

Reviews

The Voyages of Abel Janszoon Tasman. By Andrew Sharp. Clarendon Press, 1968. xii, 375 pp., illustrations, maps. U.K. price: 80s.

FIRST let us register our indebtedness to Mr. Sharp. He has brought together for us in one volume all the essential extant first-hand records of the Tasman voyages, not just bits and pieces; and not just Tasman's 'own' journal of the great voyage of 1642-3, but the document generally called the 'Sailor's Journal', and the account by the surgeon-barber Henrik Haelbos, first published in *De Nieuwe en Onbekende Weereld* of Arnoldus Montanus in 1671, and the first account to appear in print. Mr. Sharp gives us these three documents newly translated, in full and annotated. He reproduces all the drawings in the Netherlands State Archives copy of the main journal, and a number of other maps or sections of maps, together with modern sketchmaps. He has dredged through Heeres and the Linschoten Society editions for the earlier and later life of Tasman — his biographical material, in fact, is unavoidably mostly Heeres — has used Posthumus Meyjes to advantage, has made acute use of the Dutch cartographical scholar Wider; and of course in his preliminary chapter on European exploration of the Pacific and Australia before Tasman plunges into the Spanish authorities. The reader who has trailed Mr. Sharp consistently will hear echoes of earlier discourses, the Pacific Islands discovery of 1960, the Australian discovery of 1963. Mr. Sharp is building up a considerable corpus of work; his linguistic bent enables him to cast his net of enquiry very wide — at any moment one expects him to embark on Kamchatkan or Wakashan; his persistence in detail can be very useful.

At the same time he is an idiosyncratic scholar; he tends to overturn all our established expectations; and the present reviewer, who has a conventional mind, is still not at all sure that Sharp procedure (he had written Sharp practice, but fell back appalled at the imputation) is always the best. The bulk of the book (pp. 62-310) is occupied by the 1642-3 journals — i.e. Tasman's and the Sailor's. The ordinary editor, one thinks, would print the whole of this consecutively, with all necessary annotation, and he would relegate to separate chapters, or sections, the discussion of maps and charts; he would attach the translated titles of drawings to the drawings in question. Mr. Sharp, on the other hand, keeps breaking off Tasman suddenly for critical disquisitions, of smaller or greater length, on points in the State Archives, Eugene or Vingboons maps, and for translations of what we should call the captions of pictures — sometimes with explanations attached. All this is in a larger-size type than that of the journal itself. Now if your mind works exactly like Mr. Sharp's, or is anyhow in close rapport with his, you may enjoy this system, as if he were standing by your side on a hill and explaining a very intricate landscape to you, and then turned you suddenly in another direction. It is possible that he might justify this by saying he is writing a book, not simply editing a document ('The Voyages of A.J.T.' by A.S.). But this reviewer at any rate is still worried.

The other worrying thing is the translation. No one can read the Heeres

translation of 1898 without wondering whether it is not too smooth for a rendering of a tough seventeenth century seaman; and Mr. Sharp seems to be quite certain about this, and to have proceeded to rectify the matter. One is forced to say 'seems', because he nowhere explains the principles on which he has conducted his rendering; and one is forced, again, to deduce them. One is not, of course, necessarily driven back to consider the first principles of any translation, though it is curious how often that does happen to one. Mr. Sharp no doubt did consider the matter, and work on principle. He appears to have said, I cannot conscientiously make this person or his friends write a smooth clear late nineteenth century English style, or a simple everyday 1960-ish one, or an idiomatic seaman's style of any period; the only thing to do is to be literal, to follow the Dutch order of words and the plain meaning of the words, to capitalize every word in English that stands for a Dutch word with a capital, to put a comma exactly where a comma comes in the Dutch, to refrain scrupulously from any punctuation where the Dutch has none; if the clerk who copies this journal made a slip, such as repeating a word or a phrase, I shall repeat it, because obviously the slightest, most obvious vagary of my text is sacred. Now if this is what he said, it does not work out too well. If he did not say anything of the sort, it still does not work out too well. And it hardly seems right to expect every reader to be his own editor, to read passages three or four times to sort them out, to go through with a pencil and adjust the punctuation. This, be it said, is not a plea for pendency or for fancy writing. It is a plea against a pedantic literalism. One can, of course, instance plenty of passages where Mr. Sharp is perfectly straightforward. Compare one short paragraph, of importance to New Zealanders, the entry for 13 December 1642, in (1) Heeres, 1898 (2) Vigeveno, 1942 (3) Sharp, 1968.

Heeres. 'Item the 13th do. Latitude observed, 42° 10'; longitude, 188° 28'; course kept east by north; sailed 36 miles in a south-south-westerly wind with a top-gallant gale. Towards noon we saw a large, high-lying land, bearing south-east of us at about 15 miles distance; we turned our course to the south-east, making straight for this land, fired a gun, and in the afternoon hoisted the white flag, upon which the officers of the "Zeehaen" came on board of us, with whom we resolved to touch at the said land as quickly as at all possible, for such reasons as are more amply set forth in this day's resolution.'

Vigeveno. 'On the 13th d° observed latitude 42 degrees, 10 minutes and longitude 188 degrees, 28 minutes; course kept east by north and sailed 36 miles, the wind being south-south-west with a top-gallant breeze. Towards noon saw a large land, uplifted high, had it south-east of us at about 15 miles. Turned our course to the south-east, straight for the land, fired a shot and after noon hoisted the white flag, whereupon the officers of the Zeehaen came on board our ship. Then decided with them to call at the said land as soon as possible, all this for reasons as are more amply explained in today's resolution.'

Sharp. 'On 13th d° observed latitude 42 Degrees 10 minutes longitude 188 degrees 28 minutes, course kept east by north and sailed 36 miles the wind South South west, with a topsails breeze, Towards noon Saw a large high elevated land, had it South east from us about 15 miles, made our course to South east, direct for the land; shot a shot and after noon had the white flag flown, whereupon the officers of the Zeehaen came to our

ship, when [we] jointly resolved; to make said land, as soon as At all possible, This, all for reasons, as the resolution of today's date sets out more fully.'

Not a vast difference anywhere. But take three lines or so from the entry for 6 January 1643, and this time take Sharp first: 'the pilot Major having again appeared at the ship with our vessels, reported that it because of the wind too dangerous, because it round there full of hard rocks, Without any Sand bottom consequent peril was undergone, of injuring the men and getting the casks undamaged in pieces . . . ' Now you can follow that if you think about it enough, though you may think also that either there was something wrong with the Dutch language or Tasman could not write it, and the latter hypothesis may very well be true: but the other men manage to get it more immediately comprehensible without (as far as one can see) doing violence to any canons of interpretation. *Heeres*: 'The pilot-major, having come alongside our ship again with the boats, reported that owing to the wind the attempt to land there was too dangerous, seeing that the sea was everywhere near the short full of hard rocks, without any sandy ground, so that they would have greatly imperilled the men, and run the risk of having the water-casks injured or stove in.' (Too wordy, perhaps.) *Vigeveno*: 'The pilot-major, having turned up on board again with the boats, reported that owing to the wind it was too dangerous, since around there it was full of hard rocks without any sandy bottom. Consequently there would have been danger of harm to the men and of damaging or breaking the casks.' (Not too bad, except for that odd phrase, turned up on board again'.)

One quickly makes a list of such queer assemblages of words, or of expressions that seem insufficiently nautical, or need a little explanation: 'the weather somewhat better tied our bonnets on again drew the foresail up the mast'; 'anew begin to reckon the longitude; who before this longitude has had from 160 degrees or more'; 'the wind west here on the water it was good for Seeing, that in this region a barren land to Behold'; 'at this point was much broken land as by our charting Being thereof can be seen'; and so on. On the other hand, once or twice we have a flight into what seems pure Sharp; a message was sent to the *Zeehaen's* officers in a wooden canister-shot case, 'which they received alright'; 'the swells which came from the South west Have lessened quite a bit'.

It may not seem quite fair to give such attention to these oddities when the book contains so much else: but the esteem one feels for a scholar's work would be poorly served by hiding them under a general blanket of praise. One must discriminate. One must discriminate again, and say that while Mr. Sharp's geographical annotation is extremely good (though Staten Island is *not* south of Le Maire Strait) he falls short on what might be called miscellaneous enlightenment. How far to go in this is no doubt always a moot point. Finally, this reviewer at least would have liked more than he is given on Tasman as a sailor and discoverer (pp. 339-40) — a matter about which he has never been able to satisfy himself from his own work. There is a nice lot of blank space on p. 340. Was Burney right in thinking him 'both a great and a fortunate discoverer'? How estimate the comparative quantities of greatness and fortune? Mr. Sharp could perhaps have done it. A 'very competent skipper who sought opportunities for exploration and so happened to be made commander of two of the most outstanding expeditions in the history of discovery', says Mr. Sharp. Yes,

he must have been very competent; and whether his expeditions were, or were not, as outstanding as that they were very meritorious.

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The Gold Rushes. By W. P. Morrell. Adam and Charles Black, London, 1968. 427 pp. U.K. price: 42s.

The Gold Rushes was first published in 1940 as a volume in the Pioneer History series. This second edition includes textual revision and fresh bibliographical material. The casual prospector may readily locate the revisions by the lighter leading of the type and occasional disjunction of margins, but the uneven appearance of the revised pages will not be a source of joy to the bibliophile. Nor have the publishers taken care with the additional bibliographical notes appended to chapters: the note on page 42 is misplaced and belongs on page 73; that on page 73 belongs on page 410 where it properly appears; the note which should have been placed on page 42 has presumably been lost somewhere between mine and stamping battery. The revisions, while numerous, have not involved substantial recasting of the text and the pagination of the 1940 edition is preserved as are the original maps. In all other respects the second edition is uniform with the first.

Professor Morrell's preface to the 1940 edition explains his purpose: 'There seems to be no book in any language attempting a synthesis of all the gold rushes as an aspect of the expansion of the European peoples.' Nor is there still, save for this solitary monograph. Indeed, it was not until 1963 that academically respectable syntheses appeared of the major gold and silver rushes in the United States.¹ The first comprehensive historical monographs on the mining industry in Australia and the gold mining industry in New Zealand were published coincidentally in the same year.² Though a great deal has been written about gold rushes since 1940, especially during the flush of centennial gold fever beginning in California in 1948, much of it is of local interest only, too much of it is written by unsystematic fossickers and too little by academic historians able to see beyond the next gully. In 1963 Geoffrey Serle, author of a history of Australia's greatest gold colony during its (first) golden age, remarked upon his good fortune 'that Australian historians have singularly neglected the Victorian gold rushes . . .'.³ Despite the productivity of popular chroniclers it is remarkable how little the main outlines of the story have been changed and this, coupled with the rarity of the out-of-print first edition, is justification enough for a moderately revised second edition of *The Gold Rushes*.

Yet the book depends upon more than its uniqueness. Considering its range (from ancient times to the twentieth century) and its sweep (from

¹ Rodman Wilson Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West 1848-1880*, New York, 1963; and William S. Greever, *The Bonanza West*, Norman, 1963. These books supersede the popular treatment in Glenn C. Quigg, *Pay Dirt: A Panorama of American Gold Rushes*, New York, 1936, and the capricious selection of topics in T. A. Rickard, *A History of American Mining*, New York, 1932.

² Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, Melbourne, 1963, and J. H. M. Salmon, *A History of Goldmining in New Zealand*, Wellington, 1963.

³ Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age*, Melbourne, 1963, preface.