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978-1-108-04596-4 - Narrative of a Survey of the Intertropical and Western Coasts of Australia, Performed Between the Years 1818 and 1822: Volume 1

Philip Parker King

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Narrative of a Survey of the Intertropical and Western Coasts of Australia, Performed Between the Years 1818 and 1822

This two-volume work by Captain Phillip Parker King (1791–1856) was published in 1827, and describes the Royal Navy's 1817–22 surveying expedition to chart the coastal regions of Australia. King carried out the surveys in two successive ships, the *Mermaid*, which was declared unseaworthy in 1820, and the newly commissioned *Bathurst*. He worked on the charts, which were published by the Hydrographic Office, for two years after his return to England. He was made a Fellow of the Royal Society, and later undertook a similar surveying voyage, in which he was accompanied by Captain Fitzroy on the *Beagle*, around the coast of South America. The book is derived from the author's journal, and describes not only the voyages but also the towns and settlements and the natural history of the region, often making comparisons with Captain Cook's account. Volume 1 covers the south, east and north coasts of Australia.

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VOLUME 1

PHILIP PARKER KING



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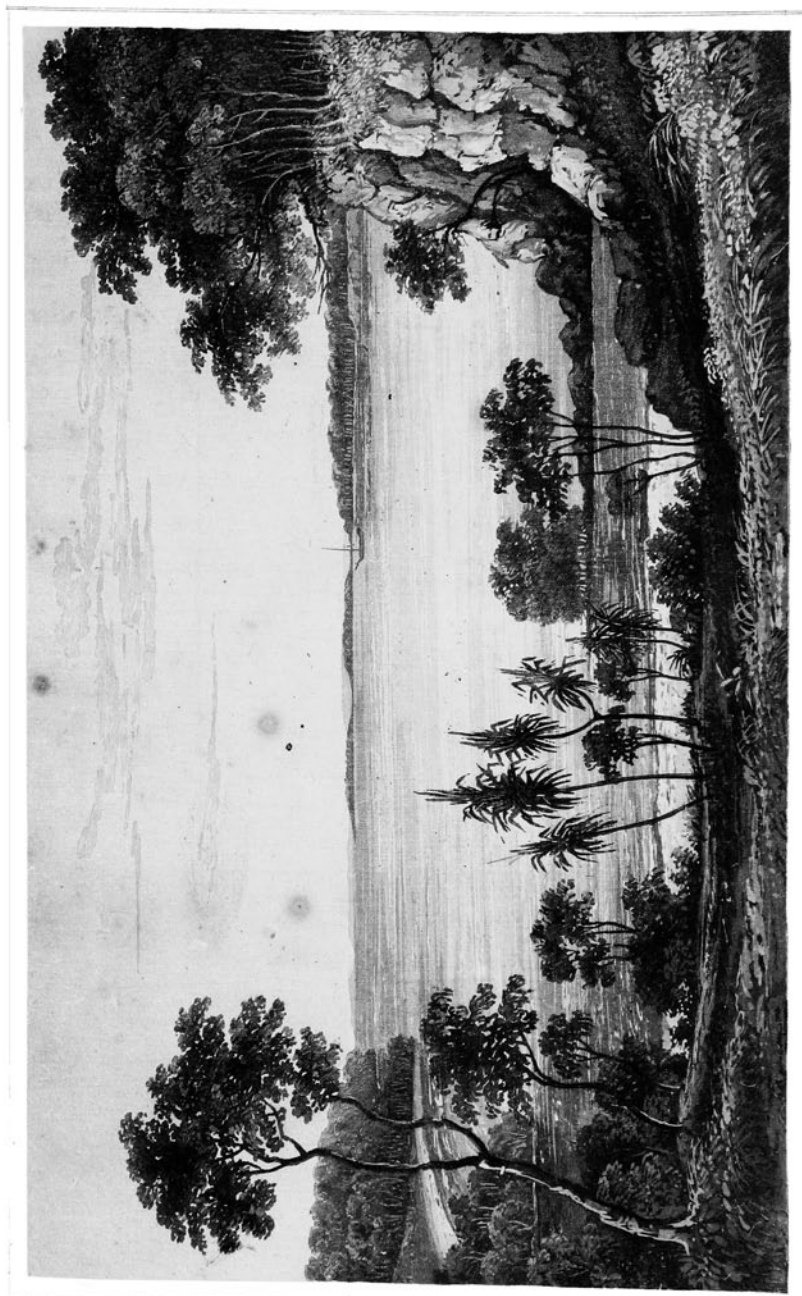
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From a Sketch by P. F. King.

VIEW IN RAFFLES BAY,
WITH CROKER'S ISLAND IN THE DISTANCE.
Published May 1824, by John Murray, London.

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NARRATIVE OF A SURVEY
OF THE
INTERTROPICAL AND WESTERN
COASTS OF AUSTRALIA.

PERFORMED BETWEEN

THE YEARS 1818 AND 1822.

BY

CAPTAIN PHILLIP P. KING, R.N., F.R.S., F.L.S.,
AND MEMBER OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY OF LONDON.

WITH

AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

VARIOUS SUBJECTS RELATING TO HYDROGRAPHY AND
NATURAL HISTORY.



Vol. I. p. 38 and 3.

IN TWO VOLUMES,
ILLUSTRATED BY PLATES, CHARTS, AND WOOD CUTS.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.

MDCCCXXVII.

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P R E F A C E.

THE rapidly-increasing importance to which the English Colonies in Australia have now arrived, rendering every subject connected with that extensive continent of the greatest interest, whether in respect to its geography, or the extraordinary assemblage of its animal and vegetable productions, has induced me to publish such parts of my Journal as may be useful to accompany the Atlas of the Charts of the Coast recently published by the Board of Admiralty.

One of the results of this voyage has been the occupation of Port Cockburn, between Melville and Bathurst Islands on the North Coast, and the formation of an establishment there which cannot fail to be productive of the greatest benefit to our mercantile communications with the Eastern Archipelago, as well as to increase the influence and power of the mother country in the South

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Pacific and Indian Oceans ; and in contemplating this new extension of her possessions *, I cannot avoid recalling to mind a curious and prophetic remark of Burton, who, in alluding to the discoveries of the Spanish navigator Ferdinando de Quiros (Anno 1612), says—" I would know whether that hungry Spaniard's discovery of Terra Australis Incognita, or Magellanica, be as true as that of Mercurius Britannicus, or his of Utopia, or his of Lucinia. And yet, in likelihood, it may be so ; for without all question, it being extended from the tropick of Capricorn to the circle Antartick, and lying as it doth in the temperate zone, cannot chuse but yeeld in time some flourishing kingdoms to succeeding ages, as America did unto the Spaniards †."—BURTON'S *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Part. II. Sect. ii. No. 3.

* The distance between Melville Island and Hobart Town in Van Diemen's Land, the former being the most northern, and the latter the most southern, establishment under the government of New South Wales, is more than 2700 miles, and comprises an extent of coast nearly equal to that of the British possessions in India!

† Since the land that Quiros discovered and called Terra del Espiritu Santo was, at the time Burton wrote, considered to be the Eastern Coast of New Holland, I am justified in the use I have made of the above curious passage.

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Since the return of the Expedition, my time has been occupied in arranging the narrative, and divesting it of such parts as were neither calculated to amuse the general reader, nor to give information to the navigator; but this has been so much impeded by the more important employment of constructing the Charts of the Survey, as to defer until the present season the publication of the events of a voyage that was completed nearly three years ago.

In addition to the Hydrographical Notices in the Appendix, I have ventured to insert descriptive catalogues of the few subjects of Natural History that were collected during the voyage; these were supplied by some friends, to whom I have in another part of the work endeavoured, inadequately no doubt, to express my sense of the obligation: but since that part has been printed, my friend Mr. Brown has submitted some specimens of the rocks of the western side of the Gulf of Carpentaria, that were collected by him on the Investigator's voyage, to the inspection of Doctor Fitton, by which means that gentleman's valuable communication in the Appendix has been most ma-

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terially improved. I have, therefore, taken the present opportunity of acknowledging the readiness with which this additional information has been supplied, and of offering Mr. Brown my best thanks.

It now only remains for me to add, that the views with which these volumes are illustrated were engraved by Mr. Finden from my own sketches on the spot: the charts, which are reductions of those in the Admiralty Atlas, were engraved by Mr. Walker; and the three plates of Natural History by Mr. Curtis, from drawings made from the specimens by himself, by Henry C. Field, Esq, and by Miss M. Field; to each of whom I take this opportunity of returning my best thanks, and also of bearing testimony to the correctness with which the respective subjects have been represented.

London, March 20th, 1826.

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TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE EARL BATHURST, K.G.,
*HIS MAJESTY'S PRINCIPAL SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR THE COLONIES,*
AND
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE LORD VISCOUNT MELVILLE, K.T.,
FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY,
THE FOLLOWING
NARRATIVE OF THE SURVEY OF THE INTERTROPICAL
COASTS OF AUSTRALIA,
PERFORMED UNDER THEIR LORDSHIPS' JOINT DIRECTIONS AND
FLATTERING COUNTENANCE,
IS, BY PERMISSION, INSCRIBED
WITH THE GREATEST RESPECT,
BY THEIR MOST GRATEFUL SERVANT,
PHILLIP PARKER KING.

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MERMAID.

NEARLY three centuries* have now elapsed since our first knowledge of the Great South Land, the Terra Australis Incognita of ancient geographers; and, until within the last century, comparatively little had been done towards making a minute exploration

* The late Rear-Admiral Burney, in his *History of Discoveries in the South Sea*, (vol. i. p. 380,) describes a chart, dated 1542, drawn by Rotz, in which a coast is continued to the 28th degree of south latitude; and immediately below the 30th degree, there is the name of Coste des Herbaiges, answering by an extraordinary coincidence both in climate and in name to Botany Bay.

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of its coasts: during the seventeenth century several voyages were made by different Dutch navigators, from whom we have the first-recorded description of its shores; but from the jealous disposition of their East India Company, under whose orders these voyages were performed, the accounts of them were so concealed, and consequently lost or destroyed, that few particulars of a detailed nature have been handed down*.

* In the voyages of Gautier Schouten, published at Amsterdam in 1708, duod. vol. i. p. 41, et seq., there is the following curious account of the wreck of a ship on the coast of New Holland:—

“ Il me semble que je ne dois pas omettre ici une histoire, de la certitude de laquelle on n'eut pas lieu de douter. Dès-que la nouvelle fut venuë à Batavia, [Anno 1659,] que le vaisseau *le Dragon*, qui venoit de Hollande aux Indes, avoit fait naufrage sur les côtes d'une Terre Australe inconnuë, on y envoya la flûte *la Boüée à la Veille*, pour ramener ceux des gens de l'équipage qui auroient pu se sauver, et les êfets qui auroient été conservez.

“ La flûte étant conduite par ceux qui étoient échapez

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The first circumstantial account that we have, is that of Dampier ; who, in his celebrated *Buccaneering Voyage* in the year 1688, visited that part of the North-West

du naufrage dans la chaloupe, et venus à Batavia en apporter la nouvelle, se rendit au parage où *le Dragon* avoit péri, et alla mouïller l'ancre dans l'endroit qui parut le plus propre pour son dessein. Aussi tôt la chaloupe fut armée pour aller chercher ceux qui s'étoient sauvez le long du rivage. Elle s'aprocha d'abord du bris, par-dessus lequel les vagues passaient; puis elle nagea vers le lieu où l'on avoit dressé des tentes, quand la chaloupe du vaisseau péri partit, pour ceux qu'elle n'avoit pu recevoir, et qui devoient attendre là qu'on vint les y prendre.

“ L'équipage étant descendu à terre, trouva les tentes brisées en pièces, et l'on ne découvrit pas un seul homme dans tout le país. La surprise ne fut pas médiocre. On regarda partout si l'on ne verroit point de traces qui marquassent qu'on eût construit quelque petit bâtiment : mais il n'y avoit ni tarrière, ni hache, ni couteaux, ni cloux, &c. Il n'y avoit ni écrit ni indication par où l'on pût conjecturer ce qu'étoient devenus les gens qu'on avoit là laissez.

“ La chaloupe étant retournée à bord, et aiant annoncé cette nouvelle, il fut résolu que l'on iroit chercher plus avant dans les terres, et le long du rivage. Pour cet éfet on se divisa en plusieurs troupes, et l'on ne réussit pas mieux que la première fois. On eut beau crier,

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Coast, to which the name of Cygnet Bay has been attached: of this place he gives a faithful and correct account, particularly with respect to its productions, and the

apeller, tirer des coups de mousquet, tout fut inutile, et je n'ai pas seu qu'on ait jamais appris ce qu'étoient devenus ces gens-là.

“ On retourna donc au bris, dont on ne put rien tirer, les lames aiant emporté les bordages, les écoutes, et fracassé tout le vaisseau, tant la mer brise fort en ces parages. Ainsi l'on jugea que le plus expédient étoit de s'en retourner, puis-qu'on n'avoit rien à prétendre, et qu'on avoit à craindre les vents forcez et les tempêtes, qui selon les aparences auroient aussi fait périr la flûte. Dans ce dessein on alla faire de l'eau. Ceux qui furent à une petite rivière qu'on avoit vuë, au-lieu de se hâter, se promenèrent, et coururent en divers endroits.

“ Cependant il s'éleva une si terrible tempête, que la flûte fut contrainte de se mettre au large, ou elle atendit encore quelque tems. Mais comme la chaloupe ne revenoit point, on jugea qu'elle avoit péri; si-bien qu'on reprit la route de Batavia, ou l'on fit le raport de ce qui s'étoit passé.

“ Quand l'orage eut cessé, l'équipage de la chaloupe se rembarqua pour retourner à bord. Mais il ne trouva plus la flûte, ni sur la côte, ni au large. La tristesse ne fut pas moindre que l'étonnement, et l'on ne seut quel parti prendre. Enfin il fallut retourner à terre, pour n'être pas englouti par les flots. Mais on n'avoit point

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savage and degraded state of its inhabitants: the same navigator afterwards (in 1699) visited the West and North-west Coasts in His Majesty's ship *Roebuck*, in

de vivres, et l'on ne voioit rien dans tout le païs qui pût servir de nourriture. Les montagnes n'étoient que des rochers; les valées étoient de vrais déserts; les plaines n'étoient que des sables. Le rivage étoit aussi bordé de roches, contre lesquelles la mer brisoit avec d'éfroïables mugissemens.

“Ceux qui étoient là demeurez se trouvoient au nombre de treize hommes, qui furent bientôt fatiguez, afoiblis et atténuez. La faim les pressoit, le froid et l'humidité les faisoient souffrir, et ils se regardoient comme condamnés à la mort. Il n'y avoit rien à espérer du bris; les vagues avoient tout fait rouler çà et là dans la mer. Enfin à force de courir et de chercher quelque chose qu'ils pussent manger, ils aperçurent entre les rochers qui étoient le long du rivage, de gros limaçons, et de plus petits, qui y venoient de la mer, et dont le goût, qui étoit passable, parut excellent à des gens affamez. Mais n'ayant point de feu pour les faire cuire, l'usage continuel qu'ils en firent, commença de les incommoder, et ils sentirent bien que ce foible remède ne les empêcheroit pas de mourir dans peu de tems.

“Enfin ne voiant de toutes parts qu'une mort certaine, ils prirent la résolution de s'exposer à la merci des flots, dans l'espérance que s'il ne se présentoit rien de plus favorable pour eux sur la mer que sur la terre, au-

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the description of which he has not only been very minute and particular, but, as far as we could judge, exceedingly correct.

Within the last fifty years, the labours

moins la mort qu'ils y trouveroient, seroit plus prompte, et les délivreroit plutôt de leurs misères. Cependant ils se flatoient encore de l'espérance de pouvoir aborder en quelque autre país, où il y auroit des choses propres pour la nourriture des hommes.

“ Ainsi chacun travailla selon ses forces à calfater la chaloupe, à faire provision de limaçons, à remplir des fûtailles d'eau. Après cela l'on mit le bâtiment à la mer, et l'on quitta ce lieu, où l'on n'avoit vu que des déserts arides et des feux folets, et où il n'y avoit ni bêtes ni gens. On perdit bientôt de vuë ce país stérile, le second Pilote de la flûte étant parmi cette troupe desolée, et la guidant par le cours du Soleil, de la Lune et des Etoiles.

“ Cependant ils avoient trois à quatre cents lieuës de chemin à faire, pour terrir à la côte septentrionale de la grande Java. On peut assez s'imaginer à quelles souffrances ils furent exposez dans un tel bâtiment, pendant une telle route, et avec si-peu de vivres, et si-mauvais. Par le beau tems ils vogoient encore passablement; mais quand la mer étoit grosse, les lames les couvroient et passoient par-dessus leurs têtes, et la chaloupe étoit toujours sur le point de se voir submergée.

“ Mais la plus cruelle aventure fut que les limaçons se corrompirent, et il n'y eut plus moien d'en manger, si-bien que pour tout aliment il ne resta que de l'eau. La

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of Cook, Vancouver, Bligh, D'Entrecasteaux, Flinders, and Baudin, have gradually thrown a considerable light upon this extraordinary continent, for such it may be called. Of these and other voyages that were made during the 17th and 18th centuries to various parts of its coasts, an account is given by the late Captain Flinders, in his introduction to the Investigator's voyage; in which, and in that able and valuable work of the late Rear-Admiral Burney, "*A Chronological Account of Discoveries in the South Sea and Pacific Ocean*," the history of its progressive discovery is amply detailed.

nuit il faisoit un froid insupportable, et le jour on étoit brûlé des ardeurs du Soleil. Toute espérance de salut sembloit être retranchée, et les fatigues, aussi-bien que le manque de nourriture, avoient entièrement épuisé les forces de ces infortunés, lors-qu'un matin ils découvrirent les montagnes méridionales de la grande Java."

This ship was probably wrecked in the neighbourhood of Dampier's Archipelago, near which there is also an account of the loss of a ship called the Vianen.

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It was intended that the whole line of the Australian Coast should have been examined and surveyed by Captain Flinders; but the disgraceful and unwarrantable detention of this officer at the Mauritius by the French Governor, General Decaen, prevented the completion of this project. Captain Flinders had, however, previously succeeded in making a most minute and elaborate survey of the whole extent of the South coast, between Cape Leeuwin and Bass' Strait; of the East Coast, from Cape Howe to the Northumberland Islands; of the passage through Torres Strait; and of the shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria.

The French expedition, under Commodore Baudin, had in the mean time visited some few parts of the West Coast, and skirted the islands which front the Northwest Coast, without landing upon, and indeed scarcely seeing, any part of the main land. The whole of the north, the north-

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west, and the western shores remained, therefore, to be explored; and in the year 1817, among the numerous voyages of survey and discovery upon which a part of the navy of Great Britain was so honourably and so usefully employed, these Coasts of Australia were not forgotten. An expedition for the purpose of completing the survey of its North and North-west Coast was planned, under the joint direction of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, and the Secretary of State for the Colonies, to the command of which I had the honour of being appointed.

The arrangements for providing me with a vessel and crew were made by the latter department; and the Governor of New South Wales was instructed to give up to my use any vessel in the colonial marine establishment that should be deemed capable of performing the service; or, in the event of there being none fit for the purpose, to

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purchase any suitable one that might be offered for sale.

For my guidance I received the following instructions from the Admiralty and the Colonial Department:—

Admiralty Office, 4th February, 1817.

SIR,

My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty being informed of the arrangements of Earl Bathurst, His Majesty's principal Secretary of State for the Colonial Department, for employing you in a survey of the unexplored parts of the Coast of New South Wales, have commanded me to express their concurrence therein, and to convey to you the following instructions, to which you are to conform yourself, in addition to those which you may receive from the Secretary of State.

The arrangements for providing you with a proper vessel and crew, and other necessaries for the prosecution of the service having been made by the Colonial Department, my Lords have no directions to give you on these subjects, but to recommend you in the conduct and discipline of the vessel which may be intrusted to your care, to conform, as far as may be practicable, to the established usages of the navy, and to the regulations