A HISTORY OF THE DISCOVERIES IN THE SOUTHERN SEA.

CHAPTER I.

Voyage of the Nassau Fleet, to the South Sea, and to the East Indies.

The twelve years truce which had been agreed upon between Spain and the United Provinces, expired in 1621, and freed the subjects of both countries from the small portion of restraint to which some respect for a convention, never well observed, had made them submit. Vast plans were formed by the States of the United Provinces against the Spanish and Portuguese settlements in South America; Spain and Portugal being then united in subjection under one monarch. The views of the Dutch extended beyond purposes of plunder, to their more permanent aggrandisement in the acquisition of large and valuable territory, and in weakening a powerful enemy by dispossessing him of those sources of wealth which rendered him so formidable in Europe.
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In the beginning of the year 1623, a Fleet was equipped, by order of the States General and Prince Maurice of Nassau, for an expedition against Peru; and this was closely followed by another against Brazil under the command of Jacob Willekens and Pieter Heyne. If the attack on Peru had been conducted with as much spirit and ability as were displayed in that against Brazil, the whole of South America would probably have been subjected to the dominion of Holland.

The expedition against Peru is the subject of the present chapter. The force destined for the purpose consisted of eleven sail of shipping, under the command of Admiral Jacob l’Heremite, an Officer who had served the Dutch East India Company many years with reputation. A mortal disease which disabled him from exercising command at the most critical time of the expedition, with his subsequent death, is the cause why this voyage has more generally been entitled the Voyage of the Nassau Fleet, than of Admiral Jacob l’Heremite; the appellation of Nassau Fleet being in compliment to Prince Maurice, who was a principal promoter of the design. The early histories of the voyage particularise the name and magnitude of each individual ship; but as their achievements bore no proportion to their force, it seems unreasonable to be so minute.*

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* The history of this voyage was first published at Amsterdam, in 1626, by Hessct Gerritz, accompanied with charts and views, under the title of Journael van de Nassausche Flott. In 1629, a translation of the Journael into the German language, with additional remarks, was published at Strasburg, under the title of Diurnal oder Tagregister der Nassauischen Flotta, i.e. Journal or Daily Register of the Nassau Fleet; by Adolf Decker, a native of Strasburg, who had served as Captain of Troops in the Nassau Fleet on board the ship Mauritius. In 1634, De Bry published a Latin translation of the voyage, in his Hist. Americana, Pars xii. A French translation was published in the Recueil des Voyages de la Compagnie, vol. ix. In all matter of fact which immediately relates to the transactions of the voyage, the Journal has the appearance of being correct, and is closely followed in the present account. M. de Brosses, who has given from Decker’s publication a summary
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The Admiral's ship, named the Amsterdam, was of 800 tons burthen (400 lasten), mounted 42 guns, and carried 237 men. The ship of the Vice-Admiral was of equal force, and some of the other ships were very little inferior. The number of cannon mounted on board the different ships was 294, and the whole number of persons in the fleet was 1637, of whom 600 were soldiers. Two persons, Johan Van Walbeck and Justus Von Vagelaar, were appointed Mathematicians to the fleet; and among the pilots was Valentin Jansz who had sailed to Strait le Maire, in the voyage of the Lisbon Caravellas in 1619.

April the 29th, 1623, the Nassau Fleet departed from Goree, under orders from the States General to sail into the South Sea by the strait which Le Maire and Schouten had discovered, that being esteemed a more certain passage than by the Strait of Magalhanes. A leak breaking out in one of the ships, obliged them to stop at the Isle of Wight, whence they sailed May the 5th. On May the 31st, near Cape St. Vincent, they fell in with a fleet of Barbary corsairs. On board these vessels, they found among the prisoners to the Moors, some Hollanders, whom the Dutch Admiral released from their captivity, and distributed in his own fleet.

June the 4th, being near the coast of Africa, they met and captured four Spanish vessels from Pernambuco bound for Spain, laden with sugar. Two of the prizes, and a ship of the fleet which sailed so slow as to retard the rest, were dismissed for Holland. The other two prize vessels were furnished with crews, and made part of the fleet.

July the 5th, the fleet anchored at St. Vincent, one of the Cape de Verde islands. At this, and at the neighbouring island of St. Antonio, good refreshment was obtained, except in that most necessary article, fresh water, which was scarce.
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1653.

July.

Island of St. Vincent.

The Island St. Vincent is rocky, dry, and for the most part barren; and was then uncultivated. Some wild figs grew in the middle of the island, and the Colocynthis Silvestris, a plant which is said to possess a strong purgative quality. The ground is exceedingly parched, except in the rainy season, which generally begins in August and ends in February, but is not always regular. The bay, however, is safe and commodious, the anchorage being on a bottom of clear sand, the depth 18 to 25 fathoms: turtle and fish also are here in abundance, and goats were caught on the island which were fat and well tasted. The watering place was at the SSW side of the Bay of St. Vincent, where was a small brook or spring which might have furnished sufficient for two or three ships, and not more; therefore pits were dug, but the water obtained from them was brackish, and was afterwards supposed to be the principal cause of a dysentery with which the crews of the ships were attacked.

The Island St. Antonio abounded in oranges and other fruits, which were procured for the fleet by traffick with the negro inhabitants, who were computed to be in number about 500. They shewed written certificates of their friendly dealings, given to them by the captains of Dutch ships which had stopped there at different times.

From the Cape de Verde Islands, the fleet sailed to Sierra Leone, where they anchored on August the 11th. In this passage they had continual rain, which, joined to the badness of the water, made the ships crews sickly. The journal gives for the latitude of the road, 8° 20' N. 'The mountain Sierra Leone ' is on the South side of a river which runs into the Atlantic; it ' is high, and covered with trees, and is easy to be known by ' those who come from the Northward, as no other part of the ' Continent in that route is so high.'

Before the Hollanders were admitted to have free communication with the shore, the Admiral was obliged to make presents
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presents to the chief and to the chief’s brother, which consisted of two bars of iron, two pieces of cloth, and some things of smaller value. Until this matter was settled, the natives, who are negroes, would not venture on board the fleet without hostages being delivered as sureties for their safe return to the shore.

Some seamen of the fleet who landed here, found and eat of a species of nuts which in appearance resembled the nutmeg, except that they were rather larger; but soon after their return to the ship, one of them died suddenly, and it was evident from an immediate change in his colour, which became violet, that he died of poison. By administering antidotes, the rest escaped.

In careening the ship Mauritius here, by neglecting to stop the lower skupper-holes, she nearly filled, and had 7 or 8 feet water in her hold before it was discovered.

The closeness of the air, and an immoderate use of limes, which grow here in prodigious quantities, operated with the causes already mentioned, and increased the dysentery which prevailed amongst the crews, so that during their stay at Sierra Leone, they buried 42 men. The Admiral likewise was taken ill.

September the 4th, they sailed from Sierra Leone, and stood for the Island St. Thomas, with the wind from the South; but the bad sailing of the ship Arend prevented their fetching St. Thomas; therefore they stood in again for the African coast; and on October the 1st, anchored near Cape Lopez Gonsalvo, with intention to water; but the water at that place was found so foul and brackish, that it was determined to sail for the Island Annobon.

Two ships of the fleet grounded on a sand bank, three quarters of a league WbS from Cape Lopez Gonsalvo. Close to the bank there was 25 fathoms depth. The ships were got off with little damage; but the Admiral, whose health at this time was nearly re-established, suffered so much from anxiety and fatigue
fatigue on the occasion, that he relapsed into illness, and from that time his health continually declined.

During the passage to Annobon, complaint was made against Mr. Jacob Begeer, principal Surgeon of the ship Mauritius, against whom it was alledged, that several of his patients, soon after taking the medicines administered by him, had died in a manner which gave cause to suspect there was something extraordinary in his practice. The Vice and Rear Admirals were jointly commissioned to enquire into the truth of this complaint, and October the 14th an examination took place. The Surgeon answered the accusations against him by protestations of innocence; but, says the journalist, ‘as there were half proofs against him, torture was applied to make him confess his guilt; nevertheless he persisted in denial, telling the Commissioners they might do with him as they pleased.’ This was regarded as insensibility, and created a new suspicion, that he had some protecting charm. On being searched, the skin and tongue of a serpent were found upon him; yet however convincing such a discovery might be to his Judges, ‘they could not at the first examination prevail over his obstinacy,’ and he was remanded into confinement. On the 16th, this miserable man was again ordered before the Commissioners for examination, when being let out of irons for that purpose, he found opportunity to elude his guard and to jump into the sea, with design to drown himself; but two of the ship’s crew leaped after him, and kept him up till a boat went and took them all in. After much resolute denial, the prisoner’s constancy was subdued, and he confessed, or was compelled to admit, that he had purposely caused seven men to die, because the care of them gave him too much trouble; also that he had endeavoured to enter into a compact with the Devil, whom for that purpose he had invoked; but notwithstanding his efforts, he had never been able to prevail on the Devil to make his personal appearance.
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The prisoner, it is said, was suspected of other crimes, but as he was reduced to a weak state, his Judges contented them- selves with this voluntary confession,' and pronounced sentence of death upon him; according to which, on the 18th, by order of the council, he was beheaded on board the Mauritius, the ship to which he had belonged.

The 20th, the fleet came in sight of the Island St. Thomas. On the 22d, the Vice-Admiral went with two boats to examine for anchorage at the small Island of Rolles which is near the SW point of St. Thomas, and to see if fruits or refreshments of any kind could be obtained there. On his return he reported the depth of water near Rolles to be from 7 fathoms to 4½ fathoms, the bottom rocky and the anchorage bad; and that from the lateness of the season, there were very few oranges at Rolles. Upon this representation, the Admiral determined for the Island Annobon, which they made on the 29th, bearing WbS 10 leagues distant; and the next day the fleet anchored in the road.

Annobon was subject to the Portuguese, though few of that nation were on the Island. It abounded with fruits, and, notwithstanding what had been said of the lateness of the season, more especially with oranges of excellent taste. Here was a Portuguese Governor, with whom the Admiral came to an agreement, that if the Hollanders were not molested in taking fresh water and oranges, and the inhabitants were allowed freely to supply them in traffic with other refreshments, no hostility or injury should be committed. The number of the black inhabitants at Annobon was said to be 150 males, besides women and children. They were in extreme submission to the Portuguese, though not more than two or three of that nation were left to govern them. When it happened that any among the negroes were refractory, they were transported to the Island St. Thomas, which is distant about 40 leagues from Annobon. This was a punishment so much dreaded, that there was no occasion
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occasion to have recourse to any other. Oxen, goats, hogs, poultry, cocoa-nuts, oranges, tamarinds, bananas, sugar canes, and potatoes, were the supplies obtained by the fleet at Annobon. The oranges were so abundant, that in the different ships during their short stay, above 200,000 were taken of large size, full of juice, and of excellent flavour. The governor said many vessels had already in this same season, stopped and taken large supplies of fruits at Annobon. Cotton was collected on the Island, and in the mountains there were civet cats.

The Island Annobon lies in latitude 1° 20′ S. It is 6 leagues in circuit, and is high land. The road in which the Dutch ships anchored is on the NE side of the Island, and the depth from 16 fathoms, to 7 fathoms very near to the shore and abreast the town or village; the bottom sand. The village had for its defence a stone wall; but when the inhabitants cannot hinder the descent of an enemy, they quit their houses and retire to the mountains. On the SE side of the Island is a good run of water, which descends from the mountains into a valley of orange and other fruit trees; but watering there would be difficult on account of the surf.*

November the 4th, the fleet sailed from Annobon. On the 11th, being advanced 90 leagues to the WSW, they had the South-east trade wind.

The 20th, three boys who were wrestling on the deck of the Admiral’s ship, being close hugged together, by a sudden motion of the ship were all thrown overboard. One only of the three was saved.

The Admiral’s instructions directed him not to touch on the coast of Brasil, or on any part of the American coast Northward of the Rio de la Plata. After passing the latitude of that river, the winds were constantly from the westward, and the fleet was not able to approach within sight of the Continent.


January
South Side of Tierra del Fuego.

There taken and described by Jan Malbeek.