THE AUSTRALASIAN COLONIES.

CHAPTER I.

DISCOVERIES IN THE SOUTH SEAS.

Australia and Australasia.

THE first duty of an author who attempts to write a history of the Australasian colonies for English readers is to point out a possible misapprehension which would render his work unintelligible. The terms "Australia" and "Australasia" are often used by speakers and writers as though the one were only a more elaborate and dignified equivalent of the other. As a matter of fact Australia is, geographically, a part of Australasia. Australia is the name appropriated to the huge island continent, at one time known as "New Holland," which lies in the Pacific Ocean due south of Papua or New Guinea, and south-east of China. Sometimes the name "Australia" includes, and sometimes it does not include, the lesser island of Tasmania (formerly known as Van Diemen's Land), which itself lies due south of the south-eastern coast of Australia, separated from it only by some 120 miles of shallow strait. There seems no adequate reason why Australia, as a geographical expression, should not include Tasmania, just as Europe includes England; and, as brevity of expression is a desirable object, Australia shall in these pages include

Tasmania, except where express mention is made of the distinction. Politically speaking, this practice seems equally harmless. Australia, even in the narrower sense, is not a single state under one government; it comprises five distinct and separately governed colonies—New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, and Queensland; and the addition of the colony of Tasmania, so closely allied with these in history and character, will create no difficulty.

The Colonies of the Continent.

Incidentally we have here come upon another pitfall of language. "South Australia," to any one at all familiar with Australian matters, means exclusively the colony of that name, with a clearly defined though extensive territory. By the less well-informed, it is apt to be taken for a mere indefinite geographical expression. No doubt there is some excuse for this mistake, inasmuch as the great bulk of the colonial population is settled towards the southern and south-eastern shores of the continent of Australia. But it would be disastrous to allow such a use of the term to slip into a history of the Australasian colonies.

South Australia.

"Australasia," on the other hand, though an equally uncertain term, is never, except by the ignorant, used as an equivalent to "Australia." In its widest application, Australasia includes Australia, the three islands known together as "New Zealand," and the almost countless islands of the Pacific ocean, from Sumatra and Borneo to the extreme east of the Polynesian group. This use of the term has the high authority of Mr Alfred Russel Wallace, the eminent explorer and man of science; but, however convenient to the naturalist, it cannot be adopted by the historian. For there is no historical connection between many of the groups composing this enormous area, and any attempt to treat them as a political whole would be doomed to certain failure. But within this area, though often separated from each other

Australasia.

by vast distances, there is a group of communities whose histories are linked together by two important facts—allegiance to the British crown, and prevalence of British blood, manners, ideas, and hopes. This group consists of Australia (including Tasmania) and the islands of New Zealand; and to this group we propose in these pages to confine the term "Australasia." One or two other dependencies of the British crown there are—such as Fiji and New Guinea—which have some claims to be considered members of the British Australasian group; but they are distinguished from the Australasian *colonies* by the great fact that the bulk of their population is not of European race. It will be better, therefore, to exclude them from the main current of our story, and only to refer to them incidentally towards its close. For the history of the Australasian colonies is pre-eminently the history of a European race in a non-European land.

The English way of acquiring colonies.

The early days of Australasia are a striking illustration of the assertion, so often made, and with apparent truth, that the Englishman discovers nothing and invents nothing, but that he possesses a marvellous knack of adopting and developing the discoveries and inventions of others. In the great maritime discoveries of the late 15th and early 16th centuries, England plays a very small part. Such original discoveries as she can claim were made after the great lines of maritime enterprise had been laid by other nations, and, even then, were often made by foreigners in the English service. But, when once the existence of lands hitherto unknown had been established, no perils, no threats could keep the English from swooping down upon the prize. The Spaniard or the Frenchman descried land, examined it hastily, set up his country's flag as claim of title, and sailed away. The Englishman went to stay. And so it has come about that of the countries discovered by Gama and Columbus, by Torres and Tasman and Cartier, (no one of them an English-

man or in English pay,) the great bulk has ultimately fallen to the British race.

Discovery of Australia.

It is impossible to say with certainty who it was that first discovered to Europeans the continent of Australia. When the great awakening of thought which took place in the fifteenth century had stirred up men's minds to put to practical use the new discoveries in science, it was natural that all eyes should be turned towards those rich Eastern lands which scholars knew from the histories of Alexander the Great, and which the multitude had heard of from the merchants who came at intervals along the old caravan routes to the great fairs of Europe. India and Cathay (China) were the names with which the adventurers buoyed up their own hopes, and charmed the money for supplies out of the pockets of princes and courtiers.

The Portuguese.

Two well defined and distinct lines of approach were attempted, almost simultaneously, in the hope of reaching by sea the riches of the Orient. The Portuguese, cautiously feeling their way down the west coast of Africa, rounded the Cape in 1497, and reached Calicut at the beginning of the next year. Following up their successes, they pushed further and further east till they reached the spice islands of the Malay archipelago, and, before the middle of the sixteenth century, obtained almost a monopoly of that valuable spice trade, which had long been the most remunerative branch of foreign commerce. Meanwhile, the Spaniards, urged by the great Columbus, had adopted the really brilliant idea that the East might be reached by deliberately starting out in the opposite direction, and trusting to the new scientific conclusion that the world was a sphere and not a plane. It is this daring acceptance of scientific conclusion, while yet unverified by experience, which shews the real greatness of the character of Columbus. As we know, he set out to find India, and, on his way, discovered America.

The Spaniards.

His successors were engaged for some years in exploring the new continent which he had brought to light, still believing that it formed a part of the long desired India. At length the truth dawned on them, but the discovery of the Pacific by Vasco Nunez de Balboa only stimulated them to still further effort. They pushed on and on, until the visit of Magelhaens to the Philippine Islands in 1521 brought the Spaniards well past the eastern-most stations of the Portuguese, and completed the circle of the globe.

Balboa.

Magelhaens.

It is almost impossible to believe that, in her wanderings in the Malay archipelago, no Spanish or Portuguese ship sighted the mainland of Australia. The northern coast of Australia is at one place distant less than 100 miles from the southern coast of New Guinea, and in those days it was no uncommon thing for a vessel to be blown 100 miles out of her course, especially when sailing in little-known waters. It is not difficult, therefore, to understand how, in the early years of the sixteenth century, rumours began to float about Europe of a great southern land, which had slept unknown since the beginning of the world in the untraversed ocean. These rumours began to take hold of men's minds, and to appear in visible, though highly imaginative shapes, on the rude charts of geographers and travellers. One of the oldest of these is to be found in the British Museum, and is attributed to the year 1542. It is believed to have been at one time the property of a man named Rotz, a French sailor who passed some part of his life in England; and this fact gives some colour to the claim put forward by the French, that their countryman, Guillaume le Testu, was the true discoverer of Australia. The claim is based mainly upon the fact that Testu's name appears on a map dated 1555, on which a southern continent, styled *Jave la Grande* ("Great Java"), is

The legend of a Great South Land.

Testu.

outlined. But this fact, of course, merely proves that Testu had heard of such a country, and guessed whereabouts to look for it. The outline is certainly not sufficiently correct to convince us that he had personally explored the coast.

Wytfliet.

Far more striking proof of the knowledge of Australia which gained ground during the later sixteenth century is afforded by a work published in 1598 by the Dutch historian Cornelius Wytfliet. One passage is sufficiently interesting to bear reproduction.

"The *Terra Australis* is the most southern of all lands, and is separated from New Guinea by a narrow strait....The *Terra Australis* begins at one or two degrees from the Equator, and is ascertained by some to be of so great an extent, that if it were thoroughly explored it would be regarded as a fifth part of the world."

Here we have not only the position of the country stated with some approach to accuracy, but a shrewd guess at the vastness of the still unexplored regions. The continent, too, has always kept the simple name given to it by the earliest writers; it is *Australia*, the South Land, and nothing can better describe it. The more ambitious name of *Australasia* (South Land of Asia), invented by the French writer Brosses in the middle of the eighteenth century, has been productive of much confusion, and has now, as we have seen, more than one meaning.

Mendana.

The credit of converting the legendary belief of the later sixteenth century into verified fact belongs, undoubtedly, to Spain. In the year 1595 Alvaro de Mendana, a Spaniard of birth and influence, set sail from Peru, ostensibly to settle the Salomon Islands, but with secret hopes of discovering the much-talked-of continent. Mendana died without having accomplished anything more than a temporary settlement on the Santa Cruz group; but his pilot,

Pedro Fernandez de Quiros, devoted himself to the fulfilment of his captain's object, and, in the year 1605, started from Lima, under the most favourable auspices, to refound Mendana's abandoned settlement at Santa Cruz, and then to search for the Great South Land. Quiros discovered many islands, probably, from the accounts of his followers, belonging to the Samoan group, and ultimately reached the group now known as the New Hebrides, to one of which he gave the name of *Austral del Espiritu Santo*, a fact which indicates pretty clearly the nature of his hopes. Quiros, no doubt, thought that he had accomplished his object, and, in pursuance of his orders, started northward, with part only of his expedition, for Santa Cruz. The accounts of his proceedings thenceforward are not satisfactory. Perhaps he thought that he had done all that was hoped of him, perhaps his men mutinied, but in any case it is probable that he did not even reach Santa Cruz. Meeting with bad weather, he consulted his officers, giving them the choice between New Spain and China. They unanimously decided for the former, and thus missed their best chance of making the great discovery.

Quiros.

But Quiros' lieutenant, Luis Vaez de Torres, who had been left behind at Espiritu Santo, was more enterprising and more fortunate. Sailing along its western coast, he saw enough to convince him that the so-called Australia was only one of the many islands of the Pacific, and not the great continent of which Quiros was in search. After making a bold dash south-westward, which must have brought him to a point between New Caledonia and the eastern coast of Australia, Torres stood back to the north-west, with the object of making the south-eastern point of New Guinea, probably hoping ultimately to reach China by way of the Philippine Islands. He succeeded in making New Guinea, but, in spite of his efforts, he failed to weather the eastern point, and was compelled to coast along the

Torres.

southern shore. This disappointment really gives Torres his title to fame; for it seems beyond question that, in passing through the narrow strait which now bears his name, he more than once sighted the northern shores of Australia. Though, by his own account, he was more interested in annexing little islands on the Guinea coast than in exploring towards the south, the currents and shallows compelled him often to stand in a southerly direction; and he expressly says that he reached the end of the 11th degree of latitude, where the water became shallow. Thus he must have been well within the outline of the continent.

Torres Strait.

The business of exploration was soon afterwards taken up by the Dutch, who, having successfully conducted a heroic war of independence against Spain, and established a national Republic, were rapidly becoming one of the great sea powers. There is indeed a tradition that in the very year (1606) in which Torres made his famous voyage, the northern coasts of Australia were sighted by the Dutch ship *Duyfhen*, which sailed from Bantam to New Guinea, and is said to have gone as far as $13\frac{1}{4}$ degrees of latitude South. In the year 1616 a Dutch ship named *Eendracht*, under the command of Theodoric Hertoge or, as he is generally called, Dirk Hartog, accidentally fell in with the west coast of Australia, at a point now known as Shark Bay. Several other voyages followed, which resulted in a gradually increasing knowledge of the continent. Carstenz, a Dutch explorer, named the Gulf of Carpentaria in the north in 1623, after the Dutch governor of the West Indies. Dutch expeditions in 1628 gave the name of the great De Witt to the western coast. But the turning point in the history of Australian maritime exploration is the famous voyage made by Abel Jansz Tasman in the year 1642.

The Dutch.

Dirk Hartog.

Carstenz.

Tasman.

The expedition was sent out by the Governor and Council

of the Dutch East Indies from their headquarters at Batavia, the colonial capital of Holland. It consisted only of two vessels, a yacht and a fly-boat. After spending some time at Mauritius, the expedition steered south and east, and, on the 24th November, 1642, discovered land which, in his modesty, Tasman called Van Diemen's Land, after the Governor of the Indies, but which the justice of posterity has named, after its discoverer, Tasmania. After exploring the east coast for some distance, and naming Storm Bay and Frederick Henry's Bay, Tasman again sailed east and, on the 13th December, 1642, sighted the middle island of New Zealand. Here, on the west coast, he met the determined opposition of the natives, who killed several of his men at a place which he named Murderers' Bay. Bearing north, Tasman discovered the Three Kings' Islands, and rounded the North Cape. To the territory thus discovered he gave the name of Staates Land, thus claiming it on behalf of the Republic of Holland; but his Government afterwards changed the title to New Zealand, a name which it has ever since borne. Tasman continued his voyage eastward, and discovered the Friendly Islands, as well as several smaller places; but these do not concern us. He returned to Batavia round the north coast of New Guinea, and reached port on the 16th June 1643, having in eight months added a new chapter to the world's history.

Tasmania.

New Zealand.

Two years later, Tasman undertook a second voyage of discovery. Of the history of this expedition little is known; but it is interesting from the fact that the instructions given by his Government to the great sailor are still in existence. From these we gather that Torres' discovery of the strait which bears his name was unknown to the Dutch in 1644, for one of Tasman's chief duties in the new expedition was to discover whether or no New Guinea and the South Land were parts of the same continent.

Tasman's second voyage.

He was also directed to examine the east coast of Australia, and to report whether Van Diemen's land likewise formed part of the continent. Apparently he did not succeed in the task. At any rate Tasman had been dead a hundred years before it was ascertained that Tasmania was an island.

By the middle of the 17th century Australasia had thus acquired a thoroughly Dutch character. In the great stone map of the world which Quellius made in the year 1662 for the Town Hall of Amsterdam, the names New Holland (Australia) and New Zealand shew the view taken of the new world by the Dutch; and it was, in fact, long before the declining strength of Holland compelled the States to abandon their claims. But at last England appeared on the scene.

Dampier.

The character of the first English explorer in Australian waters cannot be considered creditable to his nation. William Dampier was one of the large body of amateur pirates (to put it plainly) whom the increasing familiarity of Englishmen with hitherto unknown waters produced in the 16th and 17th centuries. Without being essentially cruel or lawless, he adopted the popular view that morality and law-abidingness were shore virtues only, and, though there is no evidence that he committed outrages for the mere pleasure of the occupation, he certainly let nothing stand in the way of a prospect of plunder. His greatest virtue was unquestionably a steady thirst for knowledge of all kinds connected with navigation, or, as he himself puts it, "increase of experience."

Dampier's first voyage.

Dampier's first visit to Australia took place in January 1689, and was a sort of offshoot from a piratical cruise on the coasts of the Dutch possessions in the East Indies, which occupied him for seven or eight years. His own account of his adventures (discreetly worded) was published in 1697, and though the account which it gives of New Holland is anything but attractive, the success