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James Fenton

Excerpt

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# HISTORY OF TASMANIA.

## CHAPTER I.

TASMAN'S DISCOVERY—PRIOR DISCOVERIES IN AUSTRALIA—DE QUIROS, TORRES, THE DUYFHEN, DIRK HARTOG, VAN EDELS, NUYTS, CARPENTER, TASMAN—V. D. LAND VISITED BY MARION DU FRESNE, FURNEAUX, COOK, COX, BLIGH, D'ENTRECASTEAUX, HAYES, BASS, AND FLINDERS—DISCOVERY OF BASS STRAITS—BAUDIN'S EXPEDITION—ABORIGINES.

**T**ASMANIA (formerly called VAN DIEMEN'S LAND) was discovered by Commodore ABEL JANS\* TASMAN, a Dutch navigator, who had been commanded by General Anthony Van Diemen, Governor of the Dutch Settlements in the Indian Archipelago, to explore the coast of the "Great South Land," that being the name by which Australia† was then known. Tasman sailed from Batavia on 14th August, 1642, in the *Heemskirk*, with his brother Gerritt Tasman in the fly-boat *Zeehaan* in company. The vessels arrived at Mauritius on 5th September, and sailed again in an easterly direction on 8th October. Bearing

\* Called in his letter of instruction Abel Jansen Tasman.

† Australia was the name finally applied to the continent by Flinders after it had borne the names of Great Java, Great South Land, New Holland, Notasia, &c.

considerably to the south of east, over an unknown sea, he continued his course without interruption until he sighted the west coast of Tasmania.

The Dutch had already visited the north, west, and part of the south coasts of Australia, and had given names to various places. The Spaniards, too, encouraged by the success of their Peruvian discoveries, sought further treasures in the unknown regions of the south.

As early as 1594 Fernandez De Quiros, a Spaniard, was pilot major of an expedition fitted out by the Viceroy of Peru to establish a colony upon one of the Solomon Islands. He again sailed from Callao on 21st December, 1605, in command of two ships and a launch, Luis Vaes de Torres being second in command. They sighted several islands in the Pacific, and at length, on 20th April, 1606, discovered what appeared to be "a vast territory, which seemed to have no end, and was full of great mountains." De Quiros named the new region Australia del Espiritu Santo, took formal possession of it in the name of Philip the Second of Spain, and founded a city which he named La Nueva Jerusalem. The fruits of this expedition were nipped in the bud. The natives were warlike; a collision took place, several blacks were slain, and in less than a month De Quiros abandoned the place. Torres, however, parted company with his commander and returned with his ship *La Almiranta* to his former anchorage, where he remained another fortnight. He then set sail and steered along the west side of the land, which he now found to be an island, and not the true Australian continent. For two months Torres explored the dangerous seas which lie to the north-east of Australia. Steering westward, he saw the eastern shores of New Guinea, and sailed along the southern side of that island as far as the strait that now bears his name. He sighted Cape York, but returned without making further explorations to the south.

## DUTCH DISCOVERIES IN AUSTRALIA.

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About the same time that the Spanish navigator was exploring the intricate passage of Torres Strait, the Dutch yacht *Duyfhen* (Dove) was despatched from Bantam, in Java, to explore the coast of New Guinea. In March, 1606, this vessel sailed southward along the western coast of the peninsula of Cape York as far as Cape Keer-weer (Turn Again) on the shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria, observing about 220 miles of Australian coast. The commander of the *Duyfhen* was not aware of the existence of Torres Strait, and therefore was ignorant of the fact that he was exploring a great continent separated by water from New Guinea. He had to make a hasty retreat on account of scarcity of provisions.

The Dutch East India Company, established in 1602, were noted for maritime enterprise. They formed various settlements in the Indian Archipelago, their head quarters being Batavia, in the island of Java. This mercantile company fitted out their fleets on a liberal scale, and their commanders were men of great energy and perseverance.

Before the date of Tasman's voyage these bold navigators had explored a large extent of coast on the Australian continent; but it was reserved for three Englishmen—Cook, Bass, and Flinders—at later periods to discover that portion which now forms the great centres of trade and commerce in the British Colonies of Australia.

In 1616, Dirk Hartog, in the *Eendracht*, visited the west coast at about the 25th parallel of south latitude. An island near Shark's Bay still bears his name. In 1697, and again in 1801, there was seen on Dirk Hartog's Island a plate of tin bearing the following inscription—"Anno 1616, 25th October, arrived here the ship *Eendracht* of Amsterdam; the first merchant, Gillis Miebais, of Luik; Dirk Hartog, captain. Sailed from hence to Bantam on 27th of the same month."

In 1618 Zeachen discovered and surveyed the land ex-

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tending from North-West Cape to the 15th parallel of south latitude, and also a considerable portion of the north coast, which he named Arnheim's Land. In the year following Van Edels visited the western coast about the 29th parallel of latitude. In 1622 the South-West Cape was discovered, and the coast of Western Australia. Cape Leeuwin was named after the discovery ship. Five years later a considerable portion of the south coast was discovered. That sterile region was named Nuyts' Land in honour of Pieter de Nuyts, ambassador to Japan, who was on board the discovery ship.

In the following year (1628) the country lying between Eendracht's Land and the discoveries of Zeachen was named De Witt's Land in honour of the commodore of the Dutch East India squadron. The whole of the coast line of the Gulf of Carpentaria, lying between Arnheim's Land and Cape Keer-weer, was explored in 1628 by Captain Peter Carpenter (a Dutchman, who gave his name to the gulf), and by other navigators belonging to the Dutch East India Company.\*

Thus it will be seen that Tasman was continuing a series of grand discoveries by the Dutch when he sighted the coast of Tasmania, and rounded what was then believed to be part of the Australian continent. Tasman was a pious sailor. The original manuscript journal of his voyage was brought to England and purchased by Sir Joseph Banks in 1771. It commences thus:—"Journal or description by me, Abel Jansz Tasman, of a voyage from Batavia for making discoveries of the Unknown South Land, 1642. May God Almighty be pleased to give His blessing to this voyage! Amen." When he weighed anchor and stood out to sea he entered in his log-book "the Lord be praised."

On the 24th day of November, 1642, at 4 p.m., Tasman first sighted the island which now bears his name. The

\* Tasman also in his second voyage in 1644, with the *Zimmen*, *Reemeaw*, and *Brak*, surveyed several hundred miles of the Gulf of Carpentaria. The narrative appears to have been lost, but the charts exist.

## TASMANIA DISCOVERED.

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land seen was Point Hibbs, a cape on the west coast, about thirty miles south of Macquarie Harbour. As the explorers neared the coast they observed lofty mountains rising in the back ground, two of which bear the names of Tasman's vessels—*Heemskirk* and *Zeehaan*—so named by Flinders. Tasman named the country "VAN DIEMEN'S LAND," in honour of his friend and patron, the Governor of Batavia. The frail little vessels passed along the unploughed waters of the south coast, rounded the entrance to Storm Bay, and were then driven back by a northerly wind until the navigators almost lost sight of land. Recovering their lost ground, they sailed up Storm Bay, and in the afternoon of December 1st cast anchor in Fredrik Hendrik Bay. On the following day the boats were manned and pulled to shore. The strangers observed signs that the country was inhabited, but they saw no natives. "I fancied I heard the sound of people upon the shore (wrote Tasman), but I saw none. . . . I observed smoke in several places; however, we did nothing more than set up a post, on which every one cut his name or his mark, and upon which I hoisted a flag." Tasman then weighed anchor, rounded Cape Pillar, passed Maria Island, which he named after a member of Van Diemen's family, thence along the lofty shores of Schouten Island—so named after the Dutch commander who first rounded Cape Horn in 1610—and lost sight of land at St. Patrick's Head. Tasman steered towards New Zealand (which he also discovered), and finally arrived at Batavia on 15th June, 1643.

It is a remarkable fact that more than a century passed away before any effort was made by the maritime nations of Europe to follow up Tasman's discoveries in the temperate meridians of the south. The eyes of the Old World were turned towards America, whose marvellous resources and boundless extent of territory absorbed every interest, to the complete suspension of exploration in other quarters.

Spain, France, Portugal, Holland, and lastly England, found ample scope in the wide domains of the western world for colonisation, and that, too, at a comparatively easy distance from home. Thus the resources of Australasia lay dormant for one hundred and thirty years, when the story of Tasman's white sails on the Southern Ocean had doubtless faded from the traditions of the aborigines.

The French were the next to visit Van Diemen's Land. On the 4th March, 1772, Captain Marion du Fresne, with two vessels, the *Mascarin* and *Castries*, arrived at Fredrik Hendrik Bay. The natives came with confidence down to the boats, and remained near the strangers with their children and their wives. A number of presents of the kind usually most esteemed by savage nations were distributed among them. When the captain landed one of the aborigines, advancing in front of him, offered him a lighted fire-brand that he might set fire to a pile of wood heaped up on the shore. He took it, believing that it was a formality intended to give confidence to the savages; but when the timber was ignited the aborigines retired in a mass towards a little mound from whence they threw a volley of stones, wounding both the captains. The French repelled the attack by several discharges of muskets, killing one man and wounding others. The natives fled towards the woods. The vessels remained six days in the bay and then proceeded to New Zealand, where the commander of the expedition was killed by the natives of that place.\*

In the following year (March 9th, 1773) Captain Tobias Furneaux, in the *Adventure*, entered Storm Bay and cast anchor in the bay which bears the name of his ship. This was the first visit of the English to Van Diemen's Land, and it was the result of accident. He was sailing with Captain Cook, whose ship was the *Resolution*. Cook's instructions were to search for what was then called the

\* M. Rienzi's account.

## COOK'S VOYAGES.

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“Terra Australis Incognita,” which was believed to lie south of Tasman’s discoveries. The ships separated in a fog, and Furneaux touched at Van Diemen’s Land. He did not see any natives, but came upon their fires and found some rude huts, from which he removed a few baskets and spears, leaving nails and trinkets in return. He ran along the east coast, and made this entry in his journal :—“The country here appears to be very thickly inhabited, as there was a continual fire along shore as we sailed.” This occurred during Cook’s second voyage.

It may be interesting to refer back to Captain Cook’s first voyage when, in 1770, he discovered New South Wales. On that occasion Cook sailed from England in 1768, in a small ship, the *Endeavour*, of 370 tons, for the purpose of making observations in the southern seas of the transit of Venus over the sun’s disc. He arrived at Tahiti (or Otaheite, as he wrote it) on the 13th of April in the following year, and the transit was observed on 3rd June. Leaving Tahiti on 13th July, Cook called at New Zealand, which had not been visited by Europeans since the time of its discovery by Tasman. He spent six months exploring the New Zealand coast, then sailed westward, and reached the coast of Australia on the 19th April, 1770. He named the country “New South Wales,” and took possession of it in the name of Great Britain. Cook explored a large portion of the east coast, and passed between New Guinea and New Holland, thus proving (what had hitherto been doubted) that they were separated by a strait.

During Cook’s third and last voyage, on January 26th, 1777, his ship the *Resolution*, and the *Discovery*, commanded by Captain Clerke, entered Adventure Bay. Anxious to fall in with the natives he went with a party of marines some miles into the country. At length they heard a rustling sound in the underwood and captured a girl, naked and alone. Cook soothed his terrified captive by binding a

handkerchief round her neck, placing a cap upon her head, and allowing her to depart. Shortly afterwards eight men and a boy approached without fear. They were unarmed, except that one of them carried a stick pointed at the end (probably a waddy). "They were quite naked, wore no ornaments, were of middle stature, rather slender, with skin and hair black, and the latter as woolly as that of the natives of New Guinea, but they were not distinguished by remarkably thick lips or flat noses. On the contrary, their features were far from being disagreeable. They had pretty good eyes, and their teeth were tolerably even, but very dirty."\* They rejected bread and the flesh of the sea elephant, but accepted some birds, which they signified their intention to eat. Cook persuaded a native to throw the stick at a mark thirty yards distant, but he failed after repeated trials. There was an Otaheitian with Cook named Omai, whom he had taken with him on a previous voyage. Omai, to show his skill, fired off a musket. At the report the natives fled, and so great was their fear that they dropped the axe and knives they had received.

A dead calm prevented Cook's departure on the following day, when a party again went on shore. About twenty natives soon joined them; one, who was conspicuously deformed, amused the sailors by the drollery of his gestures and the seeming humour of his speeches. Some wore three or four folds of fur round the neck, and round the ankle a slip of kangaroo skin. Captain Cook returned on board, leaving Lieutenant King in charge of the party on shore. Soon after several women and children arrived, and were introduced to the English by the men. The children were thought pretty, but the account given of the women did not extol their beauty. Mr. Anderson, Captain Cook's surgeon, who had several interviews with the aborigines, says:— 'They had little of that fierce or wild appearance common

\* Cook's Voyages.



## COOK AND OTHER VOYAGERS VISIT THE ISLAND. 9

to people in their situation ; but on the contrary, seemed mild and cheerful, without reserve or jealousy of strangers."

Twelve years elapsed before Van Diemen's Land was again visited, and at that time New South Wales had been occupied by the founders of that colony.

On the 3rd July, 1789, Captain John Henry Cox, in the brig *Mercury*, sailed inside the Schouten and Maria Islands, and discovered Oyster Bay.

Lieutenant Bligh, on his way to Tahiti to collect bread fruit trees for the West India Colonies, touched at Van Diemen's Land in the *Bounty* in 1789. He spent twelve days in Adventure Bay, and observed an English record engraved upon a tree—"A.D. 1773." At Fredrik Hendrik Bay he had an interview with the natives, but did not land on account of a heavy surf. The boat approached within twenty yards of the shore, where twelve men and eight women were assembled to receive the strangers in a friendly manner. Presents tied up in paper were thrown on shore. Brown, assistant botanist to the expedition, in his search for plants met an old man, a young woman, and two or three children. The man at first appeared alarmed, but became familiar on being presented with a knife.

The story of Bligh's voyage, the mutiny of his crew, and the sojourn of the mutineers at Pitcairn's Island, was made the subject of Lord Byron's poem entitled "The Island." Bligh having ultimately reached England, was again sent out to collect bread fruit trees for the West Indies. He then called at Van Diemen's Land a second time (1792), and planted several trees on the south side of the island.

The next visitors were the illustrious French navigators, Rear-Admiral Bruné D'Entrecasteaux in the *Recherche*, and Captain Huon Kermadec in the *Espérance*. The expedition was sent out by the French Government to ascertain the fate of the unfortunate La Pérouse, which was at

that time involved in darkness. D'Entrecasteaux's expedition called at Van Diemen's Land in 1792, and executed some valuable surveys in the vicinity of Storm Bay. The Admiral remained a month and returned again in January, 1793, to complete his surveys. D'Entrecasteaux discovered and surveyed the channel that bears his name, the Huon and Kermadec rivers, Port Esperance, Recherche Bay, and the river Derwent, which he named the "Rivière du Nord"—an obvious misnomer, corrected by Captain Hayes, who, with the ships *Duke* and *Duchess* from India, visited the river in 1794, and not aware of its previous discovery named it the Derwent. Many of the bays, rivers, and headlands in the south of the island retain the names given by the French, whose charts Flinders afterwards pronounced to be the finest specimens of marine surveying ever made in a new country.

M. Labillardière accompanied D'Entrecasteaux's expedition as naturalist and historian. His account of various interviews with the natives is interesting. In some parts of the narrative, however, there is a tone of romance and sentiment, due perhaps to the national character of the French. An interview with one party, consisting of twenty-two savages, he describes as follows:—

"We got ready a few cartridges and set out towards the place where we had seen the natives. We had gone only a few steps before we met them. The men and youths were ranged in front, nearly in a semi-circle; the women, children, and girls, were a few paces behind. As their manner did not seem to indicate any hostile design, I hesitated not to go up to the oldest, who accepted with a very good grace a piece of biscuit I offered him, of which he had seen me eat. I then held out my hand to him as a sign of friendship, and had the pleasure to perceive that he comprehended my meaning very well. . . . My companions also advanced up to the others, and immediately