

Christa Landert

Johann Heinrich Lienhard (1822–1903) and His Manuscript: A Biographical Sketch

The beautiful view of the broad valley where the family's home stood; the mountains, valleys, rivers, and lakes of four closely connected cantons; the magnificent view of Lake Zurich with its numerous splendid villages! It was down there, over there, that I always knew I, too, would have to go some day¹

Fernweh, the longing for faraway lands, could, indeed should serve as a motto for Heinrich Lienhard's manuscript. This longing shaped his childhood, his youth, and was the driving force during many years of traveling. At the time when he composed his manuscript, he had reached his fifties and for about twenty years had been living in his stately house on the Mississippi; it is a picturesque place where the broad river calmly flows by, embracing the little town in a sicklelike bend. Quite early this scenic beauty had attracted the Mormons² and the Icarians³ to Nauvoo. Yet it was not the historic significance of that place with which the author was concerned, it was his own past that absorbed his thoughts. The time for reminiscence seemed to have come: he was gradually withdrawing from farm work, and the children were growing up. They were doing so in the New World and no longer conversed in the language of their parents; the home of their forebears, the years of their father's wanderings, all this they knew only from his narration. Yet these were things that had shaped his life and that he did not want to be forgotten. He explains his undertaking as follows: "Often I have toyed with the idea of writing down my past, that is, as far as I can remember it, assuming that such an account of my experiences might be of some interest at least to my children, perhaps even to my grandchildren."⁴ Thus, as in his youth he had turned his sight on far horizons, he now looked back on the Old World, on his parents' home in Switzerland.

I

Heinrich Lienhard was born on 19 January 1822 at a place called

Ussbühl in Bilten, Canton Glarus. He spent his childhood and youth on the small farm of his parents Kaspar and Dorothea Lienhard-Becker, together with his elder siblings Peter and Barbara and his younger brother Kaspar. Living conditions were modest, and the hardworking and strict father expected wholehearted work and obedience from the entire family. Heinrich performed his tasks on the farm without much enthusiasm, because they allowed little time for hobbies. Drawing, painting, handicrafts, and roaming in nature fascinated the boy far more than the duties imposed on him by his father. As he grew older, he took advantage of Sundays as far as possible for long walks. "In particular I had the urge to see something new," he recalls, "especially new landscapes, which the mountains of my homeland so amply provide."⁵

School opened up a new world to him. Thanks to the dedicated pastor Johann Rudolf Schuler, Bilten was one of the first villages of the Glarus region to introduce regular instruction for children. For many years, however, the pastor struggled against the opposition of parents, most of whom wanted to see their children engaged in more useful tasks than daily lessons and homework. Besides fulfilling his pastoral duties, he personally taught the upper grades and knew how to awaken the pupils' interest by his varied and stimulating instruction. He recognized their individual talents and strove to develop them. Heinrich liked geography and composition, but he loved natural history "with body and soul."⁶ Among his fellow students he soon became known as a wizard at drawing, and the pastor, too, discovered his talent soon enough. Often he would bring the boy pictures, and Heinrich zealously copied them at home. Yet his father was not at all pleased: "Out with the lazy fellow," he would scold; "how dare he draw in the middle of the day when so much pressing work is to be done! Your drawing craze does not put bread on the table and is totally useless to farming people!"⁷ And he did not even change his view when the pastor himself tried to convince the parents "that they should apprentice me to a painter, designer, or sculptor; that it was a sin not to develop such a good talent which would provide me with a good income in the future; yet all was to no avail, and my father was not to be reasoned with in this matter."⁸

At Pentecost of 1838 Heinrich Lienhard was confirmed. Since Bilten did not provide further educational opportunities, and since he had to remain at home, he now assisted his father on the farm. Yet he never forgot how he envied his former schoolmates who could attend distant schools and who "returned home cheerfully for vacation as so-called students, their caps gaily adorned, and draped in sashes."⁹ In those years he held out on the parental farm only because of his dearly beloved mother; now that he was grown up he wanted to protect her from his father's fits of anger, as she had done so many times for him when he was still a child. When she died in January 1842 it was clear to him that nothing could keep him at home much longer: "I will go to America,"¹⁰ he vowed at her deathbed. Half a year later he sold the plot of land he had inherited from his mother.

Although firmly resolved to emigrate to America, he did not want to

leave Switzerland without his father's consent. Therefore he decided to make use of the time until he could obtain it, and learn a trade. First he became an apprentice of a furniture maker in Wädenswil, soon after of a gunsmith in Stäfa. Yet at both places he had to spend more time working in the house and the garden than learning his trade, despite an agreement to the contrary; therefore he quit both apprenticeships prematurely. Back home, after long disputes, he finally gained his father's consent to his plans. Without further delay he prepared for his departure and, in August 1843, bade his father, brothers and sister farewell. Together with Jakob Aebli, a young man from the same village, he traveled via Basel, Le Havre, New Orleans, and St. Louis to New Switzerland, later Highland, in Illinois.

He spent the next two and a half years mainly at that place. It was a time of adjusting to the New World and of experimenting with the freedom he had yearned for so long. In Highland he earned his livelihood as a farm hand; at first he worked without pay, later for a few dollars a month. In the course of time he occasionally left the Swiss settlement to travel up the Mississippi, taking on several jobs along the way in the hope of finding better-paid work soon.

In the spring of 1846 the farmer Jakob Schütz made Heinrich Lienhard an offer: he planned to open a store with a post office and hoped to win over his young friend as a partner. The latter, however, was not yet ready to settle down. As early as 1843, on his way to Highland, he had heard that each year in the spring small groups of emigrants gathered in Missouri to embark on a westward journey of many months. Such an idea had intrigued him at once. Although until 1845 most of these groups emigrated to Oregon, it was the magic word "California" that he could not get out of his mind. Before answering Schütz, therefore, he went to St. Louis in the hope of finding other persons interested in such a trip. Yet at that time the Mexican province on the distant Pacific coast was not known to many people in the United States, and thus his search for traveling companions was greeted with sheer amazement. "I am afraid," he comments, "that more than one of those I asked must have thought that I was out of my mind, because they stared at me as if I were asking them about a trip to the moon in a balloon: 'To travel to California—where on earth is such a place?' they wondered."¹¹

Disappointed he returned to Highland and now agreed to learn the shopkeeper's trade with an acquaintance of Schütz who owned a store in St. Louis. Returning to the city, he was luckier this time. After a few weeks he by chance met some old friends from Galena¹² with whom only a year before he had talked about emigrating to California and who were just preparing for that very venture. Little effort was needed on their part to persuade him to join them in their undertaking! Besides his restless longing for faraway lands and for adventure, there was another reason why he wanted to leave the region: in Highland he suffered regularly from malarial fever and had learned from his physician that he could not expect relief in that climate.

The journey of the "Five German Boys," as Heinrich Lienhard and

his four companions were called by the other emigrants,¹³ was to be a very special experience. It led them from Independence, Missouri, to New Helvetia or "Sutter's Fort" in California and lasted six months. The means of transportation, mainly for their baggage, was a covered wagon drawn by oxen; the emigrants themselves went most of the way on foot. In 1846, there was no trail to California yet for emigrants, let alone for their wagons, so that especially the second half of the way required the utmost effort and skill of humans and animals alike. In a lively way, obviously reflecting his happy mood during those months, Lienhard describes the exact route and the various aspects of daily life on the trail: the shifting relationships among the emigrants, encounters with the Indians, the changing landscapes as well as the trials and dangers met with on difficult passages such as the Great Salt Lake Desert or the Sierra Nevada.

Even before arriving at Sutter's Fort, the emigrants were met in California by a recruiting agent of the United States Army. Like many a young man traveling alone, Lienhard, too, signed up for a three months' volunteer service in the war against Mexico.¹⁴ He was urged to join the army by a companion who had lent him a few dollars and wanted his money back as soon as possible. Although Lienhard was reluctant to sign up, he consoled himself with the prospect of getting to know the country right from the start.

It was only some weeks later, however, when on his way to the provincial capital of Monterey, that he fully grasped the consequences of his new assignment. He observed the Spanish-Mexican people, whom he met there for the first time, with great interest. He was deeply impressed by their appearance, their way of dress, their manners, their riding skills and by the many other things he saw in the pueblos. As a matter of consequence the thought of making war on them made him feel quite unhappy. A severe fever, however, was to prevent him from being sent to the front lines; it barely allowed him to reach Monterey, where his friends immediately took him to the hospital. The following weeks may well have been the most difficult ones of those years, and more than once Lienhard wished to die. Having overcome the crisis, he changed from the hospital to headquarters; freed from field service as a convalescent, he became responsible for the kitchen, where he worked with two Indians until his discharge. In his spare time he enthusiastically took long walks along the picturesque bay of Monterey; there, by examining the rich flora and fauna, his spirits quickly revived.

During the next years Heinrich Lienhard worked for John A. Sutter, the owner of New Helvetia. From February to September 1847 he lived some forty miles north of Sutter's Fort near the Indian village of Mimal, where he tended a fruit and vegetable garden on the Yuba River. Next he served for some months as major-domo of the fort, and at the end of the year 1847 he traveled to San Francisco as the supercargo on Sutter's wheat-laden schooner. Although Sutter would have liked to entrust him further with these regularly dispatched wheat transports, Lienhard made no other such journey. Regular trips on the Sacramento would

have become monotonous and, besides, navigation was in the hands of Indians who were far more skilled than he in such matters.

It was all the more eagerly that he accepted the next task the fort's owner offered him. After the gardens in distant Mimal had been abandoned, Sutter wanted to plant new ones near the fort. Heinrich Lienhard was free to plan, arrange, and then maintain them according to his own wishes. The undertaking required hard work, but also brought him great satisfaction. A varied selection of fruit trees, vines, vegetables, and flowers grew abundantly and soon supplied the fort with a rich harvest.

In these early months of 1848 the news spread that on the south fork of the American River, at the site where Sutter's sawmill was being built, gold had been found. Soon Heinrich Lienhard was almost the only white employee who continued his assigned work at the fort. The gold fever spread quickly: whoever could, hurried to the mines to take advantage of the moment, before the expected rush from all over the world. It was only in August that Lienhard joined the miners, yet he did so remaining Sutter's partner. Sutter provided him, as he had done for the garden, with several Indian youths and with tools; the profits were to be shared fifty-fifty between the two of them. Now Lienhard learned how to wash gold, and his efforts soon paid off. Conscientiously he weighed the newly found metal and gave half of it to Sutter; at Sutter's urging, however (he wanted to impress his son at the fort), Lienhard also handed him his own half on loan.

Returning to the fort some weeks later, he had an unpleasant surprise: Sutter's son August, who had arrived from Switzerland that summer and had immediately taken charge of his father's business, was so beset by creditors that, contrary to the agreement his father had made with Lienhard, he was unable to return the loan. Heinrich Lienhard was thus forced to give up his long-cherished plan of riding to the mountains to trade with the Indians. After three weeks of idle waiting, so as not to lose everything, he finally agreed to accept Sutter's flock of about one thousand sheep in lieu of payment. As soon as the deal was struck, he moved to the sheep farm at some distance from the fort, happy to have escaped the chaotic conditions which the gold rush had brought about at New Helvetia.

The winter of 1848-49 was unusually cold and wet, so that a large number of sheep perished. Luckily, with the return of warmer days, the rest of the flock soon recovered. This induced Jakob Dürr,¹⁵ a Swiss who had been living on the sheep farm for some time, to become Heinrich Lienhard's partner. In the spring of 1849 they set out to migrate and trade the animals. Because Lienhard—rightly as it turned out—distrusted Dürr's Indian companion from Oregon, he soon decided to sell his own half of the flock to his partner and leave their camp. Dürr was reluctant at first, but when Lienhard offered him the animals at a favorable price, he eventually agreed. He washed gold in the nearby river for several days to procure the sum agreed upon, and soon after, Heinrich Lienhard, in excellent spirits, rode back to the fort with gold worth six thousand dollars under his saddle. He was determined to

become independent at last and to take up a business of his own choosing, a step which in the past Sutter's chronic insolvency had repeatedly thwarted.

Yet this time it was Sutter's eldest son that thwarted his plans: August Sutter begged him to bring his mother, brothers and sister,¹⁶ who were then still living in Switzerland, to California. Lienhard would have preferred to stay in California at that moment, but since Sutter wanted to entrust this task to no one else, he finally consented after advantageous conditions had been worked out. He left San Francisco in June 1849, traveling via the Isthmus of Panama to New York and from there via England and Germany to Switzerland. As several relatives and acquaintances of Mrs. Sutter had decided to join her, Lienhard, in the fall of 1849, returned with a group of ten people; he traveled via the same route back to San Francisco where all arrived safe and sound in early January 1850. Besides a visit to his own family, the journey had provided him with an abundance of unforgettable impressions and new experiences.

The months that followed proved to be a prolonged farewell rather than a new beginning; only six months later Lienhard was to leave California for good. The hotel that he had built in Eliza City, a newly founded town named after Sutter's daughter, soon turned out to be a bad investment, because speculators were promoting the neighboring Marysville. In the spring of 1850 he sold his property in Eliza City to August Sutter, Jr., a transaction that, at the end of his stay in California, led to an unpleasant dispute in that Sutter refused to pay the installments agreed upon. Lienhard then leased the land he owned in Sacramento and entrusted a friend with its management. In June, as the year before, he traveled to San Francisco for the last time to book his passage to New York.

Leaving California proved to be difficult. Lienhard had taken root there and made many friends. He loved the land with its pleasant climate, its wide prairies, and attractive hunting grounds. Furthermore the discovery of gold had, in a very short time, won him a fortune greater than he had ever dreamed of. Yet with increasing disgust he had also become witness to the other side of that apparently fortunate circumstance. The gold rush had provoked lawlessness of every kind, had most brutally sealed the fate of the Californian Indians, and had changed the life of the white settlers as well.

While waiting for the steamer, Lienhard often walked up Telegraph Hill; from there he could view the splendid bay and the bustling city filled with the noise of construction, the city that, as Yerba Buena, had numbered less than fifty small wooden cabins on his arrival just four years before. "My stay and the many adventures filled my thoughts," he remembers,

I had lived here for just a short time, and yet—how rich and varied were my experiences!—"Is it right," I pondered, "that you now leave this land where you have worked for and gained everything you own?" Such thoughts, however, were always quickly countered by another: If only

the laws of the land and its conditions were better established—yes, I could tell myself, then I might want to stay.¹⁷

Lienhard took his time returning to Switzerland. For the third time he crossed the Isthmus of Panama, spent several weeks on the East Coast, and then traveled across the Atlantic to France. From Le Havre he went for the first time to Paris which, together with Versailles, he toured with a hired guide. On the last day of 1850, after a journey of seven months, he again walked up the narrow footpath, so familiar to him, towards his parental home. Seven bountiful years of apprenticeship and travel thus came to an end. The longing for faraway lands had been stilled; tired of traveling, and ready to settle down, he now turned to other things.

By bringing his reminiscences to a close at this point, the author underscored the fact that with his return home an important period of his life had ended. The last folio of the manuscript in its present form is number 238. Most of its text is crossed out, and on its front page we find the following remark dating from later years: "From this point on, no one outside my family shall read my recollections."¹⁸ The last four folios have not been preserved, and one may assume that the author himself removed them. That they are missing is evident from a table of contents; the headings of the four missing folios read as follows: "239: Meeting my future wife; 240: Honeymoon; 241: Return; 242: Maria Einsiedeln; a purchase in Kilchberg." We shall deal with this period in a later section.

II

Leafing through and studying Heinrich Lienhard's manuscript today, well over a century after its composition, we cannot help being amazed at the care and perseverance with which the author, probably over a period of several years, devoted himself to his task of writing, leaving us a legacy of a very special kind. In regular, fluent lines of nineteenth-century German handwriting, he fills page after page of once-folded folio sheets, numbering them in the upper left-hand corner of the front pages. Soon he disregards the fine lines on the paper, choosing a smaller spacing. Neither chapter headings nor subdivisions break the narrative flow, and it is only after nearly a thousand closely written pages that he finally puts his pen down. One may assume that he relied in his narrative not only on his excellent memory, but also on diaries or at least on diarylike notes. He mentions a diary only once, however, in connection with the journey to California where, at one point unable to provide exact dates, he remarks that the entries for the first part of the journey were lost. Yet he does not simply compile his diaries and notes, but writes the whole story anew and gives it its own form. Starting with his earliest childhood he progresses chronologically and closes with the founding of his own family. He does not, however, strictly adhere to a past-tense perspective; occasionally he shifts into the narrative present, reflecting on an event, offering a short commentary, or making a formal reference, when, on occasion, he anticipates or adds an occurrence.

Throughout the text, written in black ink, numerous minor emendations in red ink are to be found; they usually represent insignificant linguistic or topical additions. The handwriting of these emendations reveals a Lienhard grown older; presumably he wrote them before the first partial publication of his manuscript (see below), when he reread his work and strove to improve certain words or expressions. It was also probably on this occasion that he crossed out the text of folio 238 and removed the last four folios. The separate table of contents at the end of the manuscript reproduces, with minor changes, the notations that, within the text, are entered perpendicularly in the left-hand margin of the front page of each folio. For the dating of the manuscript, the following entry in the margin of the passage describing Lienhard's arrival at the Great Salt Lake is significant: "This was written about sixteen years ago, now it is the end of December 1890."¹⁹ This remark shows that Lienhard must have composed his text during the mid-1870s.

For a long time the manuscript remained in the hands of the family. But we must assume that the following generations found it increasingly difficult to read and understand their forebear's text. In 1949, a granddaughter sold the manuscript to the Bancroft Library in Berkeley, California, where it is accessible today in its original form as well as on microfilm. Yet it had already awakened the interest of people outside the family in Lienhard's own lifetime. The first to deal with the text was Kaspar Leemann, a friend from Lienhard's days in Kilchberg (1850-54), whose edition was published in 1898.²⁰ The book was undoubtedly successful, for only two years later a second printing appeared. However, Leemann's version contains many errors of transcription, substantial omissions and changes in the text, so that, in many places, the original is hardly recognizable. Understandably, Lienhard, then approaching his eighties, was deeply disappointed, as the notes in the margins of his personal copy reveal.

In the United States the first partial edition, prepared by Marguerite E. Wilbur, was published in 1941 as *A Pioneer at Sutter's Fort, 1846-1850: The Adventures of Heinrich Lienhard*.²¹ As indicated by the title, Wilbur translated the sections relating to Lienhard's stay in California, excluding his trip to Switzerland in 1849. On the whole she follows the original, yet often omits episodes that, according to her judgment, "proved to be of slight historic value."²² This fails to do justice to the original intention of the text, in that it mainly eliminates such passages that center on Lienhard's more private experiences, for example, his illness in Monterey. Yet it is in such passages that various facets of his character are reflected that are vital to a personal account of this kind.

In 1951 J. Roderic Korns and Dale L. Morgan were the next to use Lienhard's original text as an important source in their research on the "Hastings Cutoff,"²³ Lienhard and his friends being among the first to cross that section of the trail. Ten years later E. G. and E. K. Gudde edited a textually accurate partial translation under the title *From St. Louis to Sutter's Fort*.²⁴ In their preface the editors characterize Lienhard's text as "one of the three classical reports of the great western

migration of 1846,"²⁵ thus indicating its prominent place among the copious sources on this topic. In contrast to the above-mentioned editions, a few smaller works and partial translations from earlier years are based on the unsatisfactory Leemann edition.

Two newspaper articles written by Heinrich Lienhard were published independently of his manuscript. The first appeared in the *Glerner Zeitung* after his stay in Switzerland in 1849;²⁶ it is a firsthand account of California, Sutter's Fort, the discovery of gold, and life in the mines. Lienhard also describes the most advantageous route to California, undoubtedly of much interest to many readers. The second article appeared in 1885 in the San Francisco *Daily Examiner*.²⁷ Lienhard had sent it as a letter to the editor to recall that eventful time in and about Sutter's Fort and, as he pointed out, to divert his mind from the recent death of his daughter Dora.

Thus to this day Lienhard's manuscript has not been published in its entirety. The following segments are available: the 1846 journey to California (Gudde, 1961), and the stay in California from 1846 to 1850 (Wilbur, 1941, with omissions). At present two editions are in preparation: in English a translation of the first part of the manuscript up to Lienhard's departure to California in the spring of 1846,²⁸ in German the text relating to California before, during, and after the discovery of gold.²⁹

The length of the manuscript—a transcription of its 238 folios resulted in some two thousand pages—is such that a partial edition will probably remain the only possible approach to the text. Although its chronological structure does not preclude a division into sections, a partial edition will always remain somewhat unsatisfactory. Themes running through the entire text are taken up at certain points, then dropped again, thus disrupting a continuity of over thirty years; yet it is this very continuity that allows a deeper understanding, associations and conclusions, making the reading experience particularly attractive.

One of the themes that run through the text and that we follow with great interest is, of course, the forming of the author's personality. We can observe his development from a simple Glarnese farm boy to a well-to-do, cosmopolitan young man over a period of nearly thirty years. His almost insatiable thirst for traveling only comes into full view if we know how often as a child he had yearned to leave home, and that the years after his confirmation had been little more than years of waiting for the great moment of departure. Yet his childhood memories also reveal that his craving for freedom and independence was not limited to geographic horizons, but also comprised intellectual curiosity and an almost unquenchable thirst for knowledge. He read a lot, always carrying books in his suitcase and, whenever possible, borrowing some. For a long time he had been determined to learn a trade; having failed to achieve this aim at home, he tried once again in St. Louis to find a job that was suited to this goal, unfortunately without success.

His curiosity led to a constant search for new experiences. Since earliest childhood he had felt the urge to observe, discover, and learn. After leaving school, for instance, it was not a lack of interest in farming

that caused him to perform his tasks on the parental homestead with little enthusiasm; rather, it was his father's opposition to all innovation that he found so frustrating. He vividly recalls a Sunday in July 1841, when he rose at four o'clock in the morning and hiked to the distant town of Glarus in order to buy a newly published book on agriculture.³⁰ "I would have liked to try out quite a few things that I read in Simon Strüf," he reports, "yet my father wanted to have nothing to do with it; he always pointed out that people with quite a lot of money could indeed make all kinds of experiments, and that for them the information in the book might be good, but little of it for our kind."³¹ Nevertheless, Heinrich planted several young trees according to the new method, and he soon had the satisfaction of observing that they thrived far better than the others. Later, when in California Sutter gave him a totally free hand in the care of the fort's gardens, Lienhard still found the book useful. Wherever he was, he also strove to learn the local language. When working in Highland he had arranged for English lessons as part of his wages, and in the winter of 1845-46 had attended elementary school at Greenville, Illinois, to improve his English. Later, in California, he learned Spanish and an Indian dialect. On journeys, therefore, he frequently served his fellow travelers as an interpreter.

For a full seven years Lienhard made the best of his freedom, of the joy of discovery, of constantly striking out anew. Then he was suddenly forced to realize that he had reached a state of exhaustion, when, for no apparent reason, he almost fainted on a Philadelphia street. This occurred in the fall of 1850 before his return to Europe; he had traveled far and wide in the states of New York and Pennsylvania, had gone to Niagara Falls, visited relatives, and toured the Philadelphia area in the hope of finding a farm suitable to him. The physician he consulted after the sudden dizzy spell attributed his condition to his incessant traveling; he suggested that Lienhard should take things easy, marry and establish a family, a therapy that obviously made sense to the young man.

Important passages of Lienhard's reminiscences are devoted to descriptions of people. A succession of varied portraits runs through the text, depicting friendships lasting over years as well as brief, yet unforgettable encounters. First there are his parents, his brothers and his sister, soon followed by the pastor who, as a teacher, was so important to him; then we accompany the Swiss emigrants of 1843 who, having become weary of one another in the course of their long journey to America, more than once got involved in a brawl; there are the people of Highland: farmers, friends, a first timid falling in love (without a happy ending); later we get to know the emigrants on their trek to California and, on arrival, the colorful company of volunteers in Monterey; we meet Californian Indians and observe many aspects of their life; we come across well-known names of the few early white settlers, too, and finally witness some of the fortune-seeking adventurers who, in their greed for gold, overran the land. Thus innumerable people Lienhard had met in those years come to life again through his pen, by means of which many an impressive character sketch is formed.

Among these is, for instance, that of Jakob Schütz of Burgdorf,

Canton Bern, on whose Highland farm Lienhard had lived since March 1844. Through Schütz, whom he called his "dearest friend,"³² he regained his courage, for in the previous winter, after a bad experience with another Swiss farmer, he had begun to toy with the idea of returning to France so as to learn French and then emigrating to Brazil. Yet Schütz's farm became home to him: here he enjoyed his work and was always pleased to return after his journeys, and it was here that he was nursed back to health during his frequent attacks of fever. In the baptismal record of Kilchberg, Jakob Schütz is registered as godfather of Lienhard's second-born son, Johann Heinrich; thus we may assume that the two friends kept up contact in later years, especially after Lienhard settled in Illinois for good.

In California we meet a particularly impressive character in the person of Jakob Dürr of Pratteln, Canton Basel. When Lienhard had taken over Sutter's sheep, Dürr joined him at the sheep farm and became his partner. During that time they got to know each other quite well. The older friend was an adventurer who, together with his Indian wife, roamed about, living in a tent. In Europe he had been in French military service for eleven years, later emigrating to Canada where he worked as a messenger for a French fur company for some time. He deserted from this strenuous job in a bold escape, taking refuge in an Indian village where only the loyalty of his hosts saved him from his pursuers. Next, he lived for several years as a hunter and trapper in the Rocky Mountains. Scars on his body, as well as beautiful furs of bears were proof of his courage. His reputation of being an expert marksman gained him the greatest respect in California, too, as Lienhard himself had occasion to observe. Sometimes he asked Dürr to tell about his past, and the image Lienhard portrays of his friend closing his eyes and becoming immersed in his memories is unforgettable. Dürr, of course, could not have wished for a more attentive listener than Lienhard was, especially when he recounted his first bear hunt, which nearly cost him his life. Lienhard was prepared to believe him, because he knew that his friend was not a braggart; moreover Dürr always told the story of that dangerous struggle in the same way and could, in addition, show "the two deep tooth marks"³³ behind his ears. It was typical of his suspicion of such accounts, however, that Lienhard asked friends of Dürr's whom they had met by chance in Sacramento and who themselves had taken part in that memorable hunt to tell the story again. He observed with satisfaction that they told it "exactly the same way Dürr himself had done."³⁴

All these encounters, the way Lienhard was interested in other people, getting involved with them, and then portraying them, always reflect his own personality as well. In particular this applies to his relationship to John A. Sutter, the owner of New Helvetia, whom he got to know well in the course of working for him. On the trail at the latest, Sutter's name was one known to all California travelers. The certainty of finding shelter in Sutter's Fort on arrival was undoubtedly for most of them the only reliable information they had about the reputedly wild and inhospitable Pacific coast region. Thus it was understandable that,

during the long trek into an uncertain future, a mythical image of Sutter arose that was strongly influenced by the immigrants' hopes and desires. Even Lienhard, who in this respect tended to be down-to-earth, greeted the owner of New Helvetia in the fall of 1846 with deep reverence and admiration, proud to be his countryman.

Yet not only the newly arrived and generally destitute immigrants regarded Sutter as a model to emulate: all visitors to the fort were greatly impressed by his imposing manner, his charisma, and generous hospitality. Sutter undoubtedly enjoyed his role as lord of New Helvetia and, in the early years of his undertaking, played it brilliantly. The legend around his person, however, was spun by people who either did not know him personally or had met him only fleetingly. Those who dealt with him closely and over a longer period of time could not help discovering other significant traits: his drinking habit, his empty promises in money matters, his susceptibility to flatterers and swindlers, his open inclination to grandeur, and his endless swaggering when he had drunk too much (a condition that had become nearly permanent after the discovery of gold).

Astonished and with disbelief Lienhard gradually became aware of these facts during his work at the fort. In time, his observations as well as his personal experience inevitably led to a demythologizing of the admired figure. Having grasped the true situation, Lienhard nonetheless found it difficult to free himself from Sutter's charismatic personality. Sutter evaded facing conflicts head on. Whenever someone approached him, determined to discuss a problem or an irregularity in a face-to-face conversation, Sutter managed to reassure the person in his polite and obliging manner ("in a fatherly voice,"³⁵ as Lienhard once put it). Lienhard recognized his entanglement, which was a result of his initial admiration; he was all the more annoyed with himself when he had once again struck a deal with Sutter, quite aware that it would end to his disadvantage. When washing gold, for instance, he himself knew, as his friends kept telling him, that it would be far more profitable for him to work independently of Sutter. Yet at the crucial moment he felt unable to break their arrangement. By reflecting on his relationship to Sutter, by clearly recognizing and stating his own role in the disenchantment, Lienhard never gives the impression of wanting to settle an old account with his former employer. On the contrary: although they were hardly on speaking terms any more at the end of Lienhard's stay (due to the quarrel with Sutter, Jr.) all of Lienhard's comments on Sutter reveal ongoing respect, even affection, and express the loyalty with which he had worked for him. Thus a realistic image of Sutter as a person emerges at the very time when all the world was envying him for his good fortune, whereas he himself in private life as well as in business matters had reached the nadir of his life and was trying to escape reality by drinking.

Wherever Lienhard happened to be during those years, his full attention was drawn to nature in all its variety: to landscapes, climatic conditions, soil quality, geological details, and plants and animals previously unknown to him. Aboard ship he was always the last

passenger on deck in the evening and the first in the morning, in order to miss as little as possible of the coastline they passed. He possessed an amazing gift of observation, absorbing everything new, and he retained his enthusiasm in later years, as his memoirs clearly show. He captures the haunting barrenness of the desert just as accurately as the lush profuseness of the tropical forest. At times he could not understand the indifference of his fellow travelers, as, for instance, on leaving Panama City:

After riding some three English miles, we reached the tropical forest, which only a person who has studied botany for many years might be able to describe adequately. As for myself, I could only marvel at the fullness and variety of this lush nature, and I was astonished to observe how some of my fellow-travelers who, like myself, saw this magnificent plant life for the first time, barely saw anything that caught their attention. I thought it impossible, and yet they rode on as if they had seen this magnificent plant life all their lives.³⁶

Lienhard's keen sense of observation was not limited to outward features; it always comprised heart and mind as well. This is most impressively shown in his encounter with the indigenous people of California. He had already met Indians in the United States, and again on the way to California and in Monterey, and had always gotten along well with them. Yet although he respected them as the natives of the land and rejected the arrogance of many immigrants, his own comments in the beginning are not entirely free from the typical ethnocentric perspective of the European. In the course of time, however, a change in his way of thinking took place, a change to a new perspective that very few whites manifested at that time.

This process was in large part a consequence of his stay at Mimal. Here, on the Yuba River, where he lived for six months in total isolation from other white settlers, a closer relationship to the Indians of the surrounding villages soon developed. Some of his Indian neighbors gathered regularly at his house, observing his activities with interest, trading, or occasionally helping him with garden work. They taught him to become a first-rate archer, took him along to their families now and then, and nursed him back to health when he was ill. Thus Lienhard began to observe their daily life. He marveled at their skill in making all sorts of objects, at the sophistication of their tools, at their creativity and good taste in decorating basketry. Their skill in hunting and fishing fascinated him; he often joined them in those pursuits and describes their methods of procuring and preparing food. Gradually his observations led him to understand that these people had organized their life as they had known it in harmony with nature, that strange customs were not necessarily inferior ones, and that he did not do justice to them by assessing everything from his own point of view.

This approach to evaluating the culture of the Californian Indians, a culture that was considered by the whites to be particularly primitive, is an extraordinary one in the context of the time, running counter to the

public frame of mind and to political propaganda. The exploitative settlement policy of the *rancheros* was not questioned by the whites because all of them profited from the "useful Indian."³⁷ Settlers who drove indigenous people from their land and forced them into service could count on being viewed as "pioneers," although the territories the whites took into possession were not uninhabited. This was part of an aggressive expansionist propaganda on the part of the United States government; it viewed that native culture which had managed to survive the Spanish missions and the Mexican *rancheros* as mere obstacles to permanent white settlement.

The growing understanding of the Indians' way of life that Lienhard had gained during his stay in Mimal inevitably led to conflict: it was incompatible to recognize, even to admire Indian culture as unique, but at the same time to coerce its people into a system which was destroying that very culture. Lienhard was slow to grasp that contradiction; significantly it was in Mimal that a nasty incident occurred when, having forbidden the Indians to take melons from the garden (that to them was situated on *their* land), he one night shot one of the "thieves" in the leg, wounding him seriously. The resulting tensions and sense of guilt caused him nightmares; this was one of the reasons why he wished to leave Mimal.

For all further projects Sutter assigned to Lienhard several indigenous youths who were to help him in his work. It appears that at first he had no basic objections to this system; he found that in contrast to other whites he treated "his" Indians justly and well (which no doubt was true). Then, on the sheep farm in the winter of 1848-49, he one night overheard a conversation among his young herdsmen. They talked of the times before white settlers had invaded their valleys, and of the momentous change their and their parents' lives had undergone since. Lienhard, who pretended to be asleep, was deeply impressed by what he heard:

The subdued talk of the Indians caused me to ponder. In my thoughts I tried to put myself in the position of the Indians; and I wondered whether I would acquiesce if I were driven out of my and my ancestors' homeland as had been the fate of the poor Indians. I confess that I was overwhelmed by strong feelings of revenge, always coming to the conclusion that I would take revenge on the shameless, greedy invaders in every possible way.³⁸

A year after the discovery of gold, however, he knew from firsthand experience that an Indian, whether he resisted or fled, was ultimately powerless in the face of the whites' efficient "weapons of murder."³⁹ Anger and sadness mingle at this point in his text, manifesting that over twenty-five years later he had not forgotten the terrible events of those days. To him, leaving California had at that time indeed been the only possible solution.

Critical awareness, perceptiveness, and sound self-confidence characterized Heinrich Lienhard's personality. These traits derived from the

influence of his family and schooling; it was there that he had also developed the clear moral principles that formed the basis for his keen sense of right and wrong. Insincerity, hypocrisy, and injustice of all kinds were among the qualities he appreciated least. Although on occasion his judgment was considered to be rather strict, most people respected his integrity. His objective way of looking at things was in any case so well known at Sutter's Fort that even people who knew him only from hearsay came up to him to ask his opinion.

An author's credibility is, of course, the crucial aspect of a manuscript. To report objectively and truthfully throughout was Lienhard's main concern, and this is expressed in various ways. First we may mention the spontaneous manner in which he, as a father, wished to tell a story to his family rather than to convey a particular message. He writes with frankness, hiding neither his strong points nor his weaknesses, which were no secret to his family anyway. In addition there is his precision: he spares no effort in dealing with a topic as comprehensively as possible and in controversial matters he is far too conscientious to present merely his own view. On occasion his tendency to justify himself adds clarity. That trait as well derived from his childhood when, to forestall unjust punishment by his father, he had often felt obliged to give a detailed account of an event. This remained a pattern above all in conflict situations, manifesting connections even where the reader may not wish to accept his arguments on a certain issue.

Another feature of Lienhard's narrative style that strengthens its credibility is his clear distinction between his own experiences and those of others. In the latter case he not only offers introductory remarks to that effect, but often himself weighs the credibility of the person involved. For the stories of others, furthermore, he uses indirect discourse leaving no doubt whatsoever as to their origin. This clear, often even repetitive distinction⁴⁰ indicates two things: Lienhard's deeply rooted suspicion of rumors and exaggerations—he never liked braggarts—and his wish to maintain the necessary distance to his own experience, the authenticity of which cannot be doubted. Himself an interested listener, he never forgoes that distinction, even when weaving longer adventure stories of friends into his text. On such occasions he skillfully avoids narrative clumsiness by relinquishing the role of narrator to the other.

He himself was a passionate narrator. To him, recollecting was an active undertaking to which he remained committed with admirable and untiring devotion to detail. Given his unpretentious manner of expression, a result of his modest formal education, we cannot help being amazed at the rich vocabulary he had acquired by reading, traveling, and a wide range of interests. He was not only a subtle observer, but also knew how to describe what he had seen fluently and vividly. Despite the passage of time, he tells his story with great enthusiasm, evoking good times with joy, but not omitting the bad ones. Explicitly as well as between the lines we can always sense his satisfaction, sometimes even pride, with the path he had chosen. He brings to life the thoughts and feelings that had directed his steps and actions in those

days; sometimes it is hard to say whether his dry sense of humor is of Glarnese origin or already American. All this gives color and vividness to his style—we feel that we are taking part in his wanderings!

III

In contrast to the first thirty years of his life, we know very little about the time after 1850. Two letters are extant, yet the first one dates from his early years. Heinrich Lienhard wrote it to his family in Bilten on 3 May 1847, giving his first impressions of California, where he had been living for about six months. The other, dated 20 February 1893, was sent to his younger brother Kaspar in Bilten and contains the only detailed information about his later years. Other documents of the family reveal little about his daily life after 1850. Source material of various kinds is kept in the courthouse of Carthage, the county seat of Hancock County, Illinois; numerous deed records regarding his property in Nauvoo and in neighboring Appanoose and Sonora townships, a box with notes written by himself and his children, his last will, as well as several official documents pertaining to his death. The letter of 1893, official and family documents, and news items in the local newspaper allow us to trace some important events of his later life; they shall be mentioned here to round out the picture.

As to the months immediately following his return to Switzerland, the last pages of folio 238 give us a brief, albeit unauthorized impression. They show young Lienhard looking for a wife; at the same time we gain some interesting insights into his long-range plans, since he went about this task in a circumspect way. He had attended dances at a club in Stäfa several times, commenting as follows:

I was, of course, old enough to get married, being in my thirtieth year; and since I had been thoroughly fed up with life as a bachelor for a long time, I seriously considered taking a wife as soon as I had found the right one. I am sure that I would have been able to find one in Stäfa, and I have no doubt that each of the girls I got to know would have made a good housewife. Yet I always asked myself: "Would these girls, once married, consent if I told them that we were going to America?" As some of them made it clear that, if they were me, they would now settle down in Switzerland for good, I had reason to believe that with such a person as a wife a return to the United States could not be considered in the near future; yet this was precisely an item I did not want to commit myself to; I even thought of returning to America soon.⁴¹

On an excursion at Pentecost in 1851, Lienhard became more closely acquainted with Elsbeth Blumer of Bilten, who was then seventeen years old. "She had attracted my attention for some time already," he recalls, "for she was rather good-looking, if somewhat small; but precisely because she was an orphan I thought that she would be all the more suited to me, no parents being able to object should I wish to return to America one day."⁴² At this point folio 238 comes to an end,

yet we know from family documents that the two were married by Pastor Schuler in the church of Bilten on 3 July of the same year.

The following month Lienhard bought the rural homestead "Auf Brunnen" in Kilchberg near Zurich, where their two sons, Kaspar Arnold (1852) and Johann Heinrich (1853), were born. Only two years later, in September 1853, he sold his property. From the letter of 1893 we learn that the young family left Zurich on 17 April 1854. Next we find their names on the passenger list of the steamer *Washington* which arrived in New York on 15 May 1854. In the United States the family first settled in Madison, Wisconsin. That state offered good farming opportunities and had already attracted many Swiss immigrants. In Madison their third son, Johann Jakob, was born in 1855.

We do not know what prompted the family to leave Madison after only two years and move to Illinois. The town of Nauvoo had been known to Lienhard as early as 1845, when he took a trip up the Mississippi from St. Louis to Galena and noted the settlements along the river; Nauvoo was then, just a year before the Mormon exodus, the most important of them. He heard about it again in California when, after the Mexican War, many Mormons found employment with Sutter. In Madison, Lienhard undoubtedly also heard about the Icarians, who had immigrated mainly from France and Germany and whose communal society in Nauvoo was disintegrating in the mid-1850s, making farmland and houses available.

Considering Lienhard's predilection for beautiful landscapes, it comes as no surprise that, in 1856, his choice fell on this very town on the Mississippi. He was to live here as a farmer and respected citizen for forty-seven years. As we can see from the minutes of the city council, he was elected mayor in 1864, serving a one-year term. In Nauvoo Elsbeth Lienhard became the mother of six more children: Elsbeth Henrietta Augusta (1858), Johann Peter (1860), Adam Hugo (1862), Dorothea Albertina (1865), Maria Christina (1866), and Barbara Adela (1876).

The family remained complete for only three years, after which there followed a succession of heavy blows: in 1879 their eldest son Kaspar, a dentist by profession, died of consumption at the age of twenty-seven; in 1884 they suffered the loss of their daughter Dora, who died, only nineteen years old, as a result of an accident; the shock must have been so great that just a few months later the mother passed away, too. In 1892, Lienhard mourned the death of his youngest daughter Adela, a victim of consumption at the age of sixteen.

In the letter of 1893 Heinrich Lienhard, then seventy-one, laments the ailments of old age. A growing paralysis of his left side, back pain, insomnia, and chronic bronchitis made life difficult for him. According to a newspaper item, his daughter Mary, a teacher who later moved to California, lived with him. He died, after a brief illness, on 19 December 1903, nearly eighty-two years of age. The children sold the house and auctioned off the remaining property. Only John Henry, Jr., stayed on in Nauvoo, where he had established a family of his own. The parents and seven children are buried in the family grave in Nauvoo's Presbyterian cemetery.

In 1954 Lienhard's house, which had been built by the Mormon apostle Heber C. Kimball, but had been lived in for just a few months after its completion in 1845, was bought and restored by Kimball's great-grandson, J. LeRoy Kimball. The Mormons have again been active in Nauvoo for many years now. They cherish and document the memory of their ancestors in the "Nauvoo Visitors Center" and by means of plays as well as guided tours through the renovated and rebuilt houses of the former Mormon owners. The "Heber C. Kimball Home," Lienhard's property from 1856 to 1903, is justly considered the most beautiful house of historic Nauvoo. Somewhat set back from the busy thoroughfare, it is situated on the so-called Flat near the river, surrounded by well-tended meadows and splendid old trees. In the large, shady backyard there is a restored outhouse and a washhouse; a stone plate with a wrought-iron hand pump indicates where the well once was. The documents relating to the building's restoration maintain that the smaller part of the house dates from a later time. No plans or other records of this addition have been found so far, yet it may well be that Lienhard had it built for his growing family.

Today, nearly a century after his death, there is nobody in Nauvoo who knew Heinrich Lienhard personally. Yet as late as the summer of 1989, the aged Dick Baxter well remembered his father telling him about Lienhard. His words had been full of respect for the old man who, as everybody in town knew, had gone to California in his youth and there become a witness to the gold rush.

Two great-grandsons and their families preserve the memory of their Swiss ancestors: John and Jean Lienhard of Walla Walla, Washington, and John and Carol Lienhard of Houston, Texas. They have re-established ties with the descendants of Heinrich Lienhard's younger brother Kaspar, who had stayed on in Bilten; the family still owns the house at the Ussbühl where Heinrich and Kaspar were born and where today the American relatives are always welcome guests.

Zurich, Switzerland

Notes

¹ Ms 4/3, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA. Stephen Herz, Zurich, Switzerland, together with Kirsten and Leo Schelbert, Evanston, IL, assisted the author in translating this article from German into English.

² The Mormons had settled in Nauvoo in 1839; in the following years the town grew rapidly to over 11,000 inhabitants. In 1846 the Mormons were driven from the town and, under the leadership of Brigham Young, migrated to the Great Salt Lake.

³ The Icarians arrived in Nauvoo in 1849 where Etienne Cabet (1788-1856) hoped to establish a socialist utopia. Yet after a few years the experiment failed and the community dissolved. By 1856 Cabet and his followers had left Nauvoo.

⁴ Ms 1/1.

⁵ MS 4/4.

⁶ Ms 3/3.

⁷ Ms 2/2.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ms 4/3.

¹⁰ Ms 8/2.

¹¹ Ms 50/1.

¹² For a short time Lienhard had worked in the lead mines of Galena, Illinois.

¹³ Lienhard's companions were Heinrich Thomann and Jakob Rippstein from Switzerland, and the Germans Georg Zins and Valentin Diel.

¹⁴ The war against Mexico by the United States began in 1846 and ended in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo; by its stipulations Mexico was forced to cede California and the southwestern portion of the present United States.

¹⁵ He came from Pratteln, Canton Basel.

¹⁶ Anna Sutter-Dübeld and the children Anna Elise, Emil and Alphons.

¹⁷ Ms 222/3-4.

¹⁸ Ms 238/1.

¹⁹ Ms 68/2.

²⁰ Johann Kaspar Leemann, ed., *Californien unmittelbar vor und nach der Entdeckung des Goldes: Bilder aus dem Leben von Heinrich Lienhard von Bilten, Kanton Glarus, in Nauvoo, Nordamerika: Ein Beitrag zur Jubiläumsfeier der Goldentdeckung und zur Kulturgeschichte Californiens* (Zurich: Fäsi und Beer, 1900; repr. of 1898 edition).

²¹ Marguerite E. Wilbur, ed. and trans., *A Pioneer at Sutter's Fort, 1846-1950: The Adventures of Heinrich Lienhard*, Calafia Series, 3 (Los Angeles: The Grabhorn Press, 1941).

²² *Ibid.*, xv.

²³ J. Roderic Korns, "West from Fort Bridger: The Pioneering of the Immigrant Trails Across Utah, 1846-1850: Original Diaries and Journals, Edited and with Introduction," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 19 (1951). The "Hastings Cutoff" was that segment of the California Trail that was named after Lansford W. Hastings; it covered the stretch between Fort Bridger and the place where the Humboldt River's south arm joins the main river.

²⁴ Erwin G. Gudde, and Elizabeth K. Gudde, ed. and trans., *From St. Louis to Sutter's Fort, 1846, by Heinrich Lienhard* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. ix. The other two are Edwin Bryant's *What I Saw in California*, and U. Q. Thornton's *Oregon and California in 1848*.

²⁶ Heinrich Lienhard, "Schilderungen aus Kalifornien, die Entdeckung des Goldreichtums und dessen Folgen," *Glerner Zeitung* 95-99 (1849).

²⁷ Heinrich Lienhard, "The Early Days: Reminiscences of a Pioneer Settler of '46," *The Daily Examiner* (San Francisco), 8 March 1885.

²⁸ By John C. Abbott, Edwardsville, IL, with Raymond J. Spahn, Tucson, AZ, as translator and coeditor.

²⁹ By the author of this article.

³⁰ Joh. Evangelist Fürst, *Der wohlberathene Bauer Simon Strüf, eine Familiengeschichte: Allen Ständen zum Nutzen und Interesse, besonders aber jedem Bauer und Landwirthe ein Lehr- und Exempelbuch* (Augsburg: Kollmann'sche Buchhandlung, 1841).

³¹ Ms 7/1.

³² Ms 51/1.

³³ Ms 149/4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Ms 130/2.

³⁶ Ms 163/1-2.

³⁷ Cf. James J. Rawls, *Indians of California: The Changing Image* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984). Rawls examines the changing image Anglo-Americans depicted of the Californian Indians in the 19th century. Early travelers viewed the indigenous population as "victims" of the Spanish-Mexican colonists, thereby discrediting the Mexican claim to the territory; when the Anglo-Americans themselves adopted the rancho-system, the Indians were increasingly seen as a "useful class"; in the years following the discovery of gold and the founding of the new state they became mere "obstacles" to be eliminated.

³⁸ Ms 146/4-147/1.

³⁹ Ms 147/1.

⁴⁰ English translation sometimes fails to keep Lienhard's form of reported speech. Thus statements become attributed to him although, in the manuscript, the distinction is made clear in the above-mentioned ways.

⁴¹ Ms 238/4.

⁴² *Ibid.*



O. H. Ammann, 1904; taken shortly after his arrival in the USA. (Ammann sent this photograph to his fiancée, Lilly Selma Wehrli, in Switzerland; he returned to Switzerland in 1905 to marry her.) Courtesy of Margot Durrer Ammann.