

THE
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TO OUR READERS.

WE are devoting the whole of our current issue to articles and illustrations which have a particular appropriateness to the Centennial festival.

Our Retrospect of the Colony's History during the past hundred years is necessarily brief, and a large number of very interesting reminiscences have had to be abandoned, owing to want of room.

The subject, however, is so engrossing that we intend to devote further space in our forthcoming numbers to articles on the early days, and on the successive changes and improvements which have year after year taken place.

Our February issue will, therefore, in addition to treating largely of the celebration of the Centenary in this Colony, contain the first part of a very interesting illustrated article on the infancy of New South Wales, written by an old resident, well qualified to speak of the early days of struggle from which our Colony has so triumphantly emerged.

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 1888.

A CENTENNIAL RETROSPECT
OF THE
HISTORY OF NEW SOUTH WALES.

INTRODUCTORY.

HISTORY, according to the dictum of a wise master of eloquent speech, is "Philosophy teaching by experience." Less epigrammatically, but quite as accurately, it may be defined as a kind of sublimated Biography, for it is simply a prose "epic of action," which records, for all time, the results of individual efforts operating through national channels. The nation is, of course, but the aggregate of the unit; and, very frequently, a people's History is but the amplified biography of its "choice and master spirits." Both History and Biography possess an enduring fascination for the thinker; and just as he delights to analyse the lives of notable men who have triumphed over those vicissitudes which strengthen the strongest and crush the weakest, he takes pleasure in tracing the origin, growth, achievements, and possibilities of powerful States which seem destined to play a very important rôle in the world's history.

To-day, New South Wales stands with her fair face gladdening in the Sunrise! Freed from her ancient thralldom of darkness and disaster, she, the elder colony of the Australia, looks sunward, from a coign of vantage at once serene and lofty. Just as the expectant heir, when the fitting epoch arrives, gazes with eager and glowing eyes upon his patrimony,—so, our jubilant Colony, from whose radiant borders flashed the first torch of Australasian colonisation, beholds her six prosperous sister colonies, and stands, grave at the remembrance of the past, but exultant at the visions of the future! The old, dim, black, evil days have been happily relegated to the region of forgetfulness; one by one, our undoubted rights have been wrested from reluctant oligarchs; and, one by one, wise laws and salutary enactments have given us an earnest impetus in the path of Progress; until now, at the national threshold, with a century of toilsome struggle behind us, and centuries of noble possibilities crying "Onward," the most purblind and lethargic of our countrymen can assuredly discern presaging certainties that the Australasia, of which we form an emulative part, will, in the speedy fulness of time, take rank as a great World power. This goal is, undoubtedly, assured; and it will be the result of the logic of our Destiny!

HISTORIC RETROSPECT.

I.

At a time like this—a pivot-point, so to speak, in our History—it seems proper and pertinent to briefly review the past events which have emphasised themselves in our national chronicles, and to summon "in the sessions of sweet silent thought," the names of those of our undying dead whose rare courage and untiring energy were as towers of strength in the dark and difficult days now gone. The intellectual athletes of days past were no puny politicians. Many of them would have shone brilliantly in the Legislative halls of the Mother Land, for they possessed the mental strength, and large grasp of national questions, which were imperatively required if the foundations of this nascent nation were to be laid in broad and permanent fashion. May the memory of their exalted services be for ever fragrant!

II.

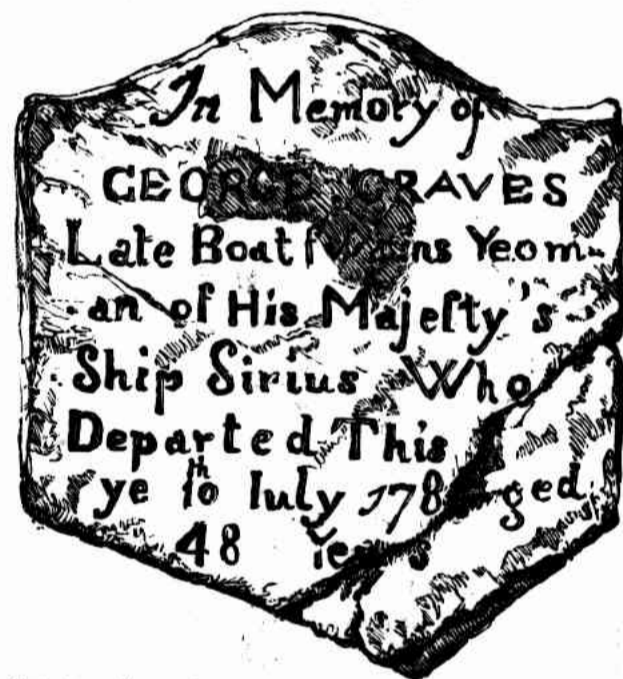
The precise, or even approximate, period when the existence of a "Great South Land" became known to the elder nations of the world is a matter of much doubt, and, even if ascertained, would hardly possess much modern value for us. Some ingenious writers think it extremely likely that the famous scientific expedition of Alexander the Great, which (about B.C. 327) gave Western nations much knowledge of Eastern peoples, may have gathered certain geographical hints of a strange immeasurable Land stretching far away there on the remotest rim of the sapphire sea. At any rate, the indefatigable Mr. Bennett has collected, in his extremely laborious work on "Australian Discovery," references from Strabo (B.C. 50) from Pliny, from Ptolemy, from Agathemerus, and others, which seem to indicate, beyond reasonable doubt, that, from the very dawn of the Christian era, the existence of Australia was something more than a hazy tradition, or geographical phantasm.

It was not, however, until after the march of many centuries that this nebulous belief assumed form and colour. The latter part of the fifteenth century witnessed the commencement of that extraordinary outburst of maritime enthusiasm which seized with the contagion of a sacred madness upon the world's leading seafaring nations. Adventurous spirits amongst the Dutch, the Portuguese, the French, and the Spaniards engaged in the ardent race of emulation; and added to the territorial possessions of the civilized world regions of immense wealth and extent. In 1492, Columbus discovered America, and the astonishing vista opened out by this navigator's immortal achievement appears to have kindled many a fiery spirit into a fixed determination to

discover, if possible, that other far-distant singular land which had, up to that epoch, eluded maritime detection. Mendana, in 1568, sailed from Peru due west for 4500 miles, and discovered, amongst other groups, the Solomon Islands. Thirty years later, on another voyage, he met with the Marquesas Islands; but he does not appear to have sighted the Australian mainland, although he sailed marvellously close to it. De Quiros, who was originally Mendana's pilot, and, subsequently, the inheritor of his "unfulfilled renown," sailed from Lima in 1605, keeping the three ships of his expedition on a course west by south. In February, 1606, he discovered Tahiti, and, in April following, sighted a land which he called "Tierra Austral del Espiritu Santo" (the South Land of the Holy Spirit) concluding, beyond doubt, that he had grasped the Continent he sought. In this conclusion, he was almost certainly in error; for the land observed by him is generally believed to have been one of the islands of the New Hebrides group. Disputes and disasters amongst his own crew, however, marred the further success of his expedition. In fact, his officers and men refused to proceed. De Torres, his lieutenant, who commanded the other two vessels, was separated from De Quiros, and continuing his onward course, sailed through the straits which separate Cape York Peninsula from New Guinea. This was in itself a momentous achievement, and has perpetuated the name of De Torres in the geographical nomenclature of Australia. But, of the two, De Quiros was the greater navigator. He afterwards, long and vainly solicited, from the Court of Spain, funds to equip another expedition, and eventually, it is said, died of those gnawing and cruel disappointments which consumed more than one of the great old dauntless Spanish navigators, who were compelled to lacquey the slow steps of princely indifference.

But the Spaniards and Portuguese had, by no means, a monopoly of discovery. The Dutch were equally adventurous. The energetic authorities at Bantam, in Java, had, in 1605, despatched a small vessel on an exploring expedition along the coast of New Guinea, and the result was the discovery of the eastern shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria. All authorities seem to concur in admitting that the "Duyfhen's" seamen were the first Europeans who set foot on Australian soil.

The French have also advanced a claim to the first discovery of Australia; for they affirm, on the authority amongst others, of a map in the War Office at Paris (bearing the date of 1555), that Guillaume le Testu is entitled to whatever distinction fame may award on this score. In any case, the honour lies between the Spanish, the Portuguese, the French, and the Dutch. The English do not appear to have entered the theatre of action until some practical acts were to follow the mere incidents of maritime discovery.



Gravestone discovered in Bethel Street, where it had been used as a paving stone.

Some further facts may well complete this swift summary of known historic items. Dirk Hartog, whose name remains as applied to an island near Shark Bay, sailed for many degrees along the Western Australian coast line. Zschan and Jan Edels coasted along other portions. In 1627, the southern shore was discovered by Peter Nuytz. In 1628, Carpenter explored a large portion of the Gulf of Carpentaria, which, since then, has borne his name. His account of the territory was so enthusiastic, that the Dutch Government determined to annex the land. A powerful fleet was sent out, but owing to mutinies and overwhelming disasters by sea, the expedition collapsed. In 1642, the illustrious Tasman discovered the island which, after the name of his patron, then Governor-General of Batavia, he called Van Diemen's Land. His own name, as applied to the discovery, will, no doubt, survive Van Diemen's. In the same year, this intrepid navigator discovered New Zealand, and called it Staaten Land, a name which is now unknown and extinct. In 1644, he made further discoveries along the Australian coast, and it would appear that, in this year, the name New Holland was first applied, at any rate, to the northern part of our Continent. Tasman was an authentic son of Neptune; one of those bold, untamable souls in whose nature was implanted the splendid sea-spirit of the Vikings of old.

Dampier was probably the first Englishman who placed foot on Australian shores. He made two visits: one in 1688, and the other in 1699; and his description of the country and its aboriginals is of the most unpromising nature imaginable. For much more than fifty years after this, our Continent seems to have lapsed into a slumbrous lethargy, and remained almost as undisturbed as during its earliest pre-historic days.