20 paces high we found the girth by measurement to be about seventeen paces round the foot. It was hollow in many places, and its branches were very large so that they threw a

deep shade around¹. There are to be found even larger trees, so that from such trees it may be concluded that the nature of the country is good, and fertile, being bathed with many waters.

There are large numbers of elephants in this country. I have seen three wild ones, for they do not know how to domesticate them as in other parts of the world. When we caught sight of these three elephants emerging from the forest, the ship was lying in midstream: some of us jumped into the boat to go to them for they were some distance off, but when the animals saw us approaching, they returned to the forest. Later I saw a small one, dead: for, to satisfy me, a negro lord named Gnumimenssa², dwelling near the mouth of this river of Gambia, set out to hunt it with many negroes, following for two days before they killed it. They go hunting on foot, carrying no other weapons for the attack save the *azagaie* which I have described above and bows, all their weapons being poisoned. You should know that they seek the elephants in woods, for these prefer swampy places, where for the most part they resort, like swine. The negroes place themselves behind the trees, and wound the elephant with arrows or poisoned spears. They advance scrambling and jumping from tree to tree, so that before the elephant, which is an unwieldy animal, can escape, it is wounded in many places without being able to defend itself: I may say here that in the open, with no trees near, no man would dare to face one, for no man can run so fast that the elephant, without breaking out of its ordinary pace, cannot overtake him; for considering his size his pace is very rapid: if it happens by a mischance that an elephant pursues a man in the open and overtakes him he attacks him with nothing but his great trunk, which is somewhat like that of a pig, except that the pig's snout is not mobile, as is the elephant's. It resembles a large tough lip, which, unlike the pig, he is able to twist, extend and shorten at will; winding this trunk around the man he hurls him so far into the air that often he is dead before he falls to the ground. This was told me by many negroes. But the elephant is not however so ferocious an animal that it will attack men without first being annoyed.

¹ The Baobab.

² King, or chief, Gnumi.

I saw this small elephant lying dead on the ground. Its tusks were no more than three spans in length. Of these three spans, one was embedded in the jaw, so that the tusks were actually only two spans in length. For this reason they said it was a young animal, since some have tusks from ten to twelve spans long: but small though it was, we judged that its carcass equalled those of five or six of our bulls.

I was given this elephant by the chief, that is, I was allowed to take whatever portions of it I wished, and the remainder was given to the hunters for food; gathering from this that its flesh is eaten by the negroes, I had a portion cut off, which, roasted and broiled, I ate on board ship, to establish this thoroughly, and to be able to say that I had eaten of the flesh of an animal which had never been previously eaten by any of my countrymen. The flesh, actually, is not very good, seeming tough and insipid to me. I also brought away one of its feet and a portion of its trunk to the ship, and also many of the hairs from its body, a span and a half in length or more, and very thick. These, with a portion of the flesh [which I had salted down], I presented later in Spain to the lord don Heurich, who received them as a handsome gift, being the first that he had had from the country discovered through his energy.

CHAPTER XLIV

Of the feet and limbs of the elephant: and of the river-horse

I wish it to be understood that the foot of the elephant is round, almost like the foot of the horse, but the foot has not a hoof like the horse, but is all a black, thick, callosity: around this there are five claws, level with the ground, round, and little larger than a *grossone*. The foot of this little elephant was not so small but that it was a span and a half in width, across the sole in every direction, for, as I have said, it is quite round, like a platter.

I was also given by the same chief another elephant's foot which I measured several times across the sole in the presence of many people, and found it to be three spans and an inch in breadth in either direction. I also presented this to the lord Infante, with a tusk twelve spans long, which with the said foot he ordered to be given to the lady Duchess of Bergogna¹ as a worthy present. Do not believe that the elephant cannot bend its knees, as I have heard said at times; on the contrary it moves, bends, and rises like any other animal.

Also in this river of Gamba, and in many other rivers in the country, in addition to the cockatrice and divers other animals, there is found an animal called a 'river horse'² (*pesse cavallo*); this animal is in nature something like the 'old man of the sea' (*vechio marin*), which lives now on the land, now in the water, and maintains itself in both elements. It is formed thus—its body, the size of a cow's, with short limbs, has cleft feet, and its head is shaped like a horse's, with two large tusks, as a wild boar has. These are very large, for I have seen some two spans in length, and at times longer. This animal frequently comes out of the water, and walks about on the banks like a quadruped: the like has not been found in any other parts to which we Christians have sailed, save these countries of the Blacks [as far as I can ascertain, unless, perchance, in the Nile.]

There are also to be found bats, or as we say *nottole*, of three spans and more, and many other birds of different kinds to ours, and especially innumerable parrots. This river is rich in fish, unlike ours in form and flavour, but none the less very good to eat.

CHAPTER XLV

The great river of CASAMANSA and CAPO ROSSO

As I have said above, we left [the port of Mansa, in] the country of the chief Batimansa, on account of illness among our men, and in a few days cleared the river. On issuing forth, it seemed

¹ The Duchess of Burgundy was Prince Henry's sister.

² The hippopotamus.

to us all, that, having sufficient victuals, it would be a praiseworthy action, since we were there, to cruise farther along this coast, for with three ships, we had sufficiently good company: accordingly, one day towards the third hour, we made sail with a favourable wind. As we were greatly engulfed in the mouth of the Rio de Gambia and the land towards the south-south-east ran well out to sea, appearing to form a cape, we set a westerly course to run well out to sea: and this land appeared low, covered with innumerable very beautiful, large green trees.

When we had stood out to sea a sufficient distance, we discovered that this could scarcely be called a cape, for beyond the point the coast-line was seen stretching away. Nevertheless we went well beyond the point, for around it the sea was breaking more than four miles off¹. For this reason, we kept two men continually in the bows, and one at the masthead, to look out for rocks or other shoals. We navigated by day only, with as little sail as was necessary, kept strict watch, and anchored at night. The caravels sailed one after the other, as decided by lot each day, for each of us wished our consorts to lead the way, but all was decided by lot; one day it would fall to us, on another day to the others.

Navigating thus for two days along the coast, always in sight of land, we discovered on the third the mouth of a quite considerable river², which proved to be half a mile across. Continuing farther, we sighted towards evening a small gulf, which appeared almost like the mouth of a river. Accordingly, as it was late, we dropped anchor. The following morning making sail, and drawing inshore, we discovered the mouth of another large river³. It seemed, in my judgment, little smaller than the mouth of the river of Gambia: on either side of the river, great masses of very beautiful, tall, green trees were to be seen. Putting in, we cast anchor. After consulting together, we decided to arm two of our boats, and to send them ashore with our interpreters to gather information about the country—the name of the river, and of its chief. This was done; the boats put off

¹ Bald Cape and the reefs lying off it.

² Either the River Bliss or the River Suta. The 'small gulf' is perhaps the Oyster River.

³ Kasamanze River.