

D'Entrecasteaux: An Account of His Life, His Expedition, and His Officers

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Plates XI-XIV; and 1 Text-figure

In November, 1737, two hundred years ago, at the Chateau D'Entrecasteaux, near Aix-en-Provence, Antoine Raymond Joseph de Bruni, Chevalier d'Entrecasteaux, was born. His father, the Marquis d'Entrecasteaux, was for a time President of the Parliament of Provence.

Educated at the Jesuit colleges of Aix and of Paris, he entered the navy in 1745 as a cadet, under the patronage of his relative, the great Suffren, took an active part in the Seven Years' War, and so distinguished himself in the battle of Minorca, where the English fleet, under Admiral Byng, was defeated, that he was given the grade of sub-lieutenant; serving later on the 'Hirondelle', he was noted for his skill in hydrographic work. In 1769, when Corsica was taken, he was given the command of a small boat—the 'Espion'—and in 1770 was promoted to the rank of lieutenant. Decorated with the Croix de Saint Louis in 1775, he sailed under Suffren until 1778, when he commanded a frigate in the Levant against the pirates who at that time menaced the trade routes. Captain in 1779, he commanded the 'Majesteaux', a vessel of 110 guns, and later the 'Puissant'. The extent of his knowledge, the integrity of his character, and the clearness of his judgment attracted the attention of the Marechal de Castries, Minister for Marine, who appointed him Assistant-Director of Ports and Arsenals under M. de Fleurieu.

In 1785, as commodore, he took over the command of the Indian station, where he displayed the French flag from the Red to the China seas; indeed, this was the first time that it had been seen in Chinese waters, the intention being to show the Emperor how it must be treated with proper respect.

His dispatches shew how he boldly pointed out the faults of French colonial administration and the means of remedying them, how he foreshadowed French Indo-China, how he realized the value of Eastern trade, and warned his Government how British policy threatened French interests in the Far East. In addition to this political work, by studying the effects of currents and winds, by carrying out surveys, and by correcting the faulty charts of the English and Dutch sailors who had preceded him, D'Entrecasteaux made navigation in these Eastern waters much safer. At Pondichéry orders reached him to repair to the Ile de France, where, as Governor-General, he was to take over the administration of the Ile de France and Bourbon (Mauritius and Réunion) and the command of all the forces, both naval and military. He found the affairs of these colonies in great disorder, and it is interesting to note how the sailor transported from the deck of his flagship to the vice-regal residency took up the role of legislator and administrator. Currency, exchange, commerce, industry, and agriculture were dealt with in a systematic manner. In relation to agriculture, one of the troubles with which he had to deal was the same as that which developed in our own Australian states, land-hunger, the desire of the colonists to acquire additional land grants from the Crown whilst failing even to clear and develop estates already in their possession. These islands, commanding as they did the entrance to the Indian seas, were regarded by D'Entrecasteaux as of great strategic value for a naval base, where not only ships of war and merchantmen could be refitted and victualled, but whence expeditions could be sent all over Asia. He found the docks and arsenal in great disorder and the shipping in very bad repair, and he at once urged the Home Government to bring the defences up to date. 'So long', he said, 'as Holland is the rival of Great Britain there is no fear of any attack, but from the day that there is a rapprochement between the two powers, the English may attempt the capture of these colonies'.

D'Entrecasteaux also envisaged the importance of Madagascar and other islands in relation to Great Britain, and considered the question of taking possession of it more than a hundred years before its occupation by the French Republic.

Military matters gave no little trouble. There was jealousy and ill-feeling between the French troops and the Irish regiment of Walsh which took all the tact of the governor to calm. The militia question was a source of further trouble, while the general body of the colonists was answerable for many disturbances; the cause of these was the colour question, which threatened a civil war, especially at the time of the mobilization of the militia. This he thoroughly reorganized, and at the same time put the general defences of the colony into a better condition.

The son of an old Catholic family, educated by Jesuit fathers, D'Entrecasteaux, although he escaped the scepticism of his age, never showed any trace of bigotry. Tolerant and liberal in his ideas, he disapproved of any narrowness or bitterness on the part of the clergy, and expressed himself strongly against their action in the case of mixed marriages.

A good number of Dutch colonists had settled in the colony, and there were prospects of further Dutch and English emigration, which the Governor-General wished to encourage. Certain regulations had been made by the church dealing with this question. 'Your measures', he said to them, 'to prevent the propagation of error are precisely those which have been made use of to oppose the establishment and progress of Christianity; they are purely human methods, which a politician might employ, but which are forbidden by the Gospels, and should never have been entertained by ministers of the true religion'.

Health reasons and family affairs influenced D'Entrecasteaux to resign his office, and arriving back in Brest in February, 1790, after three months' shore leave, he was given command of the 'Patriote'. By this time the revolutionary fervour was affecting the whole country. In September, 1790, Brest was in a state of excitement and almost of revolt; the King's officers were being denounced as traitors to their country, mutiny broke out in some ships, seditious sailors boarded the ships inciting the crews to revolt, and Huon de Kermadec and other officers were insulted.

In France, notwithstanding the storm and stress of the revolutionary times, great interest had been shown in the voyages of exploration to the Southern seas undertaken by Marion du Fresne and Cook. The mission of La Perouse especially had attracted attention, not in France alone, but in England, which had contributed to his expedition by supplying him with the nautical instruments of the illustrious Cook; an attention which became changed into keen concern when year after year passed without news of the 'Astrolabe' and 'Boussole', the ships in which La Perouse had sailed from Brest in 1785.

Some two years afterwards he had called at Botany Bay, just then founded by Commodore Phillip, but after quitting that port had never more been heard of. It was therefore but an expression of the nation's sympathy and concern when the National Assembly in 1791 passed a decree praying the King to dispatch an expedition in search of La Perouse and his companions. In this decree, as well as in the royal instructions, the objects of the expedition were clearly defined, namely, to search for La Perouse, and at the same time to make all possible exploration that might be useful and beneficial to navigation, to commerce, and to science. The following are extracts from the decree of the National Assembly dated February 7th, 1791: 'Decreed besides that the King be prayed to arm one or

more ships, in which shall be embarked savants, naturalists, and draughtsmen; the commanders of the expedition to be given the dual mission of searching for M. de La Perouse and of making at the same time researches relative to science and commerce'. The extracts from the royal instruction read: 'He will study the climate and the productions of the countries which he visits; he will seek to inform himself as to the customs, morals, religions, and forms of government of the natives, their method of making war, their arms, &c.

Relative to these and other documents bearing on the expedition, it is interesting to note how strange an epitome of those troubled years of French history is written therein. The commander and officers holding their commissions from Louis XVI, the expedition, formed by a decree of the National Assembly, returning to a Republic, had the journals and dispatches printed by the command of, and dedicated to, Napoleon, Emperor of the French, King of Italy, Protector of the Confederation of the Rhine. Doubtless it was in part these years of revolutionary turmoil, of internal strife, followed by those of military glory and European conquest, which drew the attention of France away from southern latitudes, checked her ideas of colonization, and allowed England to occupy the Australian continent and the adjoining island of Tasmania.

The expedition, which had been fitted out at Brest under the superintendence of D'Entrecasteaux's friend, Huon de Kermadec, consisted of two ships, the 'Recherche' and the 'Espérance', each of 500 tons, with a crew of 92 men, and armed with six 8-pound cannon and two 20-pound carronades. The 'Recherche' was commanded by D'Entrecasteaux in person, the 'Espérance' by De Kermadec.

On September 29th, 1791, the ships sailed from Brest, and by the 30th were on the high seas, when, according to orders, D'Entrecasteaux broke the seal of his dispatches, and found that he had been made rear-admiral, while two of his officers, De Kermadec and D'Auribeau, were appointed post-captains; the new admiral accordingly read his commission and hoisted his flag, which was honoured with the usual salute.

As soon as the ships were at sea a regime, which had been carefully thought out by D'Entrecasteaux for the preservation of the health of the crews, was brought into play. The ships were cleaned, aired, and fumigated every day, and the crews were divided into three watches, so as to give each man eight hours' uninterrupted sleep; moreover, strict supervision was kept on all sailors, who were compelled, if wet after a watch, to change their clothes.

These precautions were carried out partly on the recommendation of Captain Cook, whose crew had suffered severely from disease on his first and second voyages. On October 12th Teneriffe was sighted, and on the 13th the ships anchored and took in supplies, the naturalists of the party availing themselves of the opportunity to climb the

famous peak and make collections of the flora and fauna of the island. Weighing anchor on the 23rd of October, the ships, as they made south, experienced frequent storms, stifling heat, and heavy rains; they crossed the line on November 28th, and entered Table Bay on January 17th. Next day salutes were exchanged with the fort, and the admiral landed, being formally received at Government House by the Administrator, M. Rhenius, and the Council of Regency.

The Abbé Bertrand (the astronomer), Blavier (the naturalist), and Ely (the artist) were left behind on account of ill-health; the Abbé had a narrow escape from death, falling from a precipice on Table Mountain while engaged in taking observations. Rossel, who had studied at the Paris observatory, took over the astronomical part of the work, assisted by Willaumez and De Bonvouloir.

While at the Cape D'Entrecasteaux received dispatches from the commander of the Indian station, reporting that the captains of two French ships had informed him that Commodore Hunter had seen traces near the Admiralty Islands of what might have been the remains of the uniforms of La Perouse's wrecked expedition. Commodore Hunter, on learning of these rumours, had contradicted them, the misunderstanding having been caused apparently by language difficulties. Although the admiral placed but little reliance on these reports, he considered it his duty to investigate their truth, and to change his route. Sailing from the Cape on February 16th, with the intention of passing through the Mozambique Channel, and then steering a direct course to the Admiralty Islands by the north of New Guinea, he was compelled to change his plans, as he found his ships such poor sailors that he would miss the favourable monsoons. D'Entrecasteaux decided, therefore, to sail to the south of Australia, and then make his way north to the Admiralty Islands. On March 28th the frigates sighted New Amsterdam, the exact position of which they determined; the island was surrounded by thick smoke and enveloped in fire.

In the days which followed the ships encountered heavy gales, and were considerably strained, the 'Recherche' especially suffering from the heavy seas which she shipped, so that no attempt was made to investigate the south-west coast of New-Holland.

On April 21st land was sighted (the Mewstone) at half-past 9 in the morning, it being the intention of the admiral to anchor in Adventure Bay in order to obtain a supply of fresh water, as well as suitable wood with which to repair his battered vessels. Some mistake, however, was made by the navigating officer, and the expedition sailed into South-West Passage, anchoring for the night in a sheltered position. Although a boat had been dispatched at once to reconnoitre, it was too late to see much, but early next morning the same officers—De Saint Aignan from the 'Recherche' and De La Seinie from the 'Espérance'—left on a survey of the port, which

occupied them for two days. De Saint Aignan reported that he had found 'a large harbour surrounded by highlands and sheltered from all the winds, the sea like glass, neither shoal nor rock to be seen'; that there was an abundant supply of fresh water, and that he had noticed several deserted aboriginal huts.

Acting on these reports, D'Entrecasteaux determined to sail in, but a head wind prevented him; so next day, in the early morning of April 23rd, before the breeze had sprung up, the two ships were towed by their boats to an anchorage in what was to be known henceforth as *Recherche Bay*.

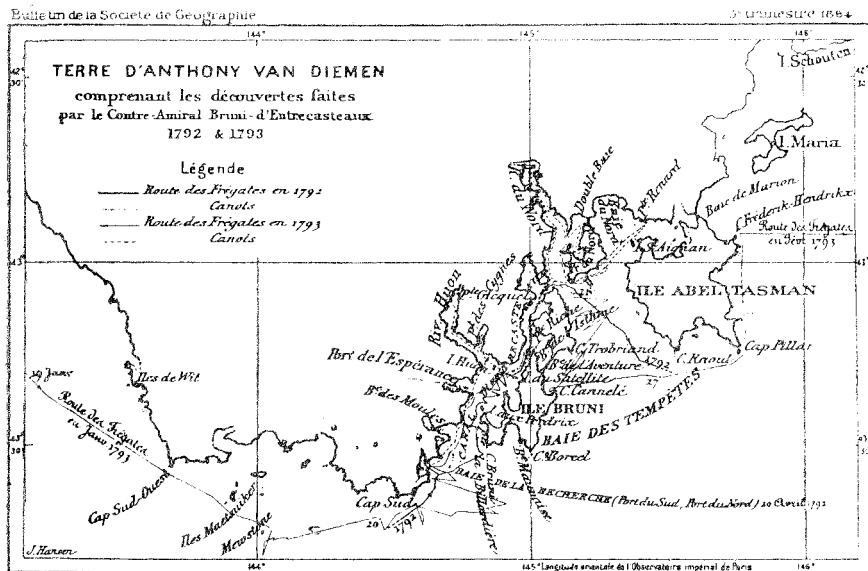


Fig. 1.

Let me quote the admiral's own words when he saw this land for the first time:

' It would be vain for me to attempt to describe my feelings when I beheld this lonely harbour lying at the world's end, separated as it were from the rest of the universe—'twas nature, and nature in her wildest mood. At each step we met here the beauties of that nature abandoned to herself, there the marks of her decay, trees of an immense height and proportionate diameter, their branchless trunks covered with evergreen foliage, some looking as old as the world; closely interlacing in an almost impenetrable forest, they served to support others which, crumbling with age, fertilized the soil with their debris; nature in all her vigour, and yet in a state of decay, seems

to offer to the imagination something more picturesque and more imposing than the sight of this same nature bedecked by the hand of civilized man. Wishing only to preserve her beauties we destroy her charm, we rob her of that power which is hers alone, the secret of preserving in eternal age eternal youth'.

Some days were spent in boat expeditions, during which South Port, Port Esperance, and the Huon River were discovered by De Cretin, De La Seinie, and De Luzencay respectively, while surveys, soundings, and astronomical observations were also made. Partridge Island, Huon Island, and Satellite Island were named.

The most important discovery was made by the boat commanded by De Saint Aignan, who, accompanied by Beaumamps-Beaupré was dispatched with a crew of 11 sailors and provisions for four days.

Leaving the 'Recherche' on May 18th at half-past 11, with a fresh S. to S.S.E. wind and rain squalls, he made good progress through the canal, and when late in the afternoon he caught sight of the open sea, and saw the waves breaking with violence on the shore, he was satisfied now that there was an open channel between the large island and the mainland (D'Entrecasteaux Channel).

Landing a little after 5 o'clock in a small cove with fine sand at the north of the island, they spent the night, which they felt very cold, notwithstanding the huge fires which they kept up. There they found some canoes 7 to 9 feet long and 3 to 4 feet wide in the middle, tapering to a point at each end. They were made of very thick bark, arranged lengthwise, and tied together with rushes or ligneous grass—really only rafts shaped like canoes. There they also saw some native huts, like those which they found at the mouth of the Huon, baskets, kangaroo-skins, &c. The return to the ship was delayed by a head wind, and the next night was passed in great discomfort owing to storms of rain and hail. The following day in the bay discovered previously by De Cretin, he allowed the boat to ground on a sand-bank at the head of the inlet, and in his own words: 'I did not hesitate to strip and leap overboard, and to wade ashore, holding a gun in one hand and a compass in the other. On landing I heard the sea thundering on the other shore, and, crossing a tongue of land a cable's length across, I found myself on the shore of Adventure Bay. The cold did not prevent me from taking several observations nor from making further sketches. Recrossing the same tongue of land through the scrub, some of which was very prickly, I returned to the boat as I had left it'. After two miserable nights of squalls, rain, and hail, their provisions exhausted, they finally regained their ships. During their cruise Saint Aignan and Beaumamps had made numerous observations and sketches.

D'Entrecasteaux, anxious to continue his search for La Pérouse, thought of availing himself of the favourable winds which were blowing and sailing south, but yielded to the wishes of his officers, who wanted to navigate the ships through the newly discovered strait, hoping, as he did himself, to make perhaps further discoveries. The channel was so sheltered and the breeze so light that it took four days to pass through it, the ship anchoring from time to time in order that observations of all kinds should be made, and that Beaumamps-Beaupré should receive every assistance in his chart-making. 'A sailor', he says, 'can never be accused of exaggeration in showing enthusiasm at the sight of a harbour 24 miles long, everywhere safe, without reefs, where one can drop anchor without fear, and approach without danger a cable's length from the shore; of an aspect attractive, although somewhat monotonous at first sight because of the uniform greenness of the trees with which the hills, heaped one upon another as they are, are covered from the very summits down to the water's edge, varied, however, by the picturesque scenes presented by the windings and numerous bays of the channel, and by the streams and rivers which flow into it on the mainland side'.

When the ships had sailed out of the channel, and D'Entrecasteaux was hoping to explore the immense bay to the north, the weather became so bad that he had to give up all thought of doing so, and, sailing Cape Pillar, he set sail for New Caledonia.

The journey from Tasmania was uneventful. The ships discovered new islands, corrected the observations of previous explorers, navigating at no little risk among the dangerous reefs so as to enable Beaumamps-Beaupré to complete a fine series of charts, and at the same time making careful search for traces of La Pérouse's expedition.

On September 6th they arrived at Amboyna, where at first the Dutch authorities objected to their landing; but the trouble was soon settled satisfactorily. There the crews found a welcome change of food, and enjoyed some weeks' rest after their long and trying voyage.

On sailing from Amboyna on October 13th D'Entrecasteaux had intended, after passing Timor, to make for Shark Bay, on the west coast of New Holland, but strong south-easterly gales carried him to the west. Cape Leeuwin was doubled on December 5th, and about 6 p.m. on December 6th the entrance to a large bay (King George's Sound) was observed. D'Entrecasteaux was very anxious to enter it, but the weather was so bad that he found it impossible to tack and make back to the entrance. Two days later he found himself in the midst of a group of small islands and reefs—the Recherche archipelago—and on December 9th was glad to anchor in Esperance Bay. There some time was spent in effecting repairs to the 'Espérance', and landing parties were dispatched to look for fresh water,

the supply of which had become very low; this search, however, proved a failure. The admiral noted in his diary how poorly supplied with fresh water the south coast of New Holland seemed to be.

The expedition was further delayed by Riche, the naturalist, who was lost for more than two days through his own carelessness and disobedience. The account of his experiences, and how he followed some aborigines whom he saw (fortunately, perhaps, for him he failed to overtake them), is interesting reading, as he describes the various animals, birds, plants, &c., which he met with. Although Riche fully acknowledged himself in fault, and expressed his gratitude for all the care which was taken for his rescue, La Billardière seized this opportunity to launch accusations against the commander in the book which he subsequently published. However distinguished La Billardière may have been as a scientist, his criticisms of his officers and companions was so unfair and spiteful that little credence can be placed in them.

On leaving Esperance Bay the expedition sailed slowly along the southern coast as far as 130° of longitude, when on January 2nd Huon de Kermadec signalled that the 'Espérance' had barely enough water to last her a few days, and that her rudder was in need of repairs; next day, receiving further unfavourable reports from the 'Espérance', and knowing that the water supply of the 'Recherche' was getting low, the admiral decided to make a course for Van Diemen's Land. After a somewhat stormy passage the expedition arrived at South Port on January 21st, 1793, and proceeded to anchor in Rocky Bay; the 'Recherche', keeping too close to the eastern shore, took the ground lightly, but had no difficulty in getting afloat without any damage. It was during this passage that D'Entrecasteaux, from the observations made of the westerly currents, formed the opinion that Van Diemen's Land was an island, and that a strait existed between it and New Holland; he records in his journal that it is his intention later to sail to Point Hicks in order to verify his supposition.

At South Port twenty-two days were spent repairing the ships and laying in a supply of wood and water, while La Billardière and the other scientists made valuable collections of plants, fishes, and animals. While charmed by the country, D'Entrecasteaux complains of plagues of blowflies, which set up putrefaction in all kinds of food, while their buzzing was loud and annoying. He had experienced nothing like them in other parts of the world.

De Welle and Beaupré sailed up the Huon for more than three leagues; they described it as more than one and a half miles wide at its mouth, its course being to the north-west for about 7 miles, then to the north some degrees east for 5 miles. At the bend of the river they found the river covered with swans,

which made no attempt to escape from the boat, even when shots were fired at them point-blank. Port Cygne also was visited and examined by these officers.

Sailing slowly through the channel, both ships, after passing Satellite Island, grounded near Point Riche, but floated off as the tide rose. The same two officers landed on Bruny Island, where, under the direction of Beaumamps-Beaupré, a base was measured on the isthmus in order that exact surveys might be made.

On the 14th February Captain Huon de Kermadec was ordered to send a boat to examine North-West Bay, while Willaumez was dispatched to explore the deep inlets at the bottom of Storm Bay, which the admiral had noticed the preceding year.

Accompanied by Beaumamps-Beaupré and provisioned for four days only, Willaumez, on issuing out of the channel, kept to the western side, and entering what he at first thought was an arm of the sea found himself in the mouth of a large river, Rivière du Nord, in contrast to the Rivière du Sud (River Huon). This river, which we now call the Derwent, he ascended for some four leagues, and then returned.

On leaving the Derwent Willaumez kept to the eastern shore, and examined Double Bay (Ralph's Bay); as he coasted along he passed between the mainland and the island called by the French Willaumez Island, after this distinguished sailor, but now known as Franklin Island, and entered the large bay, to which he gave the name of Baie du Nord (Frederick Henry Bay). By the time he reached the île Saint Aignan (Sloping Island) food supplies were almost exhausted, but the goodwill of the crew and their readiness to go on low rations encouraged him to persevere. Unfortunately bad weather came on, compelling the boat to run for shelter under a cape (Point Renard)¹, and as there was no improvement next day he had to abandon the attempt to make for East Bay Neck, which was close at hand.

The admiral's instructions had been to discover whether a channel existed, and whether the Maria Islands of Captains Cook and Furneaux were really islands or only a peninsula. Willaumez reported that, although the country was so broken up that a passage might have escaped his observation, he saw land to the east, which made him think that no such channel existed.

The continued absence of this boat and the strong gales which had raged for two days caused the admiral such uneasiness about the safety of his men that he dispatched the 'Espérance' through the D'Entrecasteaux Channel in order that she might send out search parties; fortunately on the fifth night after its departure the boat returned, the crew being exhausted and chilled to the bone.

¹ Point Renard was named after Surgeon-Major Renard, of the 'Recherche'.

Willaumez, although he had failed to discover the supposed channel, described a great series of bays extending in the north to 42°42' and in the east to the meridian of Cape Pillar. 'It seems', says D'Entrecasteaux, 'that all the sheltered havens of New Holland are collected together in the neighbourhood of South Cape, to the east of which are to be found an uninterrupted range of harbours, ports, and bays, which form one vast haven eighteen by fourteen leagues in extent. I do not believe that there is in any part of the world such a great number of excellent anchorages assembled in so small a space'.

On February 21st, 1793, the two ships sailed for Fleurieu (or Oyster) Bay, but were driven by the weather to put into Adventure Bay, which they quitted on February 27th, sailing along the east coast as far as Cape Frederick Hendrick, after which they steered a course for New Zealand.

No landing was made there, and on March 23rd the ships anchored at Tongatabu, in the Friendly Isles, staying there for more than a fortnight. Passing the New Hebrides, they arrived on April 18th at Balade, on the east of New Caledonia, the survey of which the admiral wished to complete; the chart of this coast by Beautemps-Beaupré D'Entrecasteaux describes as one of that scientist's best pieces of work. There they spent nearly three weeks, their stay being saddened by the death of Captain Huon de Kermadec, who had been in bad health for some time. D'Entrecasteaux, who was a personal friend of many years' standing, reproaches himself in his diary for having persuaded de Kermadec to come on this expedition, as his constitution had been much weakened by his long and trying service in the navy, and pays a touching tribute to his character. They buried him at nightfall on the little island of Bouguioe (Observatory Island), no mark being placed on his grave because of the fear that the savages, who were cannibals, might disturb his body. Some years later a cross was erected there by the 'Heroine', a French corvette. This was removed in 1847, as the mark was found to be confusing to navigation, but in 1857 Captain Ville Georges and Dr. Viillard built a small monument of coral on the spot.

D'Entrecasteaux, in his journal, comparing the two islands of Van Diemen's Land and New Caledonia, writes as follows: 'New Caledonia, lying in the tropics and enjoying a most beautiful climate, presents a coast-line bristling with nothing but rocks, and unapproachable. Van Diemen's Land, placed in a high southern latitude, possesses the most magnificent roadsteads and the safest of havens. They are, so to say, the two extremes of good and evil. If we ought not to hope to find as fine harbours as those of Storm Bay, we should flatter ourselves that we shall not encounter a coast as dangerous as that of New Caledonia'.

The impression that the natives of New Caledonia made on the explorers contrasted very strongly with the sentiments which they had formed for those of Van Diemen's Land. The latter, D'Entrecasteaux says, 'offer the most perfect image of a primitive society, where men are not troubled by passion nor corrupted by the vices of civilization; assured of easily finding their sustenance, they enjoy peace and contentment; their open and smiling physiognomy represents a happiness which is troubled neither by importunate reflexions nor by vain desires. The New Caledonians, more advanced doubtless in civilization, have a ferocious character, and are constantly at war with one another. Many of them had recent wounds on their bodies, and the human flesh we saw them eating, which must have been that of their enemies, showed that fighting was of recent date'.

On May 9th D'Auribeau took command of the '*Espérance*', and Rossel became flag captain of the '*Recherche*'.

As they directed a course toward the archipelago of Santa-Cruz a group of three small islands was observed, one of which, situated to the east, had not been perceived by Carteret. 'We called it "Île de la Recherche", but we saw it at such a distance that we could not place it on our chart with precision, although we noted its latitude and longitude within some minutes of accuracy', says D'Entrecasteaux. This was the very spot where La Perouse was shipwrecked, as was discovered by Dillon and D'Urville many years later; it is now called Vanikoro. It seemed the irony of fate that led D'Entrecasteaux to give the name of Île de Recherche to the very island where the French explorer whom he failed to find had been lost.

Pursuing his investigations in Santa-Cruz and the Solomon Group, he could gather no information from the natives of these islands, nor from those of the Lousiades, where he discovered and named some new ones after Rossel, Saint-Aignan, Trobriand, and Riche. A gulf on the south-east of New Guinea he named 'Huon Gulf'.

On June 29th the ships passed through Dampier Strait, and close to the coast of New Britain observed the eruption of a volcano in the sea. By this time the stock of provisions on board was getting low, the wine had become sour, the flour had rotted, the health of the crew was bad, and scurvy was prevalent, so that the admiral decided to sail for Java, which it was becoming daily more urgent for them to reach.

D'Entrecasteaux himself was in a serious condition, suffering from scurvy and dysentery, and on July 8th he became too ill to write his journal, which was continued by Rossel. On the day before his legs had become very swollen, and black spots, which appear towards the end of the disease, had developed. 'We were hoping', says Rossel, 'to land him, for we felt that a rest ashore would do more than anything to restore his health. He refused all our requests, replying

that he would never for the sake of his personal benefit depart from the orders which had been given him in his letters of instruction, that the objects of general utility, and, above all, the interests of the State, must never be sacrificed to private affairs. During the night of July 19th the pain became so violent and caused him such suffering that we perceived the onset of delirium; medicine proved useless. Towards mid-day the alarming symptoms seemed to abate, and we began to flatter ourselves that there might be some hope; but it was not of long duration. He, whose existence had been so precious to us all, became comatose, and died at half-past seven on the night of July 29th'. He was buried with naval honours next day.

Rossel says of him: 'D'Entrecasteaux astonished the most experienced sailors by his boldness in braving the greatest dangers; a boldness which, while it might have passed for rashness in another, was justified in him by the resources of his sound, keen, fertile intellect: the danger which might have taken an ordinary man by surprise was always provided for in his plans, so that the result proved that he could defy it, inasmuch as he was sure of overcoming it'.

Admiral Jurien de la Gravière, who was then a young officer on the '*espérance*', tells how all were overcome with grief and stupor at the news of the death of a commander who was so respected, so beloved, so humane.

After his death nothing but misfortune befell the expedition. On August 20th D'Auribeau took command on the '*Recherche*', and Rossel was transferred to the '*espérance*'; but the former, whose health was bad, entrusted Rossel with the duty of bringing the ships to the island of Bourou, where they were provisioned, and where they remained from September 3rd to September 15th. Arriving at Batoum on October 9th, they stayed for forty-eight hours in order to obtain a further supply of fresh food, scurvy and dysentery raging amongst the men, whose sufferings were accentuated by the great heat which prevailed. D'Auribeau, who had again resumed supreme command, brought his ships to anchor in the harbour of Sourabaya on October 19th. The Dutch authorities at first refused them the hospitality of the port, so that after being kept waiting for some days the high command had decided to sail for the Ile de France, notwithstanding the fact that so many of the crew were incapacitated by illness. The reason given by the authorities was that war had now been declared between Holland and the French Republic, the Dutch disregarding the fact that letters of safe conduct had been issued to the expedition on its departure on a voyage of exploration. At the last moment, however, the Council at Batavia announced that they would grant to the French ships the privileges belonging to friendly nations. This permission was subsequently withdrawn and again restored.

In addition to the sufferings of the expedition from famine and disease there was now to be added the political trouble and strife engendered amongst its members by the revolution and the execution of Louis XVI. Two parties were formed: the Royalist group, which included most of the officers, many of whom were of the old noblesse; and the Republican, which embraced most of the scientists, like La Billardière, Riche, and others, who had been ardent encyclopaedists. The crews took little or no part in the dissensions; knowing that they were under the command of brave officers they did their duty loyally as sailors of the navy of France.

After the American War of Independence, in which it had distinguished itself, the French navy was in a high state of efficiency, both as regards ships and personnel, and France might have once more contested the empire of the sea. At the Revolution, however, many of her best officers and sailors, being of royalist sympathies, were driven from the service, and the navy was brought into such a state of chaos that even Napoleon himself failed to restore its ancient prestige. It was this loss which accounted largely for the failure of the French navy in the Napoleonic wars.

While D'Entrecasteaux lived his genius, and the respect and affection in which he was held by all, prevented any quarrels between members of the expedition. D'Auribeau was of a different temperament; he was of arbitrary disposition, and was feared and disliked; possessed, as Jurien de la Gravière says, of an ungovernable pride, he was totally unfitted for supreme command. He had no sympathy for modern ideas; he disliked the scientists being on board his ship, and was very annoyed with them when they installed their bread-fruit trees on his quarter-deck.

With the permission of the Batavian Government, officers and crew began to live ashore. They were able at first to pay their way by selling the merchandise which they had brought with them for barter; when this money was spent they borrowed from the Dutch Trading Company on the security of their pay, which had been accumulating for them in France for more than two years. Soon, however, French credit had ceased to exist, and the Batavian Government took possession of the ships as a guarantee for the borrowed money. By this time the morale of the expedition was being sapped by the idle life ashore; quarrels became more frequent, the staffs ceased dining together, each went his own way. To make matters worse D'Auribeau seized the opportunity to confer the Cross of Saint-Louis on three of the officers, at the same time demanding the oath of fidelity to the King. With the connivance and support of the Dutch authorities the two corvettes were surrounded by men-of-war with loaded guns, lists of proscription were drawn up, detachments of troops made prisoners of the men ashore, and the white flag was hoisted and saluted. This day, February 20th, 1794, may be considered as the end of the expedition. The officers who were not royalists, the savants, and the naturalists were detained in fortresses, while half the crew were sent as exiles

into the interior of Java, where many succumbed eventually to fever and dysentery. Of the original 219, 99 died. Jurien de la Gravière and his friend Beaumamps-Beaupré were included in the proscription, but were afterwards released at the request of D'Auribeau. Fortunately the hospitality of the Dutch settlers allowed the victims of this *coup d'état* to endure their captivity in comparative comfort, and soon the news of French victories—the English, under the Duke of York, beaten at Hondschoote, the Austrians at Wattignies and Fleurus, Belgium reconquered, Holland invaded—completely changed the outlook. In 1794 D'Auribeau died at Samarang and two officers at Batavia, while two others joined the Dutch navy, which was now a friendly power, Holland having become the Batavian Republic, an ally of France against England.

Rossel, accompanied by the remaining officers, sailed from Java in January, 1795, on board a Dutch convoy, arriving at Table Bay on the 4th of April, where Jurien de la Gravière transhipped from the 'Dordrecht' to the 'Hougly' in order to rejoin Rossel, who was carrying with him all the papers, charts, and reports of the expedition. While his commander was ashore the 'Hougly' sailed unexpectedly with Jurien de la Gravière and de Trobiand on board. Rossel had to take passage by a brig-of-war, which was captured near the Shetlands, and he himself was taken to London as a prisoner. In the meantime the 'Hougly' was seized near Saint Helena by an English squadron under Commodore Essington, who took possession of all the papers, charts, and collections of the expedition, notwithstanding the formal protests of the French officers, and in violation of the pledges of neutrality and safe conduct furnished by the English Government in 1791.

There is no doubt that the value of D'Entrecasteaux's papers and charts were recognized by the English Government, and that they made use of them later for the expeditions which they sent to Australia and Tasmania. They learned from him his opinion that Tasmania was an island, and it was following his indications that Bass and Flinders made their discoveries. Bruni Island, D'Entrecasteaux Straits, the Huon, the Derwent, in fact most of the south coast of Tasmania, was French by discovery. The Home Government realized this, and foresaw the probable claims by France; to cut short all doubt, therefore, the Governor of New South Wales dispatched a detachment of troops in 1803, who hoisted the British flag, and took possession of that land by the Derwent River which Willaumez had discovered 10 years before.

After the Peace of Amiens, in 1802, the papers were returned to Rossel, and the collections of natural history were restored, so La Billardiére tells us, through the generous intervention of Sir Joseph Banks with the Government.¹

¹ La Billardiére's collection consisted of 22 boxes, containing specimens of plants, flowers, insects, fish, reptiles, birds, small kangaroos, and mineralogical specimens.

The bread-fruit trees which had been collected by the expedition in the Friendly Isles were taken eventually to Batavia; La Haye transported them to the Ile de France in 1797, where some were placed in the botanical gardens and multiplied. Many of these were distributed to other colonies, while some of the original trees were taken to Paris by La Haye.

During their two visits D'Entrecasteaux and the members of his expedition had frequent meetings with the Tasmanian natives, and were on the most friendly terms with them. He and La Billardière have left long accounts of them, their character, and customs, much of which Ling Roth quotes in his book on the aborigines of Tasmania. A vocabulary of their language was also compiled.

Huon de Kermadec (Jean Michel) was born at Froment, near Brest, on September 12th, 1748, the descendant of an old and noble family of Brittany, whose chateau near Landerneau dated from 1270 A.D. Many of the members of this family had served in the French navy. He was admitted as a page into the royal household in 1762, and into the navy four years later. As ensign of the 'Sensible', he fought, as did his uncle, in the battle of the Ushant; as lieutenant he served under the Comte d'Estaing at the capture of Grenada and the siege of Savannah, and with Motte-Picquet against Cornwallis. Knight of Saint Louis in 1781, he sailed under D'Entrecasteaux in his well-known voyage to the Indian and China seas. On his return he was made a member of the Royal Academy of Marine, and read before that body his journal of the voyage. Chosen by D'Entrecasteaux as his second in command of the expedition which was fitted out to search for La Perouse, he was promoted to the rank of post-captain. He died on the 6th of May, 1793, at Balade, in New Caledonia.

In Tasmania the Rivers Huon and Kermadie (corruption of Kermadec) bear his name; some small islands to the north of New Zealand and a bay in New Guinea were also named after him.

Several members of this old family, Comte Reges de Kermadec, Colonel de Kermadec, and others are still living in France; a small miniature of Huon as a child is in the possession of a relative.

Rossel (Elizabeth Paul Edouard) was born at Sens on September 11th, 1765, entered the navy in 1780, and served in the Antilles under the Comte de Grasse. Attached to D'Entrecasteaux in 1789, he so perfected himself in his profession that he was promoted lieutenant in 1789, and chosen for the expedition of 1791. On the death of De Kermadec he succeeded D'Auribeau in the command of the 'Recherche'. The death of the admiral, followed later by that of D'Auribeau, placed him in supreme command. As his

vessels were still detained by the Batavian Council of State, Rossel sailed on a Dutch vessel, taking with him all the papers and plans of the expedition. Captured by the English north of Shetland, and taken to London as a prisoner of war, he was released after some months. He was so overcome, however, by grief and horror at the murder of his mother on the guillotine that he did not return to France until the Peace of Amiens. At the request of Napoleon he edited and published the account of D'Entrecasteaux's expedition. He subsequently published a book on nautical astronomy, which was translated into several languages; in 1812 he was elected a member of the Institute of France, the Legion of Honour was conferred on him in 1822, and he was gazetted rear-admiral on his appointment as Director of the Department of Charts and Plans of the Navy.

In addition to the works mentioned, he published many other scientific treatises, and was one of the founders of the Geographical Society of France. Rossel was an artist of great distinction, and painted many pictures representing naval scenes and episodes, some of which are to be found in the museum of Versailles and in the Ministry of Marine at Paris. He died on November 20th, 1829.

Beaufort-Beaupré (*Charles François*) was born on August 6th, 1766, at Neuville-au-Pont, and studied under his relative Nicolas Buache, who was Geographer-Royal. At the age of 19 he was entrusted by the Minister of Marine, the Comte de Fleurieu, with the work of drawing the charts of the 'Neptune'. In D'Entrecasteaux's expedition he distinguished himself not only by his astronomical and geometrical observations and discoveries, but by the exactitude of his charts. Returning to France in 1796, he continued his work, and published the atlas of D'Entrecasteaux's voyages in 1807.

Napoleon, recognising his talent, entrusted him with the hydrographic survey of the French coast, the North Sea, the Adriatic, &c.

From 1816 to 1833 *Beaufort-Beaupré* continued his work, producing the French 'Pilot', a magnificent atlas in six volumes, which put all other charts out of date because of the precision of its astronomical, geodesic, and nautical observations. He also collated and corrected on a very large scale the whole of the charts of the French coasts in 527 volumes, which are deposited in the archives of the French navy. His pre-eminent work for navigation won for him from his English confreres the title of 'The father of hydrography'.

He was named Knight of Saint Louis and of Saint Michael, Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour, member of the Department of Longitudes, and his bust was placed in the great gallery of the Department of the Navy by command of the Emperor Napoleon III. two years before his death in 1854.

Willaumez (Jean Baptiste) was born on August 7th, 1763, at Palais, in Belle-Isle, the son of a coastguard officer. Left a penniless orphan, with five younger brothers, he educated them for the navy, in which service they all lost their lives. Embarking at the age of fourteen as a pilot's apprentice on the 'Bien-Aimé', commanded by Bougainville, he rose rapidly, until in 1781 he was pilot on the 'Amazon', commanded by La Perouse, who put him on board with a prize crew, to take to Lorient an English ship which he had captured. In 1783 a frigate of 32 guns in which he was serving was taken by the English 'Saint Margaret', of 44 guns, but next day was retaken by the French. Willaumez, who had received two severe wounds in the fighting, was promoted to the rank of senior pilot, although he was then only 19 years of age. Skilled in the practical part of his work, he wished to perfect himself in theory, and studied nautical astronomy and mathematics with this end in view; but he would probably never have become a commissioned officer had it not been for the Revolution, which in 1791 made him an ensign.

In the expedition of D'Entrecasteaux he was made a navigating officer, and the admiral promoted him to lieutenant, conferring on him the Cross of Saint Louis at a later date.

When the French ships were seized by the Dutch at Sourabaya, Willaumez was detained for some time, but eventually, with some of his companions, made his way to the Ile de France, which was then being blockaded by an English squadron. The French, sailing out with two frigates, defeated the English, and raised the blockade. Willaumez, who had been again wounded, was entrusted with the duty of carrying dispatches to France. Promoted post-captain in 1795, he was engaged in almost continuous fighting, and captured nineteen English ships in all. Officer of the Legion of Honour in 1805, and rear-admiral, he commanded a light squadron, and with a smaller ship fought the English three-decker 'Hibernia', commanded by Lord Cornwallis. After serving at the Cape and the West Indies he returned to Europe. Vice-admiral in 1819, Knight of Saint Louis and Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour, he was made a peer of France and given the title of Comte. He died in 1845.

He was the discoverer of the River Derwent and the various bays at its mouth. It is a matter of regret that his name is unknown and unremembered in the place which he discovered and charted.

Jurien de la Gravière (Pierre Roch) was born on November 5th, 1772, at Gannat, and joined the navy at the age of 14 years. Volunteering for D'Entrecasteaux's expedition, he was made ensign on the 'Espérance'; surviving the tropical diseases which carried off so many of his companions, he was taken prisoner when the Dutch ship on which he was returning to France was captured by an English man-of-war near Saint Helena. On his release he rejoined the navy, in which he gained rapid promotion, becoming post-captain

in 1803. In command of three frigates, he defeated an English squadron of six ships at Sables d'Olonne, in 1809, after three hours' hard fighting. Subsequently he was sent to retake possession of the Ile de Bourbon. Rear-admiral in 1817, vice-admiral and peer of France after the July revolution, he had conferred on him the honour of the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour. He died in 1849. He published an interesting book of memoirs—‘Les Souvenirs d'un Amiral’.

Amongst the crews of the two ships were three interesting people, the brothers Raoul, and the purser of the ‘Recherche’.

The elder brother, *Raoul (Joseph François)*, was born at Tréguier in 1766; joining the navy as a ship's boy he soon saw active service. Pilot on the ‘Recherche’, he discovered the island (29 S. latitude, 179 E. longitude) to which his name was given. Taken prisoner and detained in Batavia, the Cape, and England, he rejoined the navy in 1796 with the rank of ensign, and served in the expedition to Ireland. In the terrible fighting of 1798 he received seven severe wounds and lost his right eye, and for the second time was made prisoner. On his regaining his liberty he was, in 1799, promoted to the rank of lieutenant, and employed in the depot of charts and plans. Commander on the ‘Imperial’ in 1804 at San Domingo, he received three more severe wounds; at Guadeloupe he captured an English vessel; and despatched on a mission to Java on the ‘Medusa’ he defeated and captured the ‘Bellona’, which lost 72 men. Post-captain in 1812, he took part in the bombardment of Antwerp, and died in 1816 while on active command. His service record showed seventeen wounds and the loss of an eye.

Cape Raoul, on the south-east coast of Tasmania, was named after this gallant sailor.

His younger brother, *Raoul (Ange-Aimé-Marie)*, was born in 1769, and shared with his brother in the hydrographic work of the expedition under the direction of Beauvais-Beaupré. Ensign in 1797, lieutenant in 1803, he was attached to the general depot of the Marine in 1815, and continued to work under Beauvais-Beaupré. He died in 1843.

Girardrin (her real name is unknown), the purser of the ‘Recherche’, was the first white woman to visit Tasmania, and probably the first to visit Australia.

Her story was as follows: She was the daughter of a respectable merchant of Versailles, and having been seduced by some lover fled from her father's anger. Abjuring her sex, and dressed as a man, she managed, by means of a letter of recommendation, which she obtained from the sister of Captain de Kermadec, to obtain the position of purser. She was most attentive to her duties, but kept apart as much as possible from the rest of the crew, and resented any familiarity. On one occasion a young volunteer teased her on account of her hairless face, and said jokingly that she must be a

woman; considering herself insulted, she challenged him to a duel, and fought bravely, receiving a wound in the forearm. Notwithstanding the fatigues, the bad food, the scurvy, and the dysentery which laid others low, she not only kept on duty, but took an active part in nursing her sick comrades. She was left with Jurien de la Gravière and de Longuerue, the last of the expedition to sail for France. De Longuerue, whom she nursed, succumbed; then she herself fell sick and died, her death being as stoical as had been her life. The night before she died she told Jurien the whole history of her life.

LIST OF OFFICERS, SAVANTS, AND ARTISTS OF THE
FRIGATES 'LA RECHERCHE' AND 'L'ESPÉRANCE',
COMMANDED BY M. D'ENTRECASTEAUX

'LA RECHERCHE'

BRUNI D'ENTRECASTEAUX, rear-admiral

Lieutenants

D'HESMIVY D'AURIBEAU, made post-captain
DE ROSEL
DE CRETIN
LA FRESNAYE DE SAINT AIGNAN
SINGLER DE WELLE
WILLAUMEZ

Surgeon-Major

RENARD

Chaplain

VENTENAT, canon, naturalist

Midshipmen and Volunteers

MERITE, volunteer, made sub-lieutenant
ACIARD DE BONVOULOIR, midshipman, made sub-lieutenant
DE LONGUERUE, midshipman, made sub-lieutenant
FORESTIER, made volunteer
DE LAMBERT, made volunteer
DESLACS, made volunteer

Savants, &c.

BEAUTEMPS-BEAUPRÉ, hydrographer

L'ABBÉ BERTRAND, astronomer, disembarked at the Cape of Good Hope

LA BILLARDIÈRE, naturalist

DESCHAMPS, naturalist

BIRON, draftsman

LA HAYE, gardener, botanist

L'ESPÉRANCE'

HUON DE KERMADEC, commander, made post-captain

Lieutenants

DENIS DE TROBRIAND
 LA SEINIE
 LA GRANDIERE
 DE LUZANCAY
 LA MOTTE DU PORTAIL
 LE GRAND

Surgeon-Major

JOANET

Chaplain

PIERSON, benedictine, astronomer

Midshipmen and Volunteers

LEIGNEL, volunteer, made sub-lieutenant
 JURIEN, volunteer, made sub-lieutenant
 DE BOYNES, midshipman, made sub-lieutenant
 FILTZ, made volunteer

Savants, &c.

JOUVENCY, geographer
 RICHE, naturalist
 BLAVIER, naturalist, disembarked at the Cape of Good Hope
 ELY, draftsman, disembarked at the Cape of Good Hope

The following works have been consulted in the preparation of this paper:—

Voyage de d'Entrecasteaux envoyé à la recherche de Lapérouse, par de Rossel.
 Voyage à la recherche de Lapérouse, par le citoyen Labillardière.
 Souvenirs d'un amiral, par Jurien de la Gravière.
 Gloires maritimes de la France, par A. Doneaud et P. Levot.
 D'Entrecasteaux, par Le Baron Hulot.
 Personal communications from Colonel de Kermadec and others.
 The Cambridge Modern History.
 A History of Europe, by H. A. L. Fisher.

NOTE

In connection with the memorial to D'Entrecasteaux recently unveiled at Gordon, some controversy has taken place in the press in regard to his correct rank and name. There is no doubt about either, as documentary evidence is clear.

On 1st July, 1792, by command of Louis XVI, D'Entrecasteaux was gazetted a vice-admiral. There is in the transactions of *La Société de Géographie*, 1894, a monograph by Baron Hulot, in which D'Entrecasteaux is described as vice-admiral. The documents proving this are—

- (1) Archives de la Marine, D'Entrecasteaux dossier personnel.
- (2) La Liste générale des officiers de la Marine, 1791-95, année 1792.
- (3) Une lettre datée de 5 Brumaire an XIII, préservée in the archives of the Ministère de la Marine, dealing with his pay as vice-admiral.

The name de Bruni D'Entrecasteaux has been written in different ways—Bruni or Bruni, D'Entrecasteaux or D'Entrecasteaux. The orthography of his baptismal name and of his signature should undoubtedly be observed.

D'Entrecasteaux in his signature uses the D' (apostrophe).

His baptismal certificate, copied from the register of baptisms of the Parish of Sainte Magdeleine d'Aix, is as follows: "Noble Antoine-Raymond-Joseph de Bruni D'Entrecasteaux, fils de messire Jean-Baptiste de Bruni, Marquis D'Entrecasteaux, Président à mortier au parlement de ce pays de Provence, et de dame Dorothee de Lestang-Parade, après avoir été ondoyé le huit November, 1737, a reçu le supplément des cérémonies de baptême ce jourd'hui vingt-deux Janvier, 1738."



D'ENTRECASTEAUX ENFANT



LE CHEVALIER D'ENTRECASTEAUX (VERS 1774)



D'ENTRECASTEAUX (1791)



BEAUMÉPS-BEAUPRÉ (1808)