At 7 o’clock in the morning of Saturday, 22 January, I entered the canoe again to start the journey to Monrovia by way of Oldfield. We were now going up the Junk River; with a few exceptions and, contrary to the Du
Queah, I found it to be very straight and to run roughly parallel to the coast. It often approached this even closer than was the case at Schieffelinsville, and during our journey we could sometimes hear the surf quite clearly. The river banks were swamp-like almost all along, and were at first covered with dense stands of Pandanus. Reddish and straight stilt roots, of uniform thickness and covered with wart-like thorns, bear the trunk that starts at a height of some 3–8 feet above the water level; this in turn bears the erect branches that each have a cluster of leaves. From these, the heavy, grass-green and melon-like fruits that are covered with thorny cusps, are also suspended. The Pandanus is characteristic of the swampy river banks in Liberia, and never fails to impress not only the newcomer, but also those who have become accustomed to this type of landscape. It should be noted, as we will see in this chapter as well as later, that the Pandanus does not occur exclusively in the lower reaches of rivers, but even above the rapids, where the water never becomes brackish. Further up the Junk River, the Pandanus is replaced by Mangrove forest, which is usually interspersed with stands of Wine palms. Their long fronds with green and reddish shafts protrude over the water along the banks, and in some places the water is completely covered with the aforementioned white flowers. Although we made good progress in the pleasant cool of morning, we had been canoeing in a general westerly direction for more than one hour before we found the first landing at the bank. From here, a narrow footpath ascends a small slope to the house of a Liberian, Mr. Rundall, who leads a somewhat solitary life. This spot lies at the edge of a low range of hills that probably extends from the interior and ends here at the river.

Above Mr. Rundall’s Place the river makes an enormous bend, and the thus formed peninsula is covered with mighty trees. A narrow forest creek that is passable exclusively at high water, and even then only by canoe, cuts through the base of this large loop and allows one to save half an hour’s time if one arrives at the right moment. We too made use of this creek, which is called cut-off after this time-saving characteristic. Large amounts of rocky debris—the only ones along the entire Junk River—lay at the entrance of the creek and also covered the river’s bottom, indicating a rocky substratum to the hills that terminate here. I cannot think of any other possibility than that this creek is the relic of the original river’s course, and the river will probably reclaim its former rights before too long [to date, it hasn’t, according to aerial photographs which we have examined]. Soon we had reached the broad river again and we continued in a straight, now somewhat northwesterly direction and without a noticeable change in the uniformity of the landscape. After we had