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ABORIGINES OF TASMANIA.

CHAPTER I.—INTRODUCTION.

TASMANIA, formerly known as Van Dieman's Land, is situated between parallels of 40°33′ and 43°39′ S. Lat., and between 144°39′ and 144°23′ Meridians E. Long. and corresponds with Southern France. It is irregularly heart-shaped and occupies an area of 26,215 square miles; nearly the area of Scotland. The main axis of the Great Cordillera bordering the eastern coast line of Australia may be traced across Bass Strait in a chain of islands, which almost continuously link Tasmania with Australia. Tasmania is wholly occupied with the ramifications of this chain which in the western half of the island rises into an extensive plateau with peaks attaining a height of 3,000 to 5,000 feet above sea level. The island is beautiful in its scenery, with its open plains bordered by far extending precipitous mountain tiers, its isolated shaggy peaks and wooded ranges, and its many fine rivers and lakes. Its coasts, especially towards the south, are bold and frequently indented by splendid bays and harbours, such as the Derwent on which stands Hobart the Capital. On the western side the scenery resembles that of the Highlands of Ross and Inverness. Settlement has principally taken place among the plains and lower levels of the South Eastern, Midland, and North Western parts of the island, and more recently in the mineral districts of the West and North East. The climate is exceptionally genial and is one of the finest in the temperate zone (*Johnston's Tasm. Official Record*).

The island was discovered on the 24th November, 1642, by Abel Janszoon Tasman, who named it after the Governor of the Dutch East Indies, Anthony Van Diemen. It does not appear to have been visited by any European after Tasman until March, 1772, when Marion du Fresne, in command of a French expedition, spent some days in exploring the coast. A twelvemonth later it was visited by Captain Furneaux, in the Resolution, during his temporary separation from Captain Cook during the Second Voyage. The latter celebrated navigator visited the island in January, 1777. He was followed by Captain Bligh in 1788 and again in 1792, Captain Cox in 1790, the French Admiral Bruny d'Entrecasteaux in 1792 and 1793, and Captain (afterwards Sir John) Hayes of the Bombay Marine, in 1794. In the early part of year 1798 Dr. Bass in an open

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whaleboat, entered Bass Strait from Sydney, and in the latter part of the same year and in the beginning of 1799 Lieut. Flinders and Dr Bass in the "Norfolk" sailed through Bass Strait for the first time and circumnavigated Van Dieman's Land. The French Captain Baudin visited the island in 1802, and the first European settlement, consisting of a small party was made under Lieutenant Bowen at Risdon on the Derwent, some three miles above Hobart, in September, 1803. Lieut. Governor David Collins' settlement was made at Hobart Town 20th February 1804.

The first Aborigine killed by a European was during a misunderstanding between the natives and Marion's party. The first meeting of English with the aborigines was Dr. Bass' interview with one man in January 1799. The next meeting was with James Meehan who was engaged in making short surveys in connection with Bowen's party but some distance above Risdon, on the north bank of the river. This was in February, 1804, Meehan's note book is preserved in the Tasmanian Lands Office, and his words are as follows: "Are here invested with a considerable body of natives who endeavoured to surround us--had taken one of my marking sticks—am obliged to fire on them". . . . "The natives are in a considerable body—assembled again and endeavoured to steal behind a hill—on which, fired another gun and they dispersed for this night." "Tuesday morning.—The natives again assembled in a large body on a hill over us—all around with spears and in a very menacing attitude. They followed us a short distance and then stopped. They appear to be very dexterous at throwing stones. Them who surrounded us yesterday in such multitudes had no arms but a few waddys, but several of them picked up stones. . . .

"In the first affray with the blacks, which was at Risdon, May, 1804, the best evidence goes to show that very few were killed—perhaps five or six. Future hostilities do not appear to have been caused by this episode. The real fact is, that in the early years of the Colony, the blacks though regarding the whites with jealousy and mistrust, too often well-founded, were on fairly good terms with the settlers; frequently visiting their home-steads, and receiving food and other small presents. Bodies of them, 'Mobs' as they were called, often came to Hobart, where they were always well treated and never sent away empty handed. Occasional murders were committed by the blacks, when opportunity or provocation tempted. Many cruelties were perpetrated on them by Convict Shepherds and Herdsmen in isolated parts, but the stories told of brutal murders by the settlers are," G. W. Walker believes, "gross exaggerations or inventions, almost without exception." It was not till about 1825, that the deadly feud began. It originated in the execution of some blacks for killing some whites. The blacks at once retreated from the settlements, and from that time never came near the settlers, except to murder and to burn. Then the war became one of extermination. The reign of terror which ensued in the remoter districts of the Colony has not yet faded out of local memory. It is quite a mistake to suppose that the Colonists were nearly driven out of the island, but enormous efforts were made to capture and bring in the whole of the tribes, which then could only have numbered a few hundreds. Governor Arthur called a general levy of the population, and formed some five thousand men into parties constituting a line across

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the island. His plan was for the parties to advance and drive the blacks before them into the south eastern corner of the island, where it was thought they would be trapped in Tasman Peninsula. As might have been expected from the wild and rugged nature of the country, the thick forests and dense scrub in many parts, the "*Black Line*" was a complete failure. The natives easily passed through the lines and only one boy was captured. The "*Black War*" of Colonel Arthur cost the English Government some £36,000.

"What five thousand armed men failed to do, was accomplished by one man, unarmed and almost single handed. George Augustus Robinson, accompanied by a few 'tame' blacks whose confidence he had gained, set out to trace the miserable remnants of the tribes in their wild haunts. Between the years 1831 and 1836, he succeeded in bringing in, by persuasion alone, various parties numbering altogether two hundred and three persons. With a few scattered exceptions, these were all the surviving natives in the island. As they arrived in the settled districts they were transferred to Swan Island, then to Gun Carriage or Vansittart Island, and finally in 1831, to Flinden Island. . . .

"In 1832 Messrs. Backhouse and Walker found the natives at the Settlement looking plump and healthy, notwithstanding that they had been suffering from shortness of provisions. The arrangements for supplies had been shamefully deficient. The white people had for some time been living on oatmeal and potatoes, which were far from good. The blacks, who abhorred oatmeal, lived on potatoes and rice. Fortunately mutton-birds (*Nectris brevicaudus*) supplemented their scanty provision. A little while before, when left in charge of Surgeon M'Lachlan on desolate Gun Carriage, if it had not been for some potatoes they obtained from the sealers, the unfortunate blacks would have been actually starved.

"The site of the settlement at 'The Lagoons' was most unsuitable. It was a narrow sandbank, running parallel with the shore, producing nothing but fern and scrub. It was bounded on one side by the sea, and on the other side by a salt lagoon bordered with thick tea-tree, and cutting off access to the main.

"When first placed on the islands the blacks had been put under the charge of most unsuitable officers—ignorant men, quite unfit for the difficult and delicate task of managing savages fresh from their native forests. It was not therefore strange that at first there was much disorder, and that quarrels between members of different tribes were of frequent occurrence. At this time, however, they were under the care of a commandant, who threw himself into the work before him with an unselfish enthusiasm. The commandant was Lieutenant William J. Darling, a young officer of the 63rd Regiment, a brother of Sir Charles Darling, who was afterwards (1863-66) Governor of Victoria. He was ably seconded by the surgeon, Archibald M'Lachlan. The self-denying exertions of these two officers for the welfare of the poor blacks cannot be too highly praised. To promote their advancement in civilisation the Commandant and Surgeon spared no pains. They treated them with uniform and patient kindness and consideration. They seldom sat down to breakfast or tea in their own little weatherboard huts without having some aborigines as guests, with the view of exciting in them a desire for improvement in civilisation.

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"Yet the arrangements for the aborigines, well meant as they undoubtedly were, seem to have been singularly injudicious. They were lodged at night in shelters or 'breakwinds.' These 'breakwinds' were thatched roofs sloping to the ground, with an opening at the top to let out the smoke, and closed at the ends, with the exception of a doorway. They were twenty feet long by ten feet wide. In each of these from twenty to thirty blacks were lodged. The fires were made along the centre of the breakwind, and the people squatted or lay on the ground around them. Blankets were provided for them to sleep in. To savages accustomed to sleep naked in the open air beneath the rudest shelter, the change to close and heated dwellings tended to make them susceptible, as they had never been in their wild state, to chills from atmospheric changes, and was only too well calculated to induce those severe pulmonary diseases which were destined to prove so fatal to them.

"The same may be said of the use of clothes. In their wild state the blacks had gone entirely naked in all weathers, protecting their bodies against the elements by rubbing them with grease. At the settlement they were compelled to wear clothes, which they threw off when heated or when they found them troublesome, and when wetted by rain allowed them to dry on their bodies. In the case of Tasmanians, as with other wild tribes accustomed to go naked, the use of clothes had a most mischievous effect on their health. In their native bush the constant and strenuous exertion which they were compelled to make in hunting wild animals for necessary food kept them hardy and healthy. Cooped up in the settlement and regularly fed, they lost the motive for exertion, and sank into a life of listless inaction, in which they lost their natural vigour, and became an easy prey to any disease that attacked them. . . . In fact, the unhappy captives pined and died from 'home sickness.'

"How to treat the poor remnant of the native tribes was a difficulty, perhaps an insoluble problem under the circumstances. If they could have been left in possession of a portion of their ancient hunting-grounds—a reserve to which they could have been confined—they might have lived healthily and even happily for a long period of years, though even that would not have averted the final doom. But the feud between the two races had been too deadly to permit of their being left in proximity, and the seclusion of an island was imperative, as much for the protection of the blacks as for the safety of the whites.

"To the credit of the authorities, it must be said that from the time Lieut. Darling took charge in 1832 every possible effort was made to secure the well-being of the few survivors of the native tribes. They were well supplied with food, and they supplemented the ordinary supplies by taking mutton-birds and their eggs, and, while the game lasted, by occasional hunting excursions. . . . The care of the authorities extended far beyond ensuring them plentiful food. No exertion was spared to drill these children of nature into the habits of a civilisation unto which they were not born.

The blacks, in 1833, "were removed to a place called by the sealers Pea Jacket Point, then rechristened 'Civilisation Point,' about fifteen miles north of their old location. The village was named 'Wybalenna,' signifying, in the language of the Ben Lomond tribe, 'Blackman's Houses.'

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. . . Wybalenna was a much better location than The Lagoons. There was sufficient water, good pasturage, and land fit for cultivation as gardens. The officers of the establishment had weatherboard houses, and about twenty thatched wattle and plaster huts had been built for the blacks. . . . They now had a regular instructor or catechist, who tried to instil into their minds some ideas of religion. To aid in this work he had attempted a translation of the first three chapters of Genesis into the language of the Ben Lomond tribe! The worthy catechist's version is obviously worthless from a linguistic point of view, whatever effect it may have had on the native mind in other ways. The catechist made most persevering efforts to instruct the blacks, and even succeeded in teaching some of the boys and younger men to read a little.

"In 1835, George Augustus Robinson, who had just completed his mission by bringing in the last party of wanderers, was sent by the Government to take charge of the Flinders establishment. In a speech which he made at Sydney some few years later, he gave a long account of his administration. He boasted that his efforts to lead forward the blacks in the scale of civilisation had met with flattering success. Their minds were beginning to expand. In their intercourse with each other they were affable and courteous. They were placed under no restraint, but enjoyed the fullest degree of personal freedom. They were instructed in the Christian religion. Two services were held on Sunday, and others during the week. The services were conducted in English, which the natives well understood. Attendance was voluntary, yet all attended. He had established schools,—a day-school for boys, a day-school for girls, an evening school, and a Sunday-school. Periodical examinations were held, from which it appeared that the youths were able to answer questions in the leading events of Scripture, in Christian doctrine, arithmetic, geography, and several points of general information. Some of them could write very fairly. The girls were taught sewing and knitting, and could make clothes. The people had neat cottages and gardens, and conformed in every respect to European habits. He had formed an aboriginal police, and a court composed of himself and three chiefs, who acted as constables. He had established a circulating medium, and also a market to which the natives brought their produce. The men had in three years cleared a considerable area of ground, and had made a road nine miles long into the interior of the island. He concludes with the remark, 'The only drawback on the establishment is the great mortality among them; but those who survive are happy, contented, and useful members of society.'

"A significant comment on his 'flattering success!' While Robinson and others were doing their best to make them into a civilised people, the poor blacks had given up the struggle, and were solving the difficult problem by dying. The very efforts made for their welfare only served to hasten on their inevitable doom. The white man's civilisation proved scarcely less fatal than the white man's musket. Yet it would be wrong to estimate lightly the disinterested labours of men who perseveringly worked for the fading race. Amongst these men the name of Mr. Robert Clark, the catechist, stands first. From the time of his appointment to Flinders Island in 1834 to his death in 1850 this estimable man gave himself with an absolute devotion to the care of the unhappy remnant

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of the captive tribes. The poor blacks on their part showed that they were not 'insensible to kindness, or devoid of generous feelings.' While Mr. Clark lived they regarded him with a touching love and veneration. When he died, after sixteen years spent in their service, they mourned him as their one true and constant friend, and to the last the miserable remnant of Tasmania's native tribes affectionately cherished the memory of their beloved 'Father Clark.'

"In 1838 the aborigines on Flinders, probably at the suggestion of Robinson, who had been appointed Protector of the Aborigines in Port Phillip, petitioned Governor Franklin to be removed to that colony. The Home Authorities interposed and forbade the removal. On Robinson's departure from Flinders, Captain Smith, and afterwards Mr. Fisher, took charge of the settlement. In 1842 Dr. Jeannerett received the appointment of Commandant from Sir John Franklin. Five years later, in 1847, . . . in the face of considerable opposition from the colonists, the Government resolved to remove the few survivors to Oyster Cove, in D'Entrecasteaux Channel. Dr. James Milligan was appointed superintendent, and under his care the transfer was effected. Among the children thus removed was Fanny Cochrane (now Mrs. Fanny Cochrane Smith, who is still living on her farm at Port Cygnet, the sole survivor of the Flinders Island settlement.) At Oyster Cove the blacks rapidly deteriorated. A new phase of civilisation was here presented to them in the shape of low whites and rum. The mortality was accelerated by the drunken habits into which many of them fell. A few lingered on—a disgraced and degraded remnant. In 1854 there remained only three men, eleven women, and two children—sixteen in all. In 1865, Billy Lanneé, the last male aborigine, died, and only four women remained. Truganini, the last survivor of her race, died in 1877.'"—(G. W. Walker, Trans. Roy. Soc. of Tasm., 1897).

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CHAPTER II.—Physical Characters.

THE very remarkable differences in the descriptions of these people handed down to us by eye-witnesses may perhaps induce the belief that there was ocularly appreciable difference in the physiognomy of the various members of the tribes. This belief finds support in the statement of Kelly (Colonies and Slaves, p. 51), who states that "the tribes to the southward and westward are a much finer race of men than those to the eastward and northward." It also finds more limited support in an examination of their portraits and photographs. The differences are not very marked, but still they are appreciable. We will now give a detailed description of the face, and follow it up with others of their general physiognomy and other physical characteristics.

The forehead was high, prominent (Laplace, III. ch. xviii. p. 200), narrow and running to a peak (Davies); the malar bones were prominent, and the cheeks hollow (West, p. 77), and the faces massive (Dumoutier, ix. p. 134).

Eyes.—Their eyes were small (Prinsep, p. 79; Marion, p. 28), and hollow (Laplace, p. 200; Prinsep, p. 79; Dumoutier, p. 134). Breton says (p. 349) they were more deeply set than those of any other people, and Milligan (p. 25) that the natives "had projecting eyebrows and sunken orbits," agreeing herein with Leigh, who describes them as much sunk in the head and covered with thick eyebrows (pp 242-3). According to Laplace (p. 200) the eyes were yellowish, and according to Marion (p. 28) of a bilious colour. Cook (Voy. Bk. I. ch. vi.) says they had "good eyes," while Anderson records them as being of a middling size, less clear than in us, and, though not remarkably quick or piercing, such as give a frank cheerful cast to the countenance. This is very different from Davies, who describes the eyes as dark, wild, and strongly expressive of the passions. According to West (p. 77) the eyes are full, the eyelid drooping, the iris dark brown, the pupil large and jet black.

Nose.—This has been described as flat (Milligan, p. 25; Davies; Marion, p. 28; and Leigh, p. 242), not remarkably flat by Cook (Voy. Bk. I. ch. vi.), and as very flat by Widowson (p. 187). According to Laplace (p. 200) it is short and flat, and Anderson says their noses, though not flat, are broad and full. According also to Calder (J.A.I. p. 20) the nose was broad. Prinsep (p. 79) describes the nose as broad and short, and he speaks of the nostrils being widely distended. Davies, as well as Leigh (p. 242), says the nostrils were wide, and Widowson (p. 187) that the natives had immense nostrils. Dumoutier (ch. ix. p. 134) tells us the nose was exceedingly big, being about the quarter of the entire length of the face. Nostrils flat and distended says Walker (p. 97).

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Mouth.—Anderson considered the mouth rather wide; Davies and Widowson (p. 187) consider it wide; Marion (p. 28) gave them very large mouths; while Dumoutier (ch. ix. p. 134) says the mouth was extremely broad. Laplace says it was enormous; Prinsep (p. 79) that it was uncommonly large; while Calder's account is that the mouth generally protruded extremely (J.A.I. p. 20). The lips have been described as not remarkably thick (Cook, Voy. Bk. I. ch. vi.; Dumoutier, ch. ix. p. 134); as thick (Laplace p. 200); as slightly thickened (Milligan, p. 25); and as particularly thick (Widowson, p. 187). On the other hand, (Loyd, p. 43) says the underlip was smaller than that of the negro; and Davies, "the lips are *not* full, like those of the negroes, at least not generally so." "Generally thick lips" (Walker, p. 97).

Teeth.—Cook (Voy. Bk. I. ch. vi.) found their teeth tolerably even, and Anderson broad, but not equal. Davies says their teeth were large, strong and even, while Laplace (p. 200) describes them as "pointed." La Billardière tells us they all had very good teeth (II. p. 39), and Widowson that they were tolerably good (p. 187). According to Strzelecki (p. 334) they were large and white; according to Marion (p 28) very white, and according to Lloyd of an "exquisite whiteness" (p. 43); while Anderson describes their teeth, "either from nature or dirt, are not of so true a white as is usual among a people of a black colour."

Jaws.—Prinsep (p. 79), who was not by any means enamoured of the race, states the jaws to have been elongated like those of the orang-outan! According to Davies the jawbones are large, strong, and prominent, and show a great width in front, agreeing herein somewhat with Anderson's statement that the lower part of the face projects a good deal. La Billardière (II. p. 39) makes the curious statement that "in the children the upper jaw advances considerably beyond the lower, but sinking as they grow up, both jaws are nearly even in the adult."

Development, Form, Size.—"The native of V. D. Land possesses, on the whole, a well-proportioned frame. His limbs, less fleshy or massive than those of a well-formed African, exhibit all the symmetry and peculiarly well-defined muscular development and well-knit articulations and roundness which characterize the negro" (Strzelecki, pp. 334-336). Cook (Voy. Bk. I. ch. vi.) thought the people slender, and Anderson (*ibid.*) well proportioned; while Prinsep (p. 79) says they were "short in stature, with disproportionately thin limbs and shapeless bodies," and Mortimer (p. 19) that most of the party he encountered were of the middle size, and though lean, were square and muscular. Laplace (III. ch. viii. p. 200) speaks of the lanky limbs and inflated stomachs of the native; but Dixon (p. 22) agrees with the others that the limbs were muscular and well proportioned. La Billardière (ch. v. p. 222) mentions a very tall and muscular savage, and elsewhere (ch. x. p. 73) he speaks of a savage of middle size whose figure was very finely proportioned. To Marion (p. 29) they "seemed to be generally slender, fairly well made, broad-chested, and the shoulders thrown back." According to Hamy (Anthrop, II. p. 610) Petit remarks that "the slender limbs are an essential character of the race," and West describes (p. 77) them with "breast arched and full, the limbs round, lean and muscular, the hands small, the feet flat and turned inwards." They had small natural parts

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To face p. 9.

WAPPERTY.

BESSY CLARK.

FROM PHOTOGRAPHS BY WOOLLEY IN THE POSSESSION OF MR. J. W. BEATTIE, HOBART.

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(Marion, p. 29). Dr. Knox (Races of Men, Lond., 1850, p. 286) says: "The reproductive organs in the Tasmanians are said to be quite peculiar in men and women." He gives no authority, he makes no distinction between Australians and Tasmanians. In describing an interview with fourteen of the Aborigines, Péron says, "The majority of them were young men of about sixteen to twenty-five years of age; two or three appeared to be thirty to thirty-five years old; one alone, older than the rest, appeared to be fifty to fifty-five years of age. . . Generally all the individuals were of a stature proportionate to their age. Among those arrived at manhood there was one who was not less than 1 metre 786 millimetres (5 feet 10⅓ inches), but he was much thinner and slimmer than his fellows. All the others were from 1 metre 678 millimetres to 732 millimetres (5 feet 6 to 8 inches) in height. One of them . . . was a young man, twenty-four to twenty-five years of age, called *Bara-Ourou*, with a much finer constitution than the others, although spoilt by the same constitutional defect common to all his race, that is to say, with a well-developed head, ample and fleshy shoulders, broad chest, and very muscular buttocks, all his extremities were slender and weak, particularly his legs; his stomach* also, proportionately, was much too big" (ch. xiii. p 280). One man killed by Marion's party was five feet three inches in height† (Marion, p. 31). They are rather below the average stature of Europeans. . . . Both sexes are stout and their limbs well-proportioned (Walker p. 97). Near Port Davey, Kelly (p. 7) met some natives "six feet high, their stomachs very large, legs and arms very thin"; at Retreat River some men were "six feet high and very stout made" (p. 8); at Cape Grim he says he measured a man six feet seven inches high (p. 10). "Robinson found some at Port Davey about six feet. In 1819, a man was killed six feet two inches high. Dr. Story informs me that 'the general size of the men was from five feet two inches to five feet five inches; the women in proportion to the men, of course smaller.' He adds, 'Balawenna was a fine athletic man, more than six feet. His wife was in proportion'" (Bonwick, p. 119.)

Laplace (III. ch. xviii. p. 202) deemed the women as repulsive [*sic*] in physique as the men, and Lloyd (pp. 43-44) speaks of their attenuated frames as "comparable only to animated skeletons. The spinsters, however, . . . presented a marked and pleasing contrast, . . . possessing a tolerable amount of rounded limb . . . and sleekness of person." Widowson considered the women better formed than the men (p. 187). Of two women Péron writes (ch. xii. pp. 222-223): "The former appeared to be forty years of age, and the large folds of the skin of her stomach showed unmistakeably that she had been the mother of several children. . . . The young woman of twenty-six to twenty-eight years of age, had a fairly robust constitution, . . . her breast, already slightly withered, appeared nevertheless fairly well formed. Of a party of some twenty aboriginal females he writes (ch. xii. p. 252): "Their forms were generally thin and withered, their breasts long and hanging; in a word, all the details of their physical constitution were repulsive. One must, however, except

* Probably from the indigestable food such as fern roots, &c.

† Old French measure.

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