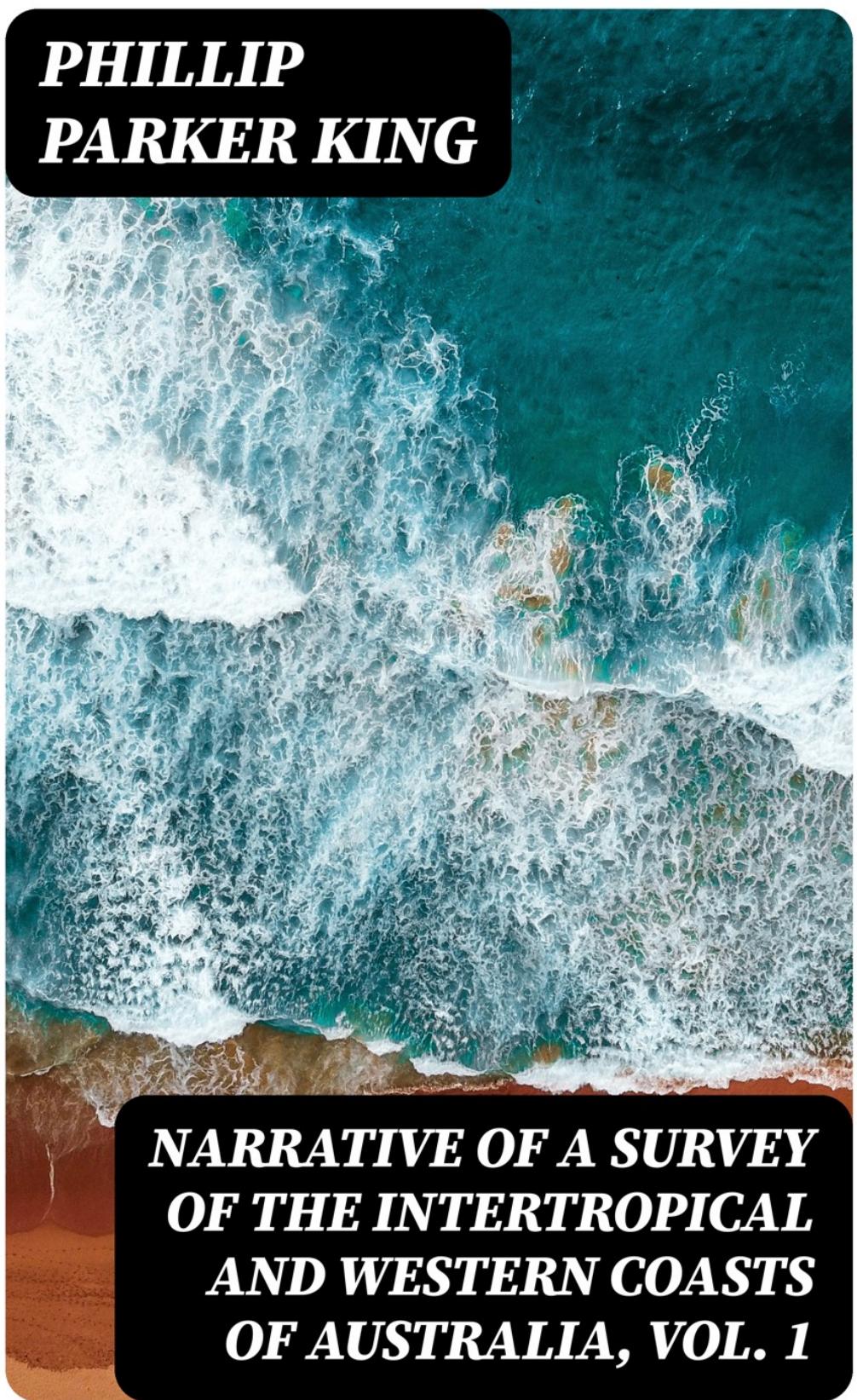


**PHILLIP
PARKER KING**



**NARRATIVE OF A SURVEY
OF THE INTERTROPICAL
AND WESTERN COASTS
OF AUSTRALIA, VOL. 1**

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Phillip Parker King

**Narrative of a Survey of the
Intertropical and Western
Coasts of Australia, Vol. 1**

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LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

PREFACE.

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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 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 Antarctic, 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 2 Section 2 Number 3.

(*Footnote. 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!)

(**Footnote. 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.)

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 materially 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, Esquire, 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.

TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE EARL BATHURST, K.G.,

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**HIS MAJESTY'S PRINCIPAL SECRETARY OF STATE
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AND

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

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FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY,

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**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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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 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.**

(*Footnote. The late Rear-Admiral Burney, in his History of Discoveries in the South Sea, volume 1 page 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.).

(**Footnote. In the voyages of Gautier Schouten, published at Amsterdam in 1708, duodecimo volume 1 page 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. Des-que la nouvelle fut venue a Batavia [Anno 1659], que le vaisseau le Dragon, qui venoit de Hollande aux Indes, avoit fait naufrage sur les cotes d'une Terre Australe inconnue, on y envoia la flute la Bouee a la Veille, pour ramener ceux des gens de l'equipage qui auroient pu se sauver, et les efets qui auroient ete conservez.

"La flute etant conduite par ceux qui etoient echapez du naufrage dans la chaloupe, et venus a Batavia en

aporter la nouvelle, se rendit au parage ou le Dragon avoit peri, et alla mouiller l'ancre dans l'endroit qui parut le plus propre pour son dessein. Aussi tot la chaloupe fut armee pour aller chercher ceux qui s'etoient sauvez le long du rivage. Elle s'aprocha d'abord du bris, pardessus lequel les vagues passoient; puis elle nagea vers le lieu ou l'on avoit dresse des tentes, quand la chaloupe du vaisseau peri partit, pour ceux qu'elle n'avoit pu recevoir, et qui devoient attendre la qu'on vint les y prendre.

"L'equipage etant descendu a terre, trouva les tentes brisees en pieces, et l'on ne decouvrit pas un seul homme dans tout le pais. La surprise ne fut pas mediocre. On regarda partout si l'on ne verroit point de traces qui marquassent qu'on eut construit quelque petit batiment: mais il n'y avoit ni tarriere, ni hache, ni couteaux, ni cloux, etc. Il n'y avoit ni ecrit ni indication par ou l'on put conjecturer ce qu'etoient devenus les gens qu'on avoit la laissez.

"La chaloupe etant retournee a bord, et aiant annonce cette nouvelle, il fut resolu que l'on iroit chercher plus avant dans les terres, et le long du rivage. Pour cet efet on se divisa en plusieurs troupes, et l'on ne reussit pas mieux que la premiere fois. On eut beau crier, apeller, tirer des coups de mousquet, tout fut inutile, et je n'ai pas seu qu'on ait jamais apris ce qu'etoient devenus ces gens-la.

"On retourna donc au bris, dont on ne put rien tirer, les lames aiant emporte les bordages, les ecoutilles, et fracasse tout le vaisseau, tant la mer brise fort en ces parages. Ainsi l'on jugea que le plus expedient etoit de s'en retourner, puis-qu'on n'avoit rien a pretendre, et qu'on avoit a craindre les vents forcez et les tempetes, qui

selon les aparences auroient aussi fait perir la flute. Dans ce dessein on alla faire de l'eau. Ceux qui furent a une petite riviere qu'on avoit vue, au-lieu de se hater, se promenerent, et coururent en divers endroits.

"Cependant il s'eleva une si terrible tempete, que la flute 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 peri; si-bien qu'on reprit la route de Batavia, ou l'on fit le rapport de ce qui s'etoit passe.

"Quand l'orage eut cesse, l'equipage de la chaloupe se rembarqua pour retourner a bord. 'Mais il ne trouva plus la flute, ni sur la cote, ni au large. La tristesse ne fut pas moindre que l'etonnement, et l'on ne seut quel parti prendre. Enfin il fallut retourner a terre, pour n'etre pas englouti par les flots. Mais on n'avoit point de vivres, et l'on ne voioit rien dans tout le pais qui put servir de nouriture. Les montagnes n'etoient que des rochers; les valees etoient de vrais deserts; les plaines n'etoient que des sables. Le rivage etoit aussi borde de roches, contre lesquelles la mer brisoit avec d'efroiables mugissemens.

"Ceux qui etoient la demeurez se trouvoient au nombre de treize hommes, qui furent bientot fatiguez, afoiblis et attenuez. La faim les pressoit, le froid et l'humidite les faisoient soufrir, et ils se regardoient comme condamnez a la mort. Il n'y avoit rien a esperer du bris; les vagues avoient tout fait rouler ca et la dans la mer. Enfin a force de courir et de chercher quelque chose qu'ils pussent manger, ils apercurent entre les rochers qui etoient le long du rivage, de gros limacons, et de plus petits, qui y venoient de la mer, et dont le gout, qui etoit passable,

parut excellent a des gens affamez. Mais n'ifiant point de feu pour les faire cuire, l'usage continual qu'ils en firent, commenca de les incommoder, et ils sentirent bien que ce foible remede ne les empêcheroit pas de mourir dans peu de tems.

"Enfin ne voiant de toutes parts qu'une mort certaine, ils prirent la resolution de s'exposer a la merci des flots, dans l'esperance que s'il ne se presentoit rien de plus favorable pour eux sur la mer que sur la terre, au moins la mort qu'ils y trouveroient, seroit plus prompte, et les delivreroit plutot de leurs miseres. Cependant ils se flatoient encore de l'esperance de pouvoir aborder en quelque autre pais, ou il y auroit des choses propres pour la nourriture des hommes.

"Ainsi chacun travailla selon ses forces a calfater la chaloupe, a faire provision de limacons, a remplir des futailles d'eau. Apres cela l'on mit le batiment a la mer, et l'on quitta ce lieu, ou l'on n'avoit vu que des deserts arides et des feux folets, et ou il n'y avoit ni betes ni gens. On perdit bientot de vue ce pais sterile, le second Pilote de la flute etant parmi cette troupe desolee, et la guidant par le cours du Soleil, de la Lune et des Etoiles.

"Cependant ils avoient trois a quatre cents lieues de chemin a faire, pour terrir a la cote septentrionale de la grande Java. On peut assez s'imaginer a quelles soufrances ils furent exposez dans un tel batiment, pendant une telle route, et avec si-peu de vivres, et si-mauvais. Par le beau tems ils voguoient encore passablement; mais quand la mer etoit grosse, les lames les couvroient et passoient par-dessus leurs tetes, et la chaloupe etoit toujours sur le point de se voir submergee.

"Mais la plus cruelle avanture fut que les limacons 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 nuit il faisoit un froid insuportable, et le jour on etoit brule des ardeurs du Soleil. Toute esperance de salut sembloit etre retranchee, et les fatigues, aussi-bien que le manque de nourriture, avoient entierement epuise les forces de ces infortunes, lors-qu'un matin ils decouvrirent les montagnes meridionales 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.)

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 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 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 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 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.

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 North-west Coast, without landing upon, and indeed scarcely seeing, any part of the mainland. The whole of the north, the north-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 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 for preserving health, cleanliness, and good order, which have been established in His Majesty's ships when employed in Voyages of Discovery.

In order to assist you in the care and use of the timekeepers and instruments with which their Lordships have directed the Hydrographer of this department to

furnish you, and to follow your orders in all other particulars relating to the service, my Lords have directed Messrs. Frederick Bedwell and John Septimus Roe, two young gentlemen, who have been recommended to them as peculiarly fitted to be of use to you, and for whose appointment you have expressed your wishes, to accompany you and to be under your command.

The principal object of your mission is to examine the hitherto unexplored Coasts of New South Wales, from Arnhem Bay, near the western entrance of the Gulf of Carpentaria, westward and southward as far as the Northwest Cape; including the opening, or deep bay called Van Diemen's Bay, and the cluster of islands called Rosemary Islands, and the inlets behind them, which should be most minutely examined; and, indeed, all gulfs and openings should be the objects of particular attention; as the chief motive for your survey is to discover whether there be any river on that part of the coast likely to lead to an interior navigation into this great continent.

It is for several reasons most desirable that you should arrive on this coast, and commence your survey as early as possible, and you will therefore, when the vessel shall be ready, lose no time in proceeding to the unexplored coasts; but you are at liberty to commence your survey at whichever side you may judge proper, giving a preference to that which you think you may be able soonest to reach; but in case you think that indifferent, my Lords would wish you to commence by the neighbourhood of the Rosemary Islands.

Either on your way out, or on returning, you should examine the coast between Cape Leeuwin and the Cape

Gosselin, in M. De Freycinet's chart; and generally you will observe, that it is very desirable that you should visit those ranges of coast which the French navigators have either not seen at all, or at too great a distance to ascertain and lay down accurately.

You will provide yourself at Port Jackson with the seeds of such vegetables as it may be considered most useful to propagate on the coasts you may visit, and you will take measures for sowing or planting them in the fittest situations, with a view not only to their preservation, but to their being within the observation and reach of succeeding navigators.

You will take care to make duplicate copies of all your notes, surveys, and drawings; and you are to take every possible opportunity of transmitting one copy to Earl Bathurst, and the other to me for their Lordship's information; but you need not send duplicates by the same conveyance. And you will feel the necessity of writing by every opportunity to acquaint both departments of your progress.

You will remain on this service till you shall have examined all parts of the coast which have not been laid down by Captain Flinders, M. De Freycinet, or preceding navigators, or until you shall receive further orders.

I am, Sir,
Your very humble servant,
(Signed) J.W. CROKER.
To Lieutenant P.P. King.

Downing-street, 8th of February, 1817.

SIR,

As His Majesty's Government has selected you for the command of an expedition which is to be fitted out in New South Wales, for the purpose of exploring the yet undiscovered Coast of New Holland, and for completing, if possible, the circumnavigation of that continent; you will proceed with all practicable expedition to Port Jackson, and you will, on your arrival, deliver to Governor Macquarie the accompanying despatches, which state the object which you have in view, and the means by which it is to be accomplished. The Governor will place at your disposal any colonial vessel which you may consider best calculated for the voyage, and you will concert with him as to the equipment of such vessel, and avail yourself of his knowledge of the several persons in the colony, in order to select a crew on whom reliance can be placed for steadiness and subordination. Besides the persons necessary for the navigation of the vessel, you will receive on board Mr. A. Cunningham, a botanist, now in New South Wales, who has received the orders of Sir Joseph Banks to attend you; and you will engage any other person, if there be such in the colony, who possesses a competent knowledge of Mineralogy or Natural History.

It is on every account most desirable that the Expedition should proceed from Port Jackson as early as possible; you will therefore make every exertion in your power to accelerate your departure from thence, and your arrival at the point specified in your Admiralty instructions.

The Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty having given you detailed instructions relative to the naval objects of the Expedition, I have only to direct your observation to the several points referred to in the enclosed

memorandum, as those upon which it is desirable to procure information. You will exercise your own discretion as to landing on the several parts of the coast which you may explore; but on all occasions of landing, you will give every facility to the botanist, and the other scientific persons on board to pursue their inquiries; and you will afford them such assistance in the pursuit as they may require. If the place selected for landing be in any way remarkable in itself, or important from being at the mouth of a river, or a harbour, you will take care to leave some evidence which cannot be mistaken of your having landed, either by erecting a flagstaff, or sowing some seeds, or by resorting to any other means which may at the time present themselves.

You will not fail regularly to keep a journal of your proceedings, and to note down your observations, as they from time to time occur, transmitting home by every opportunity intelligence of the progress which you have made, and of the leading events which may have befallen you.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your most obedient, humble servant,
(Signed) BATHURST.
To Lieutenant P.P. King, R.N.

MEMORANDUM.

The following will be among the most important subjects, on which it will be more immediately your province, assisted by your officers, to endeavour to obtain information on any occasion which may offer.

The general nature of the climate, as to heat, cold, moisture, winds, rains, periodical seasons; the temperature regularly registered from Fahrenheit's thermometer, as observed at two or three periods of the day.

The direction of the mountains, their names, general appearance as to shape; whether detached or continuous in ranges.

The animals, whether birds, beasts, or fishes; insects, reptiles, etc., distinguishing those that are wild from those which are domesticated.

The vegetables, and particularly those that are applicable to any useful purposes, whether in medicine, dyeing, carpentry, etc.; any scented or ornamental woods, adapted for cabinet work and household furniture, and more particularly such woods as may appear to be useful in ship-building; hard woods for tree-nails, block-sheaves, etc., of all which it would be desirable to procure small specimens labelled and numbered, so that an easy reference may be made to them in the journal, to ascertain the quantities in which they are found; the facility or otherwise of floating them down to a convenient place for shipment, etc.

Minerals, any of the precious metals, or stones; how used, or valued by the natives.

The description and characteristic difference of the several tribes or people on the coast.

The occupation and means of subsistence, whether chiefly, or to what extent by fishing, hunting, feeding sheep or other animals, by agriculture or by commerce.

The principal objects of their several pursuits, as mentioned in the preceding paragraphs.

A circumstantial account of such articles growing on the sea-coast, if any, as might be advantageously imported into Great Britain, and those that would be required by the natives in exchange for them.

The state of the arts, or manufactures, and their comparative perfection in different tribes.

A vocabulary of the language spoken by every tribe with which you may meet, using in the compilation of each the same English words.

On the day that my appointment was dated, I received an order for a passage in the ship Dick, a transport, hired to convey the 48th regiment to New South Wales; and on the 17th of February, twelve days after my appointment, left Gravesend; but from a tedious detention in the Downs, and a succession of foul winds, did not finally leave Cork, where the troops embarked, until the 3rd of April.

On the 26th of May, the Dick anchored in the harbour of Rio de Janeiro, and remained for a fortnight, to procure refreshments for the troops, and complete her water.

Hence to New South Wales the voyage was performed, without the occurrence of any incident worth recording. The heads of Port Jackson were seen at daylight on the 1st of September; but being to leeward of the port, the ship did not anchor in Sydney Cove until the 3rd, after a passage from Cork of twenty-two weeks, including the fortnight that was passed at Rio.

The same evening I waited upon his Excellency Governor Macquarie at Parramatta, and delivered to him his letters and the despatches which acquainted him with the particulars of my mission; upon which His Excellency, after expressing

himself anxious to give every assistance in his power in forwarding the service I had to perform, informed me that there were only two vessels belonging to the colony that could suit my purpose: one of one hundred tons that had been lately launched, and the other a brig of seventy tons, the Lady Nelson, that was built at Deptford in the year 1799, and sent out to the colony, expressly for the purpose of surveying the coast; she had, however, for the last ten years, been used as a coal-vessel, and was then hauled upon the slips, undergoing a repair. Upon examining the two vessels, I found that the former, although of convenient burden, not only drew too much water, but was in every other way unsuitable for my purpose; and the latter required much repair before she could be sent to sea, but as there was no other vessel at Port Jackson, either for sale or hire, no choice was left but to prepare the Lady Nelson as quickly as possible; and, as it was found absolutely necessary to give her a new keel, stern-post, and cut-water, besides new decks, with many new beams, there was no probability of completing her for at least four months.

Fortunately, however, this arrangement was shortly afterwards rendered unnecessary by the arrival from India, of the Mermaid, a cutter of 84 tons burden, built of teak, and not quite twelve months old: her length was 56 feet; breadth of beam 18 feet 6 inches; and did not, when deep-laden, draw more than 9 feet; her bottom was rather sharper than was convenient for the purpose of taking the ground; but, as I could not expect to find every advantage combined in one vessel that was necessary for the purpose of surveying, the latter objection was of necessity overruled; and being in every other respect superior to the Lady Nelson, and requiring no

repairs, she was eventually purchased for the sum of 2000 pounds sterling, and immediately appropriated to my use.

A schooner would have been much more convenient; but, as there was no opportunity of making such an alteration, it could not be effected. My statement of the arrangements that were requisite for our accommodation was approved of by the Governor, who gave the necessary orders to the Engineer, a captain of the forty-sixth regiment; and the Deputy Commissary General was instructed to attend to all my demands, and to supply the requisite quantities of provisions and stores; but, notwithstanding every wish on the part of His Excellency to forward our outfit and complete the vessel for sea without delay, it was not until the 21st of December that the alterations were finished. Had we met with as much opposition and inattention from the commissariat department as from the engineer, the vessel would not have been ready for sea for six months; it is, however, a duty I owe to Deputy Commissary General Allan, to acknowledge the readiness with which that officer's department attended to my wants.

The following is a list of the officers and men who formed the crew of the Mermaid:--

Commander:

Lieutenant Phillip Parker King.

Master's mates, 2:

Mr. Frederick Bedwell.

Mr. John Septimus Roe.

Botanical collector:

Mr. Allan Cunningham.

Seamen, 12.

Boys, 2.

Total, 18.