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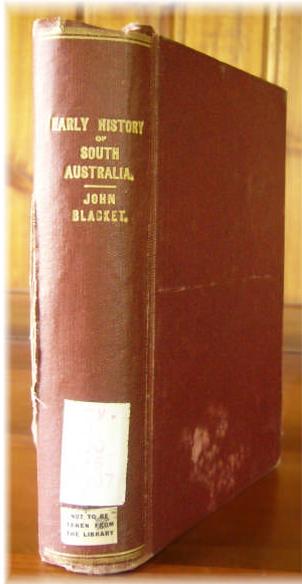
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The Early History of South Australia – A Romantic Experiment in Colonization

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ISBN: 978 1 74222 642 2

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THE EARLY HISTORY
OF
SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

A
ROMANTIC EXPERIMENT IN COLONIZATION.

1836—1857.

BY THE
REV. JOHN BLACKET,

Author of "A South Australian Romance," "Social Diseases and
Suggested Remedies" (a criticism of some socialistic theories),
"Reminiscences of a City Suburb and an Old Saint,"
"Not Left Without Witness, or, Divine Truth
in the Light of Reason and Revelation."

"As a child South Australia attracted more than ordinary notice."
SIR JAMES HURTLE FISHER.

"A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation."
ISAIAH.

ADELAIDE :
METHODIST BOOK DEPOT.

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CHAPTER I.

FIRST GLIMPSES OF THE GREAT LONE LAND.

We mean first glimpses of that part of the Australian Continent with which this history deals. It is said that the first known discovery of any part of South Australia was made in 1627. The discoverer was a Dutch navigator who sailed along the south coast. The new land was called Nuyts' Land.

LIEUT. JAMES GRANT.

Of Lieut. Grant's association with our Province we can speak with greater confidence. On March 17th, 1800, the *Lady Nelson*, a vessel of sixty tons burden, left Old England for New Holland. She was to proceed on a voyage of discovery as far as the infant settlement of New South Wales, so named by Captain Cook in 1770. Amongst other things that Lieut. Grant had to do was to search for the strait that separated Van Dieman's Land (now called Tasmania) from Australia.

The *Lady Nelson* had fifteen men on board, and was provisioned for nine months. A voyage to New Holland (or Australia as it is now called) in 1800 was a most momentous undertaking. The captain had great difficulty in keeping his men together, the general conviction being that the vessel was not adapted for so long, difficult, and dangerous a voyage. The vessel was sarcastically named by the sailors "His Majesty's Tinder Box."

After being ninety-nine days at sea the *Lady Nelson* dropped anchor in Table Bay, Cape of Good Hope. Here Lieut. Grant waited for a long time for a

CHAPTER IV.

PREPARING TO BUILD.

We are still in the Old Land more than half a century ago. In anticipation of the founding of the colony some intending emigrants are taking time by the forelock. The thought has suggested itself to the minds of some of them that in the new land settlers might become so absorbed in things relating to the body as to neglect the cultivation of the mind. An antidote must be provided. Some of the more thoughtful spirits have talked the matter over, and have decided to form what is termed "The South Australian Literary Association."* The objects of the society were stated to be: "The cultivation and diffusion of useful knowledge throughout the colony." Colonel Napier was appointed President and Osmond Gilles Treasurer. Among the committee of management we find such honored names as Robert Gouger, John Brown, Richard Davies Hanson, and George Strickland Kingston. A copy of the rules of the society was laid before the Under-Secretary of State, who was impressed with the intellectual calibre of some of the intending emigrants.

The first conversazione in connection with this society was held in London on September 5, 1834. Richard Davies Hanson delivered the inaugural address. Said he: "The occasion of our meeting this evening is the establishment of a Literary Association among the intending colonists of South Australia. . . . The reasons which have induced its formation in this

*The old minute-book of the society has come to light. Quite accidentally it was discovered among some old books in the Colonial Office in London. It is now in the Public Library.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BUILDERS' SOCIAL LIFE AND MATERIAL SURROUNDINGS.

The foundations of the colony had been laid, now came the work of raising the superstructure.

Of the present generation of South Australians it may be said: "Other men laboured, and ye have entered into their labours." In building up the Commonwealth it was under peculiar conditions that the pioneers had to work. Said one of the most worthy of them: "Men generally laboured from early morning to dusky eve. Restless nights were frequent, and hard work by day caused us often to feel weary by the way." Yet there were compensations. As we shall see, there was a great deal of romance about these early days that is no longer possible. If colonists are more comfortable to-day their circumstances are more prosaic.

We saw that the first temporary settlement was at Kangaroo Island; the second at Holdfast Bay.

Here the emigrants dwelt in tents, and in rude huts made of rushes and boughs. "Hutting" themselves was the term they used. Some for the first evening or two after their arrival had to sleep in the open air. They made for themselves beds among the bushes, on the beach, just above high water mark. One of the pioneers, who arrived on a Saturday in January, 1837, tells how himself, wife, and two children had to camp in the open air from Saturday night to Monday morning. They then set to work cutting down trees, and covering them with bushes. In this way (as many others did) they constructed a temporary shelter. Robert Gouger, the Colonial Secretary, describes how

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST OVERLAND TRIP.

This was one of the most important events in the early history of South Australia. It was a bold undertaking, worthy of the best traditions of our race. Joseph Hawdon, with whom we have to deal, forced his way through the Australian bush. He passed over land that foot of white man had never trodden. Fortunately he kept a full journal of his experiences. Up to the present time that valuable journal has not been given to the public in permanent form. It is now possessed by Joseph Hawdon's nephew (F. Davison, Esq.), of Mount Gambier, who generously placed it in the hands of the author.

Long before the settlement with which we are dealing was founded New South Wales had been discovered and colonised. It was discovered by Captain Cook, and colonised in 1778. The famous navigator could see some resemblance between the Australian coastline and the Welsh coast that he loved so well; hence the peculiar name, "New South Wales." Sailing into Botany Bay, he said, "I once more hoisted the English colors, and, though I had already taken possession of several parts, I now took possession of the whole of the eastern coast in the right of His Majesty King George III., by the name of New South Wales, with all the bays, harbors, rivers, and islands situated upon it."

Joseph Hawdon was a settler in New South Wales. He arrived in that colony in the brig *Children* in November, 1834, having been induced to emigrate from the Old Land through the favorable reports that had been furnished to him of the advantages for the investment

CHAPTER IX.

SOCIAL REVERSES AND SUCCESSES.

In addition to financial reverses there were many other burdens that the pioneers had to bear. In the building up of a strong and vigorous nation adversity seems to be a necessity. An old book says "that no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous; nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby." There is a social and general as well as spiritual and individual application of this principle. Adverse circumstances furnish discipline; they develop thrift, caution, energy, determination, and self-reliance. Nations as well as individuals have more to fear in times of great prosperity than in seasons of adversity.

Perhaps this is the most fitting place in which to speak a word of warning, especially as Australian Federation is now an accomplished fact. It is a great nation that we desire to see in these southern lands, and such a consummation is only to be realised by individual effort. Visionaries may conceive ideals; Senators may pass laws; the strong arm of the law may compel changes in the social system; but neither of these nor all combined can make a nation determined, energetic, masculine, and self-reliant. It is individual character that constitutes and conditions national character. One of the most effective ways of teaching a lad to swim is to put him in deep water and let him struggle to keep himself afloat; so to develop what is best in men in a psychological sense it is necessary to cast them upon their own resources—let them boldly grapple with difficulties and contend with adverse circumstances. It is just here that Governments are in danger of making a mistake.

CHAPTER XII.

STRUGGLES FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM.

The pioneers came from a land in which there was an Established Church. It is not a matter of surprise that many desired to see such in South Australia. It was a Christian commonwealth that our fathers wished to build up, and it was the conviction of many of them that in order to do so the State, in a monetary sense, must support the Christian religion. There were others—good men and true—who looked upon the Church and State as two distinct spheres, and who were wedded to what is known as the Voluntary Principle.

Over this question the pioneers were divided into two factions, and the administration of Governor Robe will be ever memorable as the time when the question of State-aid *versus* the Voluntary Principle was brought to an issue.

The first emigrant to utter a word of warning was David McLaren. Before the colony had been founded eight months he published the following letter :—

“ We have an Episcopal Church, the worship of which is conducted by our excellent friend, Mr. Howard, who is deservedly popular. The Episcopal Church, we know, is the Established Church in England, but not in South Australia, and I have no hesitation in saying I trust it never will be. I trust we shall never see, in this our adopted country, any church by law established, but earnestly do I pray that here the true Church of Christ may prosper, and be extensively established in the hearts of a willing people.”

Some months after a correspondent, signing himself “ Churchman ” revived the subject. He stated that

CHAPTER XIX.

SOME PIONEER BUILDERS.

In previous chapters we have watched the process of nation building. We saw the plans prepared and the foundations laid; the circumstances under which the builders worked; their reverses and their successes; their struggles for political and religious freedom; we saw them rise from a position of imperial tutelage to that of a self-governing people; we witnessed their efforts to penetrate into the interior and the rise of their religious institutions; now some of the builders will come under review. Their memories ought to be kept green. This is a duty that we owe to them. Anglo-Saxons the world over (as well as South Australians) would like to know something of the more prominent pioneers who laid the foundations of the State, and who helped to build up the very creditable superstructure that we have detailed.

The pioneers were a fine sample of the British race. Said the late Sir Henry Ayers, who was one of them, having come out in 1840: "The early settlers evinced great boldness in coming to this country when they did, for it was no light undertaking for men and women, with their children, to leave the comforts and conveniences of civilization and to venture to settle in a country whose geographical position was not generally understood, and of whose productive powers absolutely nothing was known. When they were surrounded with difficulties it was the possession of like courage which enabled them successfully to withstand them. I have always urged, and am still of opinion, that the greatest factor in overcoming our difficulties was the sterling qualities of our pioneers. They were a superior sample of the people of the Mother Country. They had their

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