

CHAPTER IX.

Tasmania—The Blacks—Mr. G. A. Robinson—The capture and transportation of the Aborigines to Flinders Island—Their gradual decay and extinction—Lalla Rookh, the last native.

TASMAN had discovered the island of Tasmania and given it the name of Van Diemen's Land, after the Governor of Batavia, by whom he had been commissioned to explore the "Great South Land."

The next visitor was a Frenchman, named Captain Marion du Fresne, who on landing was assailed with showers of stones and spears, and retaliated by volleys of musketry, which killed and wounded several natives. This was the first blood shed, never to be forgotten by the natives. The celebrated discoverer Captain Cook visited the island in 1777. He and Captain Bligh left pigs, vines, oranges, apples, plums, onions, and potatoes, to which Captain Furneaux made additions.

Captain Cook describes the natives—their women naked, their bodies marked with scars, their heads partially shaved; they lived like beasts. No doubt their condition was very miserable, but it was made more so by European contact.

Even Flinders' interview with the natives was unfortunate; while Captain De Surville, who anchored in Doubtless Bay, and was received by crowds of natives, who supplied them with food and water, and treated their sick with tenderness, nevertheless, repaid their services with cruelty, under the suspicion that they had stolen a boat. The chief Pagine, having been invited on board, was placed in irons. They then burnt down the village and carried the chief to sea, who died of a broken heart. De Surville, afterwards, was drowned in the surf when landing at Callao in 1791. Thus, unfortunately, the very first visit of the European was a visitation of blood, while the introduction of large bodies of criminals added crime and disease to their wretchedness.

From these causes arose an undying hatred on the part of natives to Europeans; in fact, nothing short of a guerilla war.

Government sought to conciliate and benefit these people, and no doubt much was done, but with very unsatisfactory results.

From the diary of the Rev. Robert Knopwood we learn that our people went to their camp, probably by way of reprisal, and attacked the natives at Burke's house, where a large body of natives had assembled and were, in pursuit of kangaroo, shooting with spears. Mistaking this for a war attack, an inexperienced officer ordered the soldiers to fire into them, and numbers were wounded and slain. This led to fearful consequences.

Shortly afterwards two Europeans were put to death by the natives, and the attack was attributed by the Governor in his proclamation, 1813, to the frequent ill-treatment by the bushrangers.

Another calamitous event took place. The natives came into town, under the leadership of a prisoner named Campbell, who cohabited with a native woman; they were kindly received by the Government, and many presents were bestowed on them; the children associated and played with the white children, but the conduct of the bushrangers to the native women led to serious consequences. "Bad men," they said, "had stolen their piccaninnies."

In 1816 it is recorded that the natives now manifested much hostility to the up-country settlers, killing and driving away their cattle. Quarrels arose between them and the stockmen. Spears were exchanged for the more deadly fire of musketry. The natives now entered on a marauding warfare, stopped drays and travellers, and made regular attacks on the huts.

The Lieut.-Governor issued a proclamation in which he enumerated the ill-treatment sometimes received—that they killed the men and pursued the women and compelled them to abandon their children; and still more horrible, the editor of a Wellington paper said, "We have ourselves heard old hands