

WATKIN
TENCH'S
1788

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WATKIN TENCH
Date and artist unknown

Watkin Tench was born in 1758 in Chester, England. He joined the marine corps in 1776 and served in the ~~American War of Independence~~ before sailing to Botany Bay on the First Fleet. He returned to England in 1792, and stayed with the marine corps before retiring as a lieutenant-general in 1821. Tench died in 1833.

Tim Flannery was born in 1956 in Melbourne. He is a writer, a scientist and an explorer. He has published over a dozen books including the award-winning titles *The Future Eaters*, *The Eternal Frontier*, *Country* and *The Weather Makers*. Tim is based at Macquarie University. He chairs the Copenhagen Climate Council, is a member of the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists and is the National Geographic Society's Australasian representative. Tim Flannery was the 2007 Australian of the Year. He lives on the Hawkesbury River in New South Wales.

WATKIN
TENCH'S
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Comprising

*A Narrative of the Expedition
to Botany Bay*

and

*A Complete Account of
the Settlement at Tort Jackson*

Edited & introduced by

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Length

1 inch = 25.4 mm

1 foot = 30.5 cm

1 yard = 0.914 m

1 mile = 1.61 km

Mass

1 ounce = 28.3 g

1 pound = 454 g

Area

1 acre = 0.405 ha

Volume

1 gallon = 4.55 litres

Temperature $^{\circ}\text{C} = \frac{5}{9} (^{\circ}\text{F} - 32)$

The Extraordinary

Watkin Tench

by Tim Flannery

The European settlement of Australia occurred so swiftly, and altered the land and indigenous cultures so profoundly, that it can be difficult to imagine what the country was like before the first white settler walked ashore. If we wanted to picture that different land, and think about how it had been transformed, there's no better guide than Watkin Tench's extraordinary accounts of Australia's first European settlement. Bestsellers in their day, they vividly describe the land and the Aboriginal people as they were at first encounter, and comprehensively report how they were affected by the new settlers. Despite their early popularity, Tench's books have remained virtually unknown to Australian readers for most of the past 200 years and are only now claiming their rightful place in our national literary canon, and inspiring new works of national importance, such as Inga Clendinnen's *Dancing with Strangers* and Kate Grenville's *The Lieutenant*.

Watkin Tench was a lieutenant in the marine corps on board Australia's First Fleet. Around 1000 people, 700 of whom were convicts, sailed on the eleven ships. Britain's jails were overflowing at the time, and with the American colonies gaining independence and thus no longer willing to accept convict labourers, a new solution had to be found. West Africa was briefly considered as the site for a penal colony. Joseph Banks, who accompanied James Cook when he mapped Australia's east coast, vigorously championed Botany Bay as a site. An influential voice in Britain, his arguments carried the day. Unfortunately, Botany Bay did not live up to expectations as a site, and upon arriving Governor Phillip quickly made the decision to relocate the settlement to Port Jackson.

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Watkin Tench was born in Chester on 6 November 1758. Very little is known of his childhood. His father, Fisher Tench, was a dancing master who ran a dance academy and boarding school in Chester with his wife Margaritta.¹ The building that housed this establishment, probably the birthplace of Watkin Tench, still stands. Today a pizza shop occupies the street frontage and there's no sign that one of Australia's finest chroniclers was born there. It was presumably a happy home, one in which the young Watkin was well educated, as his fondness for quoting from Milton and Shakespeare attest. Indeed such were his educational achievements that he would be widely considered the most cultured mind in the colony at Port Jackson.

Tench entered the marine corps at the age of sixteen. At the time the marines were considered to be

a distinctly junior (and therefore inferior) service, deficient both in pay and prestige relative to the army and the navy. Perhaps Tench joined the marine corps because in those days you had to buy your position in the military, and the cost of a commission with the marines was within his family's reach. Whatever the case, Tench saw active service almost immediately, for by 1776 the American War of Independence was in full swing. Just two years later, in 1778, Tench was captured by American forces; he spent three months as a prisoner of war before rejoining the fray. The end of the war, in 1783, must have brought bittersweet feelings to the young marine. The adventure and the chance to distinguish himself had passed, and he faced the boredom of non-active service. He was placed on half pay in 1786—it must have been all but intolerable for a talented and ambitious young man to linger idly on a substantially reduced income.

We can only imagine Tench's feelings when, just a few months later, the opportunity arose to volunteer for a three-year tour of service (which ended up being nearly five) with the First Fleet. The unusual nature of the commission—it involved having some of the responsibilities of a jailer—must have deterred many officers who perhaps saw such service as beneath their dignity. But in it Tench may have seen the chance to develop a second career—that of a writer.

In early 1787, when the publishing house John Debrett of Picadilly commissioned him to write an account of the voyage to New Holland and the settlement of the new land, Tench had no literary credentials. But such was public interest in the venture that would dispatch around 1000 Britons into the unknown that all the leading figures of the expedition had been signed up to write accounts. They included the governor and lieutenant governor, the judge advocate and the surgeon. Debrett commissioned surgeon John White, perhaps hoping that his medical training might incline him to document the natural history of the new land, and White did not disappoint, producing a fine account of the flora and fauna of what is now the Sydney region.

It is not known what Debrett expected of Tench, but perhaps the laying out of a few pounds to secure a work from the young lieutenant—who was by far the most junior person commissioned to write—seemed like a reasonable risk. Whatever Debrett's thinking his investment was amply repaid when a ship returning from New South Wales carried Tench's manuscript detailing the voyage out at the first months of settlement. Tench's *A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay* was rushed to press, appearing on 24 April 1789 as the very first genuine account of the settlement. Published as a pocket-sized pamphlet, *Expedition to Botany Bay* is by far the most modest of the five 'foundation books' of Australia's colonial history, but it is also the most elegant, perceptive and engaging². Even from a distance of more than 200 years Tench's personality draws us in as he tells us about the very first days of our national story. Tench spent just four years at Port Jackson, and upon his return in 1793 his second book, *A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson*, was published by J. Nichol of Pall Mall. Altogether a more handsome publication it is testimony to both the success of Tench's first work and the enduring public fascination with the colony at Port Jackson.

A rich picture of Tench's personality emerges from his writings. From the moment he steps aboard the *Charlotte* he is extraordinarily bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, curious about everything, and filled with boundless energy. As the fleet's journey progresses Tench gives us snapshots of the diverse peoples and places that would mark the journey to the Great Southern Land for years to come. We follow him through the streets and byways of the Cape Verde Islands, Rio De Janeiro and Cape Town. But it's upon reaching Australia that Tench's wide-ranging interests truly come into their own. Here, in the vast new land where everything seems surprising and worth reporting, Tench proves capable as something more than an amateur naturalist, ethnographer, lawyer, soldier, agronomist and social

commentator.

As the first fleet was leaving England, Tench records the reactions of the convicts on leaving their homeland, in all probability, forever:

I strolled down among the convicts to observe their sentiments at this juncture. A very few excepted, their countenances indicated a high degree of satisfaction, though in some the pang of being severed, perhaps forever, from their native land could not be wholly suppressed. In general, marks of distress were more perceptible among the men than the women, for I recollect to have seen but one of those affected on the occasion.

Tench's deep humanity is particularly apparent in his dealings with the convicts. When he was told that he was at liberty to release them from their fetters, he records that he 'had great pleasure in being able to extend this humane order to the whole of those under my charge, without a single exception'. The evident dismay with which he watched their punishment, particularly those who showed some penitence, is poignant. His transcription of the pathetic last letter of a condemned youth to his mother speaks eloquently of the inhumanity of the system under which he served. And Tench clearly had a soft spot for children. He tells us that he took a seven-year-old boy for a walk on the beach at Botany Bay at a time when the majority of the party was still confined aboard ship. We do not know who this boy was—whether the child of a convict or a marine—but he was doubtless weary of shipboard life, and must have appreciated the adventure.

Although Tench's writings in natural history are not as voluminous as those of the surgeon John White, they are detailed and apposite. His account of the anatomy of the emu, with its description of the bird's unusual double-shafted feathers, is worthy of a professional naturalist such as Charles Darwin. In his description of the kangaroo Tench compares the actual animal with an illustration drawn in 1770 during Cook's voyage, noting the merits and inaccuracies of the earlier work. His comment that 'the testicles of the male are placed contrary to the usual order of nature' doubtless refers to the fact that the testicles of marsupials are found in front of the penis, a condition which must have seemed remarkable indeed at the time, but which had gone unremarked by earlier observers, including Joseph Banks.

While at Port Jackson Tench kept a daily journal which he often quotes in his published work, giving his words an immediacy which suggests that he has just arrived, breathless at his writing-table to narrate some extraordinary event. Unfortunately, this invaluable diary appears to have been lost, and we are much the poorer for it, for Tench deliberately omits some key events in his published work. He makes no mention, for example, of his arrest in March 1788, by his superior, Captain Ross, for failing to reconsider the ruling of a military court case he'd presided over. This arrest order was not lifted for the entire time that Tench was in New South Wales, and we know from other sources that the injustice of Ross's action long angered him.³ While Tench decided not to include his arrest in his published writings, it might account for his minute detailing of the nature of courts in the colony.

Perhaps the most extraordinary aspects of Tench's writings (at least to the twenty-first-century reader) concern the Aborigines, or 'Indians' as he knew them. More than anyone else, except possibly his close friend Lieutenant Dawes, Tench was a friend and confidante of the Aborigines held in the settlement and those who regularly visited. He learned their language, and they, apparently, trusted and liked him. It is through Tench that some of the language of the Sydney Aborigines lives on in our own Australian idiom: *dingo* for native dog, *gin* (or *dyin* as he rendered it) for woman, and *cooee* for

the call to locate someone in the bush.

Despite his many accomplishments Tench remained first and foremost a soldier, and it was perhaps his love of valour that inclined him to admire the Aboriginal men of Port Jackson. He was astonished at their bravery when facing an enemy more powerful than themselves, and awed by their disregard for death, both in their own combats and when facing Europeans armed with guns. Such bravery was not limited to the Aboriginal people of Port Jackson; it was commented upon by many Australian explorers. Yet few writers valued it as highly in a naked black man as they did in a fellow soldier.

As a military officer expected to defend the settlement, Tench was not in the best of positions to open friendly relations with the potentially hostile Aborigines. Indeed, he bears the unfortunate distinction of being the first European ordered to carry out an officially sanctioned massacre of Aborigines. In recording these events, his work takes on a tragic aspect, for the conflict between Tench's private beliefs and the obligation of duty are conveyed with deep feeling, and his outward restraint is almost painful to witness. His horror at receiving the order to kill Aborigines remains implicit in his text, for as a soldier he could not be seen to betray his duty, but it is clearly there. We see Tench summoned to Governor Phillip's residence to be told of the hatchets and bags with which he is to cut off and carry away the heads of ten Aboriginal men. We hear Phillip give the gruesome order in his own words.

One wonders if it was something he saw in the expression on his lieutenant's face that prompted Phillip to ask whether Tench could suggest any alteration to the order. Tench's proposal that six Aborigines be captured (some to be executed, others to be released, as the Governor saw fit), rather than ten decapitated, was perhaps the best he felt he could negotiate. If so, he appears to have judged well, for his suggestion was accepted by Phillip. Remarkably, Tench's inability to carry out even this diminished order is not related with shame. Rather, he writes of the termination of the terrible episode with evident relief, and an almost comic sense of his hapless endeavour.

Tench's evolving view of the Aborigines is of enduring interest. In the beginning his views are typical of the way humans usually react to new and different cultures. At first fearful, perhaps even contemptuous of these 'fickle, jealous, wavering' people, Tench gradually came to know many individually, and to respect them. By the time he left Sydney in 1791, he'd forged firm friendships with several Aborigines.

The ignorance of Tench's initial assessment of the Aborigines is perhaps understandable when it is remembered that encounters were few during the first six months of the settlement (the period with which the *Expedition to Botany Bay* is concerned). Of the encounters that did take place over this period, a number were marked by violence. Indeed, in all, the Aborigines killed or severely wounded seventeen Europeans (including Governor Arthur Phillip himself) with no loss to themselves, before reprisal was ordered.

The nature of contact between European and Aborigine changed dramatically following the kidnapping of Arabanoo. Phillip had decided to take a native into custody because every other means of opening communication had failed, and he felt strongly that the survival of the colony depended upon the development of good relations with the Aborigines. Tench was well aware that this was a desperate measure which would either make or break forever the chance for friendly contact between the two cultures. In Arabanoo, Tench came to know an Aborigine personally for the first time, and his attitudes underwent a profound change. From this point on in Tench's writing one slowly loses sight of Arabanoo, Colbee and Bennelong as naked, black 'savages', and begins to see them as complex individuals. By the end of his time at Port Jackson, Tench could write: 'untaught, unaccommodated

man is the same in Pall Mall as in the wilderness of New South Wales.’

Arabadoo was a serious, somewhat ponderous man, with a gentle demeanour and a kindness to children which endeared him to everyone. Bennelong (who appears in Tench’s narrative as Baneelon) is, in contrast, mercurial. Passionate, fearless and never slow to grasp an opportunity, he is the natural intermediary between his people and the colonists—and he plays the Europeans for all they are worth. Tench is patently fascinated by him:

Baneelon we judged to be about twenty-six years old, of good stature and stoutly made, with a bold intrepid countenance which bespoke defiance and revenge...He quickly threw off all reserve, and pretended, nay, at particular moments, perhaps felt satisfaction in his new state...His powers of mind were certainly far above mediocrity. He acquired knowledge, both of our manners and language, faster than his predecessor had done. He willingly communicated information, sang, danced and capered, told us all the customs of his country and all the details of his family economy. Love and war seemed his favourite pursuits, in both of which he had suffered severely.

Tench did not demur at reporting events which show the Europeans in a poor light. During an expedition to the Hawkesbury, he reports how Boladeree refused to swim for a duck which the Europeans had shot. For days the party had been shooting birds, reserving the tastier ducks for themselves and giving crows and hawks to the Aborigines. The incident places in sharp focus just how distasteful the Aborigines found the English class system, a structure in which even fully initiated Aboriginal men were inevitably relegated to the bottom of the social ladder. They would simply not tolerate being treated so. Instead, they laughed at and mocked the Europeans for their clumsiness and stupidity in the bush. When the exhausted Europeans (who were in any case carrying the supplies of the Aborigines) showed ill-humour at this, the Aborigines called them *gonin-patta*—shit-eaters.

Tench’s account of Arabadoo’s meals with Governor Phillip stand in contrast with the events of the Hawkesbury expedition. Although his acquaintance with his European abductors was but a few hours old, Arabadoo acquitted himself well at dinner, watching the others carefully in order to learn how to handle his food and napkin. His single mistake, not repeated, was to wipe his hands on his chair. Only at the end of his second meal did his performance become unstuck, for then he moved to throw his plate (one of the few in the colony) out the window, as one would a leaf or piece of bark. Rarely has the gulf between the two cultures been so strikingly revealed.

One wonders, given the innate difficulties of their situation, how individuals such as Phillip and Arabadoo, or Tench and Bennelong, could have struck up friendships. Part of the equation, no doubt, was that the Europeans and Aborigines had yet to compete more than marginally for resources. The Europeans were fed largely out of their own stores, while the Aborigines still had their land. Because of this, neither group was dependent upon the other, and each retained its dignity. It was only when graziers and agriculturalists began to take the resources of the land wholesale from the Aborigines that the degradation of dispossession and dependency began.

Tench had hardly returned to Britain when he married Anna Maria Sargent, in October 1792. Apparently unable to have children of their own, the couple adopted four of Anna’s sister’s children (who had been orphaned) and brought them up as their own. He was soon fighting in the Napoleonic Wars, and on 6 November 1793, while serving under Captain Richard Rodney Bligh on the *Alexander*, was captured after a particularly bloody encounter. He was freed as an exchanged prisoner in May 1795.

Tench's service afloat ended in 1802; thereafter he took land posts and retired as lieutenant-general in 1827. Described as a 'gentleman' by the time of his death, Watkin Tench passed away at Devonport on 7 May 1833, aged 74.

*

Many aspects of Watkin Tench's personality seem to sit more comfortably in our century than in the eighteenth. Yet it would be a mistake to judge him by our own sensibilities. That his regard for the Aborigines and his push to reform the cruel penal practices of the eighteenth century accords with contemporary views is to be applauded. But it would be far too easy, and decidedly wrong, to condemn him for failing to espouse many other causes which have gained currency today.

So often we rewrite history to suit our own ends. For nations whose beginnings are shrouded in the mists of time, this is perhaps understandable. But in Australia we have the writings of Phillip, White, Tench and many others to inform us. We have no reason not to read them. It is merely our neglect of our own past that has led to the absurd idea that 'Australia has no history'. In truth no history is so extraordinary, nor so well documented, as that of Australia. I hope that Tench's seminal works be even more widely read so that we can better understand how things really were in the beginning.

*

I have used the text of the third edition of the *Expedition*, published in 1789, and the 1793 edition of the *Settlement*. I have modernised Tench's punctuation and spelling, corrected the occasional error (for example De Perrouse for La Perouse), and sometimes added a word or two of clarification or explanation in a footnote, marked by a dagger (†). Tench's own notes are indicated with an asterisk (*). Otherwise, Tench's text is given as it was first published.

[1](#) Fitzhardinge, L. F. (ed.), *Sydney's First Four Years, By Captain Watkin Tench*, Library of Australian History, Sydney, 1979.

[2](#) Australia's other four foundation books are:

Collins, David. *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales, from its first settlement in January 1788, to August 1801*, (1804)

Hunter, John. *An Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island*, (1793)

Phillip, Arthur. *The Voyage of Governor Philip to Botany Bay With an Account of the Establishment of the Colonies of Port Jackson and Norfolk Island*, (1789)

White, John. *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales, with sixty-five plates of nondescript animals, birds, lizards, serpents, curious cones of trees and other natural productions*, (1790)

[3](#) Fitzhardinge, L. F. (ed.), *Sydney's First Four Years, By Captain Watkin Tench*, Library of Australian History, Sydney, 1979.

Book One:

A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay

IN offering this little tract to the public it is equally the writer's wish to conduce to their amusement and information.

The expedition on which he is engaged has excited much curiosity and given birth to many speculations respecting the consequences to arise from it. While men continue to think freely, they will judge variously. Some have been sanguine enough to foresee the most beneficial effects to the parent state from the colony we are endeavouring to establish, and some have not been wanting to pronounce the scheme big with folly, impolicy and ruin. Which of these predictions will be complete I leave to the decision of the public. I cannot, however, dismiss the subject without expressing a hope that the candid and liberal of each opinion, induced by the humane and benevolent intention in which it originated, will unite in waiting the result of a fair trial to an experiment no less new in its design than difficult in its execution.

As this publication enters the world with the name of the author, candour will, he trusts, induce its readers to believe that no consideration could weigh with him in an endeavour to mislead them. Facts are related simply as they happened and when opinions are hazarded they are such as, he hopes, patient inquiry and deliberate decision will be found to have authorised. For the most part he has spoken from actual observation, and in those places where the relations of others have been unavoidably adopted, he has been careful to search for the truth and repress that spirit of exaggeration which is almost ever the effect of novelty on ignorance.

The nautical part of the work is comprised in as few pages as possible. By the professional part of my readers this will be deemed judicious; and the rest will not, I believe, be dissatisfied at its brevity. I beg leave, however, to say of the astronomical calculations that they may be depended on with the greatest degree of security, as they were communicated by an officer who was furnished with instruments and commissioned by the Board of Longitude to make observations during the voyage and in the southern hemisphere.

An unpractised writer is generally anxious to bespeak public attention and to solicit public indulgence. Except on professional subjects, military men are, perhaps, too fearful of critical censure. For the present narrative no other apology is attempted than the intentions of its author, who has endeavoured not only to satisfy present curiosity but to point out to future adventurers the favourable as well as adverse circumstances which will attend their settling here. The candid, it is hoped, will overlook the inaccuracies of this imperfect sketch, drawn amidst the complicated duties of the service in which the author is engaged, and make due allowance for the want of opportunity of gaining more extensive information.

Watkin Tench, Captain of the Marine
Sydney Cove, Port Jackson, New South Wales, 10 July 1788

From the embarkation of the convicts to the departure of the ships from England

THE marines and convicts having been previously embarked in the river at Portsmouth and Plymouth the whole fleet destined for the expedition rendezvoused at the Mother Bank on the 16th of March 1787 and remained there until the 13th of May following. In this period, excepting a slight appearance of contagion in one of the transports, the ships were universally healthy and the prisoners in high spirits. Few complaints or lamentations were to be heard among them and an ardent wish for the hour of departure seemed generally to prevail.

As the reputation equally with the safety of the officers and soldiers appointed to guard the convicts consisted in maintaining due subordination, an opportunity was taken, immediately on their being embarked, to convince them in the most pointed terms that any attempt on their side either to contest the command or to force their escape should be punished with instant death. Orders to this effect were given to the sentinels in their presence. Happily, however, for all parties, there occurred not any instance in which there was occasion to have recourse to so desperate a measure, the behaviour of the convicts being in general humble, submissive and regular. Indeed, I should feel myself wanting in justice to those unfortunate men were I not to bear this public testimony of the sobriety and decency of their conduct.

Unpleasant as a state of inactivity and delay for many weeks appeared to us, it was not without its advantages, for by means of it we were enabled to establish necessary regulations among the convicts and to adopt such a system of defence as left us little to apprehend for our own security in case a spirit of madness and desperation had hurried them on to attempt our destruction.

Among many other troublesome parts of duty which the service we were engaged on required, the inspection of all letters brought to or sent from the ships was not one of the least tiresome and disagreeable. The number and contents of those in the vessel I was embarked in frequently surprised me very much. They varied according to the dispositions of the writers, but their constant language was an apprehension of the impracticability of returning home, the dread of a sickly passage and the fearful prospect of a distant and barbarous country. But this apparent despondency proceeded in few instances from sentiment. With too many it was, doubtless, an artifice to awaken compassion and call forth relief, the correspondence invariably ending in a petition for money and tobacco. Perhaps a want of the latter, which is considered a great luxury by its admirers among the lower classes of life, might be the more severely felt from their being debarred in all cases whatever, sickness excepted, the use of spirituous liquors.

It may be thought proper for me to mention that during our stay at the Mother Bank the soldiers and convicts were indiscriminately served with fresh beef. The former, in addition, had the usual quantity of beer allowed in the navy and were at what is called full allowance of all species of provisions, the latter at two-thirds only.

From the departure to the arrival of the fleet at Tenerife

GOVERNOR Phillip having at length reached Portsmouth, and all things deemed necessary for the expedition being put on board, at daylight on the morning of the 13th the signal to weigh anchor was made in the commanding officer's ship the *Sirius*. Before six o'clock the whole fleet were under sail, and the weather being fine and wind easterly, proceeded through the Needles with a fresh leading breeze. In addition to our little armament, the *Hyena* frigate was ordered to accompany us a certain distance to the westward, by which means our number was increased to twelve sail: His Majesty's ships *Sirius*, *Hyena* and *Supply*, three victuallers with two years' stores and provisions for the settlement, and six transports with troops and convicts.

In the transports were embarked four captains, twelve subalterns, twenty-four sergeants and corporals, eight drummers and 160 private marines, making the whole of the military force, including the major commandant and staff on board the *Sirius*, to consist of 212 persons, of whom 210 were volunteers. The number of convicts was 565 men, 192 women, and eighteen children. The major part of the prisoners were mechanics and husbandmen, selected on purpose by order of government.

By ten o'clock we had got clear of the Isle of Wight, at which time, having very little pleasure in conversing with my own thoughts, I strolled down among the convicts to observe their sentiments at this juncture. A very few excepted, their countenances indicated a high degree of satisfaction, though in some the pang of being severed, perhaps forever, from their native land could not be wholly suppressed. In general, marks of distress were more perceptible among the men than the women, for I recollect to have seen but one of those affected on the occasion. 'Some natural tears she dropp'd, but I wip'd them soon.'[†] After this the accent of sorrow was no longer heard; more genial skies and change of scene banished repining and discontent, and introduced in their stead cheerfulness and acquiescence in a lot not now to be altered.

To add to the good disposition which was beginning to manifest itself, on the morning of the 20th, in consequence of some favourable representations made by the officers commanding detachments, they were hailed and told from the *Sirius* that in those cases where they judged it proper they were at liberty to release the convicts from the fetters in which they had been hitherto confined. In complying with these directions I had great pleasure in being able to extend this humane order to the whole of those under my charge without a single exception. It is hardly necessary for me to say that the precaution of ironing the convicts at any time reached to the men only.

In the evening of the same day, the *Hyena* left us for England, which afforded an early opportunity of writing to our friends and easing their apprehensions by a communication of the favourable accounts it was in our power to send them.

From this time to the day of our making the land, little occurred worthy of remark. I cannot, however, help noticing the propriety of employing the marines on a service which requires activity and exertion at sea in preference to other troops. Had a regiment recruited since the war been sent out seasickness would have incapacitated half the men from performing the duties immediately and indispensably necessary, whereas the marines, from being accustomed to serve on board ship, accommodated themselves with ease to every exigency and surmounted every difficulty.

At daybreak on the morning of the 30th of May we saw the rocks named the Deserters which lie of

the south-east end of Madeira, and found the south-east extremity of the most southerly of them to be in the latitude of $32^{\circ} 28'$ north, longitude $16^{\circ} 17\frac{1}{2}'$ west of Greenwich. The following day we saw the Salvages, a cluster of rocks which are placed between the Madeiras and Canary Islands, and determined the latitude of the middle of the Great Salvage to be $30^{\circ} 12'$ north, and the longitude of its eastern side to be $15^{\circ} 39'$ west. It is no less extraordinary than unpardonable, that in some very modern charts of the Atlantic, published in London, the Salvages are totally omitted.

We made the island of Tenerife on the 3rd of June, and in the evening anchored in the road of Santa Cruz, after an excellent passage of three weeks from the day we left England.

† John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, XII, 645: 'Some natural tears they dropp'd...'

*From the Fleet's arrival at Tenerife to its departure for Rio de Janeiro in
the Brazils*

THERE is little to please a traveller at Tenerife. He has heard wonders of its celebrated peak, but he may remain for weeks together at the town of Santa Cruz without having a glimpse of it, and when its cloud-topped head emerges the chance is that he feels disappointed, for from the point of view in which he sees it, the neighbouring mountains lessen its effect very considerably. Excepting the peak, the eye receives little pleasure from the general face of the country which is sterile and uninviting to the last degree. The town, however, from its cheerful white appearance, contrasted with the dreary brownness of the background, makes not an unpleasing *coup d'oeil*. It is neither irregular in its plan, nor despicable in its style of building, and the churches and religious houses are numerous, sumptuous and highly ornamented.

The morning of our arrival, as many officers as could be spared from the different ships were introduced to the Marquis de Brancifort, governor of the Canary Islands, whose reception was highly flattering and polite. His Excellency is a Sicilian by birth and is most deservedly popular in his government. He prefers residing at Tenerife, for the conveniency of frequent communication with Europe, to the Grand Canary, which is properly the seat of power, and though not long fixed there has already found means to establish a manufactory in cotton, silk and thread, under excellent regulation which employs more than sixty persons and is of infinite service to the common people. During our short stay we had every day some fresh proof of His Excellency's esteem and attention, and had the honour of dining with him in a style of equal elegance and splendour. At this entertainment the profusion of ices which appeared in the dessert was surprising, considering that we were enjoying them under a sun nearly vertical. But it seems the caverns of the peak, very far below its summit, afford at all seasons ice in abundance.

The restless importunity of the beggars and the immodesty of the lowest class of women are highly disgusting. From the number of his countrymen to be found, an Englishman is at no loss for society. In the mercantile houses established here, it is from gentlemen of this description that any information is derived, for the taciturnity of the Spaniards is not to be overcome in a short acquaintance, especially by Englishmen, whose reserve falls little short of their own. The inland country is described as fertile and highly romantic, and the environs of the small town of Laguzá mentioned as particularly pleasant. Some of our officers who made an excursion to it confirmed the account amply.

It should seem that the power of the church, which has been so long on the decline in Europe, is at length beginning to be shaken in the colonies of the Catholic powers. Some recent instances which have taken place at Tenerife evince it very fully. Were not a stranger, however, to be apprised of this he would hardly draw the conclusion from his own observations. The bishop of these islands, which conjunctively form a see, resides on the Grand Canary. He is represented as a man in years and of a character as amiable as exalted, extremely beloved both by foreigners and those of his own church. The bishopric is valued at ten thousand pounds per annum, the government at some-what less than two.

In spite of every precaution, while we lay at anchor in the road a convict had the address, one night to secrete himself on the deck when the rest were turned below and, after remaining quiet some hours

let himself down over the bow of the ship and floated to a boat that laid astern, into which he got, and cutting her adrift, suffered himself to be carried away by the current until at a sufficient distance to be out of hearing, when he rowed off. This elopement was not discovered till some hours after, when a search being made and boats sent to the different parts of the island, he was discovered in a small cove to which he had fled for refuge. On being questioned, it appeared he had endeavoured to get himself received on board a Dutch East Indiaman in the road, but being rejected there, he resolved on crossing over to the Grand Canary, which is at the distance of ten leagues, and when detected was recruiting his strength in order to make the attempt. At the same time that the boats of the fleet were sent on this pursuit, information was given to the Spanish governor of what had happened, who immediately detached parties every way in order to apprehend the delinquent.

Having remained a week at Tenerife, and in that time completed our stock of water and taken on board wine etc., early on the morning on the 10th of June we weighed anchor and stood out to sea with a light easterly breeze. The shortness of our stay and the consequent hurry prevented our increasing much any previous knowledge we might have had of the place. For the information of those who may follow us on this service, it may not, however, be amiss to state the little that will be found of use to them.

The markets afford fresh meat, though it is neither plentiful nor good. Fish is scarce, but poultry may be procured in almost any quantity at as cheap a rate as in the English seaports. Vegetables do not abound, except pumpkins and onions, of which I advise all ships to lay in a large stock. Milch goats are bought for a trifle, and easily procured. Grapes cannot be scarce in their season, but when we were here, except figs and excellent mulberries, no fruit was to be procured. Dry wines, as the merchants term them, are sold from ten to fifteen pounds a pipe.[‡] For the latter price the very best, called the London Particular, may be bought. Sweet wines are considerably dearer. Brandy is also a cheap article. I would not advise the voyager to depend on this place for either his hogs or sheep. And he will do well to supply himself with dollars before he quits England to expend in the different ports he may happen to touch at. Should he, however, have neglected this precaution, let him remember when he discounts bills or exchanges English money here not to receive his returns in quarter dollars, which will be tendered to him, but altogether in whole ones, as he will find the latter turn to better account than the former both at Rio de Janeiro and the Cape of Good Hope.

The latitude of the town of Santa Cruz is $28^{\circ} 27\frac{1}{2}'$ north, the longitude $16^{\circ} 17\frac{1}{2}'$ west of Greenwich

[‡] A large cask which held around 500 litres.

The passage from Tenerife to Rio de Janeiro in the Brazils

IN sailing from Tenerife to the south-east, the various and picturesque appearances of the peak are beautiful to the highest degree. The stupendous height, which before was lost on the traveller, now strikes him with awe and admiration, the whole island appearing one vast mountain with a pyramidal top. As we proceeded with light winds, at an easy rate, we saw it distinctly for three days after our departure, and should have continued to see it longer had not the haziness of the atmosphere interrupted our view. The good people of Santa Cruz tell some stories of the wonderful extent of space to be seen from the summit of it that would not disgrace the memoirs of the ever-memorable Baron Munchausen.[‡]

On the 18th of June we saw the most northerly of the Cape Verde Islands, at which time the commodore gave the fleet to understand, by signal, that his intention was to touch at some of them. The following day we made Sao Tiago, and stood in to gain an anchorage in Port Praia Bay. But the baffling winds and lee current rendering it a matter of doubt whether or not the ships would be able to fetch, the signal for anchoring was hauled down and the fleet bore up before the wind. In passing along them we were enabled to ascertain the south end of the isle of Sal to be in $16^{\circ} 40'$ north latitude, and $23^{\circ} 5'$ west longitude. The south end of Boa Vista to be in $15^{\circ} 57'$ north, $23^{\circ} 8'$ west. The south end of the isle of Maio in $15^{\circ} 11'$ north, $23^{\circ} 26'$ west; and the longitude of the fort, in the town of Port Praia, to be $23^{\circ} 36\frac{1}{2}'$ west of Greenwich.

By this time the weather, from the sun being so far advanced in the northern tropic, was become intolerably hot which, joined to the heavy rains that soon after came on, made us very apprehensive for the health of the fleet. Contrary, however, to expectation, the number of sick in the ship I was embarked on was surprisingly small and the rest of the fleet were nearly as healthy. Frequent explosions of gunpowder, lighting fires between decks, and a liberal use of that admirable antiseptic, oil of tar, were the preventives we made use of against impure air; and above all things we were careful to keep the men's bedding and wearing apparel dry. As we advanced towards the Line the weather grew gradually better and more pleasant. On the 14th of July we passed the equator, at which time the atmosphere was as serene and the temperature of the air not hotter than in a bright summer day in England. From this period until our arrival on the American coast, the heats, the calms and the rains by which we had been so much incommoded were succeeded by a series of weather as delightful as it was unlooked for. At three o'clock in the afternoon of the 2nd of August, the *Supply*, which had been previously sent ahead on purpose, made the signal for seeing the land, which was visible to the whole fleet before sunset, and proved to be Cape Frio, in latitude $23^{\circ} 5'$ south, longitude $41^{\circ} 40\frac{1}{4}'$ west.

Owing to light airs we did not get abreast of the city of St Sebastian, in the harbour of Rio de Janeiro, until the 7th of the month, when we anchored about three-quarters of a mile from the shore.

[‡] A fictional figure of the eighteenth century, famous for his wildly exaggerated stories.

*From the arrival of the fleet at Rio de Janeiro till its departure for the
Cape of Good Hope, with some remarks on the Brazils*

BRAZIL is a country very imperfectly known in Europe. The Portuguese, from political motives, have been sparing in their accounts of it. Whence our descriptions of it in the geographical publications in England are drawn I know not. That they are miserably erroneous and defective is certain.

The city of St Sebastian stands on the west side of the harbour, in a low unhealthy situation, surrounded on all sides by hills which stop the free circulation of air, and subject its inhabitants to intermittent and putrid diseases. It is of considerable extent. Mr Cookⁱ makes it as large as Liverpool, but Liverpool, in 1767, when Mr Cook wrote, was not two-thirds of its present size. Perhaps it equals Chester, or Exeter, in the share of ground it occupies, and is infinitely more populous than either of them. The streets intersect each other at right angles, are tolerably well built and excellently paved, abounding with shops of every kind in which the wants of a stranger, if money is not one of them, can hardly remain unsatisfied. About the centre of the city, and at a little distance from the beach, the palace of the viceroy stands, a long, low building, no wise remarkable in its exterior appearance; though within are some spacious and handsome apartments. The churches and convents are numerous and richly decorated. Hardly a night passes without some of the latter being illuminated in honour of their patron saints, which has a very brilliant effect when viewed from the water and was at first mistaken by us for public rejoicings. At the corner of almost every street stands a little image of the virgin, stuck round with lights in an evening, before which passengers frequently stop to pray and sing very loudly. Indeed, the height to which religious zeal is carried in this place cannot fail of creating astonishment in a stranger. The greatest part of the inhabitants seem to have no other occupation than that of paying visits and going to church, at which time you see them sally forth richly dressed, *en chapeau bras*,ⁱⁱ with the appendages of a bag for the hair, and a small sword. Even boys of six years old are seen parading about, furnished with these indispensable requisites. Except when at their devotions, it is not easy to get a sight of the women and, when obtained, the comparisons drawn by a traveller lately arrived from England are little flattering to Portuguese beauty. In justice, however, to the ladies of St Sebastian, I must observe that the custom of throwing nosegays at strangers for the purpose of bringing on an assignation, which Doctor Solander and another gentleman of Mr Cook's ship met with when here, was never seen by any of us in a single instance. We were so deplorably unfortunate as to walk every evening before their windows and balconies without being honoured with a single bouquet, though nymphs and flowers were in equal and great abundance.

Among other public buildings, I had almost forgot to mention an observatory which stands near the middle of the town and is tolerably well furnished with astronomical instruments. During our stay here some Spanish and Portuguese mathematicians were endeavouring to determine the boundaries of the territories belonging to their respective crowns. Unhappily, however, for the cause of science, these gentlemen have not hitherto been able to coincide in their accounts so that very little information on this head, to be depended upon, could be gained. How far political motives may have caused this disagreement I do not presume to decide; though it deserves notice that the Portuguese accuse the Abbe de la Caille, who observed here by order of the King of France, of having laid down the longitude of this place forty-five miles too much to the eastward.

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