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HANDBOOK OF MELBOURNE.

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HANDBOOK OF MELBOURNE.

FOR THE USE OF MEMBERS OF THE

AUSTRALASIAN ASSOCIATION

FOR THE

ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE.

MELBOURNE MEETING, 1890.

EDITED BY PROFESSOR W. BALDWIN SPENCER, M.A.

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PREFACE.

THE object of this Handbook is to give an epitome of the History, Commerce and Manufactures, Meteorology, and Flora and Fauna of Melbourne and the Colony of Victoria generally, together with a brief outline of the habits and distribution of the aboriginal inhabitants.

Limits of space necessitate brevity in the various chapters; but, as this is probably the first occasion on which any such series dealing with the Colony has been brought together, it is hoped that the Handbook may prove of value to members of the Association, for whose especial use it has been compiled.

MELBOURNE,
January, 1890.

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CONTENTS.

I. HISTORY OF VICTORIA. By ALEXANDER SUTHERLAND, M.A. - - - - - 9

II. GEOLOGY OF MELBOURNE. By G. S. GRIFFITHS, F.G.S. - - - - - 26

III. ABORIGINES OF VICTORIA. By LORIMER FISON, M.A. - - - - - - 45

IV. ZOOLOGY: VERTEBRATA. By A. H. S. LUCAS, M.A, B.Sc. - - - - - 56

V. ZOOLOGY: INVERTEBRATA. By A. DENDY, M.Sc., F.L.S. - - - - - - 74

VI. ENTOMOLOGY. By C. FRENCH, F.L.S., Government Entomologist - - - - 97

VII. BOTANY. By C. A. TOPP, M.A., LL.B. - - 110

VIII. COMMERCE AND MANUFACTURES. By WM. H. THODEY - - - - - 118

IX. CLIMATE. By R. L. J. ELLERY, C.M.G., F.R.S., F.R.A.S., Government Astronomer - 134

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THE HISTORY OF VICTORIA.

By Alexander Sutherland, M.A.

The foot of civilisation first trod Victorian soil on the Christmas of 1797, when that stout-hearted surgeon, George Bass, spent nine days upon the shores of Gippsland. His was the most courageous voyage on record. In an open whale-boat, with a crew of six convicts, he had faced a great ocean, had explored 300 miles of coast, and now, while a wild gale blew over him, he was sheltering his frail craft in a little inlet, waiting to prosecute that further voyage in which he was to explore 300 miles more of coast never seen before by discoverer. After a wild and adventurous time he reached as far as Western Port, which he roughly examined. Then returning along the shores, he brought with him to Sydney a pencilled chart, which gave to science its first knowledge of Bass Strait and of the coasts of Victoria. Five years later there came explorers from the other side. The "Lady Nelson," a schooner of some 60 tons burthen, despatched by the English Government for survey purposes, and commanded by Lieut. Grant, sighted the shores of Australia at Cape Northumberland, and holding eastward discovered and named Portland Bay, Cape Otway, Cape Schanck, and intermediate features of the coast. It was the same vessel which, commanded by Lieut. Murray, a year later first sailed into Port Phillip, though the gallant Flinders was

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only two months behind, when, quite independently, he worked the "Investigator" through the Heads, and rowed in his barge over the waters of the age-long silent inlet.

Flinders made a nautical survey of all the coasts of Victoria, such as left little to be discovered from the seaward side; but it was not till 20 years later that the world learnt what manner of country lay within those rocky bulwarks or those fringing sands. It was in 1824 that Hamilton Hume, accompanied by Captain Hovell, set out from Lake George in New South Wales to penetrate the secret of the south. They had a party of six convicts, a waggon each, and horses. They crossed the Murrumbidgee by an ingenious device. They discovered the Murray, which they called the Hume. They saw and named the Ovens River; then, following very much the line of the present railway from Albury, they passed through a land silent and lonely, but offering a smiling welcome to the coming settler. Unluckily they turned too soon out of the south-west course, which would have been the wisest, and struck due south, involving themselves among the ranges that lie behind the Yan Yean. In vain did they toil and struggle through those wildernesses of giant trees; in vain did they cut their way through fern-tree gully and over scrub-encumbered ravine. They fell back again, and holding to the west crossed the hills just as the railway does at present from Kilmore to Beveridge. Then their course was easy. Over grassy plains that delighted the pastoral heart of Hume they passed by easy stages; but by keeping so far to the west they were near the site of Geelong ere they came within view of the sea. A rapid journey brought them home with news that was sure, sooner or later, to bring settlers and flocks to the fair lands they had traversed.

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Accordingly the Government at Sydney proposed to form a convict settlement, but trusting to the ill-informed Hovell, they sent it to Western Port, which he declared to have been the inlet they had reached. The settlement struggled for nearly a year with adverse circumstances, and then the little township it had formed on the shores of the port was abandoned.

But at this time there were persons who would have shown in private enterprise more sense and determination than had been exhibited in the Government scheme. A lawyer named Gellibrand, and a roving unsettled youth of the name of John Batman, sent in a petition in 1824 for a grant of land at Western Port, in the hopes of utilising the fine pastoral country said to lie thereabouts. Their request was refused, on the ground that instructions from England forbade the unnecessary scattering of settlement. Lonely out-posts, it was considered, were dangerous, and involved increased expense.

Yet there were others resident on the shores of Victoria who made no pretence of asking leave. These were the sealers, who lived in knots of twos and threes and fours, along all the coast from Gippsland to Kangaroo Island. A favourite haunt of theirs was Portland Bay, and there, in 1829, Captain Dutton formed a regular station, with substantial buildings. Thither in 1833 came Edward Henty on his way from West Australia to Tasmania. He liked the look of the land. He saw that whales were plentiful, and seals by no means scarce. In the following year he was back with flocks, and men, and apparatus; he brought whaling boats with him; he built a substantial house; he erected sheds, and cultivated the soil, and from that time forward Victoria was the permanent abode of

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civilised men. He, too, applied to the British Government for formal leave to settle in these waste parts of the earth. It was refused. But the march of events forced the authorities to accede to a course they were loth to initiate.

For Captain Sturt in 1832 had taken that memorable voyage of his down the River Murray; the first to float on its winding stream. He had, in an open boat, accompanied by the now veteran, but then ardent George Macleay, and six convicts, rowed down the stream to Lake Alexandrina, and then through appalling hardships had pushed his way back to civilisation. His two volumes, published soon after, made known the fact that land of excellent quality lay all along the valley of that river, and the news awakened the greatest interest in Tasmania. John Batman, now some ten years older, felt his old enthusiasm revive. He proposed to Gellibrand to take up land in that favoured district without waiting for legal permission. The lawyer, then in good practice at Hobart, but largely interested in pastoral enterprises, agreed, and became chairman of an association of 10 or 12 members, who subscribed funds to send over John Batman on a reconnoitring expedition.

And so in May, 1835, the "Rebecca" took him on board at the mouth of the Tamar, and after a tedious voyage he entered Port Phillip Heads. Landing on the Geelong side of the inlet, he followed up the shores of the Werribee district, observing with delight the sheep-bearing capacities of these treeless, but grassy plains. Subsequently the vessel was worked up the Bay to the mouth of the Yarra, and Batman in the ship's boat rowed up the stream. On the rough chart he made, he marked in upon the site of Melbourne the words, "This will be the place for a village." Landing with several men

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he made his way inland for some days, reaching the neighbourhood of Sunbury; then holding eastward, came upon the Merri Creek, on the banks of which he caused his memorable treaty with the blacks to be decorated with the serpentine strokes, which he called their signatures; and when Batman returned to Tasmania bearing this precious document, the company, somewhat increased in numbers, took immediate steps to occupy this fine grazing country, and sent over a surveyor named Wedge to estimate the area of the estate they were supposed to have bought for blankets, tomahawks, and toys. A rough division was made among the members of the association, and each of them began to hurry over his stock as fast as vessels could be chartered.

But there were other people in Tasmania whose regards were fixed on the pastoral lands across the Strait. An association was formed, having Mr. Dobson for its chairman and W. J. T. Clarke for one of its members. They also sent forward their stock and prepared to follow and settle in the new district. Another company was formed by the energy of John Pascoe Fawkner, a restless publican of Launceston. He joined himself with several tradesmen of that town in order to fit out a schooner, the "Enterprise," for a trip to Western Port, where Fawkner proposed to get from the blacks of that district a document analogous to that received by Batman from the natives of the Yarra basin. He was too seasick, however, to prosecute the voyage, and was landed at the mouth of the Tamar.

His party crossed to Western Port, disliked the appearance of the country for pastoral purposes, and carried their vessel round to Port Phillip. Entering the Yarra, they settled down on the wattle-scented banks of the river, not far from the spot where the little creek, which now is Elizabeth-street,

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discharged its waters into the main stream. Here they were warned off by men employed by Batman's party, but, declining to budge, they made preparations for permanent occupation. Soon after Fawkner himself came over, and built the first house of the nascent settlement.

Meanwhile petitions were on their way to England from Batman and his friends, requesting Imperial recognition of the native grant. This was refused, but the authorities in England, hearing that quite a stream of settlement was flowing into the Port Phillip district, wisely resolved to sanction and regulate a movement which they could not have arrested. Instructions were sent to Governor Bourke at Sydney to make all necessary arrangements for the formation of the province. Bourke at once sent down a party of three surveyors, who proceeded to lay out the streets of a town on the banks of the Yarra. He himself came round in March, 1837, to see the district for himself. He named the chief streets of the city that was to be, and being dissatisfied with the progress of the work, he left Mr. Hoddle to act as surveyor-general and prepare plans of the land for sale by auction.

Accordingly, three months after his return to Sydney, the work was done, the plans were ready, and the first land sale was held on June 1st, 1837, so that the city of Melbourne is almost exactly contemporaneous with the reign of Queen Victoria. Up to this date the people had been living in turf huts, or in houses made of wattle boughs daubed over with clay. Now, these were all cleared away, and for months the open woodland glades rang with axe, and hammer, and saw; while weatherboard houses were being erected, and the streets began to show some signs of their alignment. Soon they

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started the making of bricks, and Fawkner's Hotel, the most imposing edifice of the settlement, was of that material.

At this time Captain Lonsdale was acting as magistrate in charge of the new district; but, in 1839, there came from England Charles Joseph Latrobe, appointed by the Colonial Office to be superintendent of what it was even then intended should be before long a new colony. For this was an eminently colonising period of English history. It was 20 years since the great wars had ceased. There was little outlet for adventurous spirits, and there was felt the increasing pressure of population. Hence came the great emigration schemes that founded Perth and Adelaide. These had been costly, and had involved the British Government in heavy expense. It welcomed a self-directed, self-supported colonial enterprise that promised to form a peculiarly advantageous field for emigration, and the stream of settlement that had been anticipated was not long in setting in from England to Port Phillip.

In large measure this was due to the publication of the travels of Sir Thomas Mitchell. That officer, who was Surveyor-General of New South Wales, had in 1836 been sent to follow up the work of Sturt. He had descended the Murray to its junction with the Darling; then, turning back, had bent his course southward and westward along the valleys of the Loddon and the Avoca, till he reached the waters of the Glenelg. He saw the Henty family at Portland; then, turning back, crossing the ranges near the site of Ballarat, he had found his way home over the Murray. He had seen and named many rivers, and some mountains, but he had above all traversed a district, grassy and promising beyond all other parts of Australia he had seen. He called it Australia

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Felix, and that name, as well as his glowing descriptions, determined to the shores of Victoria a large share of that vigorous emigration then looking round for a suitable destination.

There came a surprising number of cadets of good family, with high spirits, abundant enterprise, and a little capital. These took up runs; when, by paying a license fee of £10 per annum, they had the right to depasture on Crown lands as many sheep each as they pleased. Soon all the land around Geelong was taken up, and that between Geelong and Melbourne; out by Dandenong, and away down to Western Port, and as far up as Mount Macedon, the country was all apportioned in separate runs, whereon the young fellows lived a rough but enjoyable life in the open air, while their flocks increased around them. Then settlement pushed out to Colac, and up to Ballarat. From Portland as a centre, squatters and their sheep radiated over all the Western District, while from the north came the "overlanders" driving their cattle and their flocks from Sydney over the Murray. These settled along the valleys of the Ovens and Goulburn. And so all the central parts of the colony were occupied before 1842. A year or two later increasing pressure sent the squatters north-west into the Wimmera district, and south-east into Gippsland, and in 1846 the whole area of the colony was thinly occupied by about 800 stations, carrying 3,000,000 of sheep.

The process of peopling the colony was greatly quickened by what was called "Bounty Immigration." The young squatters could afford to come out on their own resources, but in the colony they could have done little without the labour of those who had strong arms to work with, but no cash to bring them so far. The money, therefore, that was derived from the sale of land within the district was set apart for

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