

A PRELIMINARY CRITIQUE OF THE *TERRA*
AUSTRALIS LEGEND.

BY JAMES R. McCLYMONT, M.A.

I. MISCONCEPTIONS DUE TO THE "NOVUS ORBIS."

In the Latin edition of the *Novus Orbis*, first published in 1532 in Basle and Paris, a letter from Lorenzo Cretico, Ambassador of the Venetian Republic to the court of Emanuel of Portugal, is translated from the *Paesi nouamente retrouati*, Vicenza, 1507, cap. cxxv. The letter treats of the Portuguese expedition to India, conducted by Cabral in 1500-1501, for although Cabral is not mentioned by name, we know that at the date of this letter (June 27, 1501,) his fleet had newly arrived in Lisbon, and was that to which the words of Cretico must apply when he spoke of the expedition "which the king sent most recently to India."

The letter begins with a brief itinerary of the voyage. They sailed along the African coast as far as Cape Verde, where they saw the Hesperides (Cape Verde Islands) and the coast of Lower Ethiopia, beyond which the ancients rarely travelled. From that point the coast trends eastwards until it reaches the meridian of Sicily; in latitude it is four or five degrees north of the equator; about the middle of it is the gold mine of this monarch (El Mina). A cape, called the Cape of Good Hope, rises further to the south, nine degrees south of the tropic of Capricorn. Thence the distance to our Barbaries is five thousand miles, coming towards our own shores. When you have passed that cape, the coast curves towards the promontory called Prasum, which the ancients, and chiefly Ptolemy, held to be the limit of the Southern Hemisphere; the land beyond he termed "Unknown." Thence their route was to the Troglodites and the gold mine called Sofala, where the ancients affirm that there is a greater quantity of gold than in any other place. Here they enter the Barbaric Gulf (from Mozambique to Mogadoxa), then the Indian Ocean, and finally reach the city of Calicut. Such was their route, which you will find to be almost fifteen thousand miles in length; but if you sail direct, it is less. Near the Cape of Good Hope they were driven by a south-west wind and discovered a new country, which they called the Land of Parrots—"Supra Caput bonæ spei lebegio vecti vento nacti sunt novam tellurem quam apellarunt

Psittacorum"—because they found these birds there in incredible number; some of them exceed a cubit and a half in length, and are of many colours; we have seen two, so that there is no doubt of the truth of it. When the sailors saw this coast, they believed it to be a continent, because they sailed for two thousand miles without coming to the end of it. Numerous naked and rather handsome men inhabit this country. *Novus Orbis*, cap. cxxv. *Exemplum literarum cuiusdam Cretici*.

This new land, discovered by Cabral, was, owing to the inaccuracy of the translator, located in a quite erroneous direction. If the ships were driven on it by a south-west wind, it must have lain to the east of their route, and it was placed by Mercator and other geographers west of the Cape of Good Hope and on a parallel somewhat south of it, and appears in Mercator's *Magna orbis terræ descriptio*; Duisberg, 1569, reproduced by Jomard, *Monuments de Géographie*, No. XXI., under the name *Psittacorum Regio*, with an explanatory note to the effect that it was discovered by the Portuguese when on their way to Calicut they were driven upon it by a south-west wind. Where the *Novus Orbis* has "lebegio vecti vento," Mercator's map has "lebegio vento appulsi." Cornelis de Jode says nothing about the direction of the wind, but simply that the *Psittacorum Regio*, which he places S.W. of the Cape of Good Hope, was so called by the Portuguese on account of the incredible size of these birds in that country, and on another map that the Portuguese in rounding the Cape have seen "this southern land" (the *Terra Australis*) extending opposite, but have not yet explored it—"sed nondum imploraverit." Cornelis de Jode.—*Speculum orbis terrarum*. Antwerp, 1593. The maps entitled *Orbis universalis descriptio*, 1589, and *Hemispherium ab æquinoctiali linea ad circulum poli antarctici*.

A blind adherence to Mercator led subsequent cartographers to include this Land of Parrots in maps of various languages down to a comparatively recent date. M. d'Avezac mentions several of them. *Relation du Capitaine de Gonville*, p. 20. note; p. 22, p. 22, note.

This Southern *Regio Psittacorum* had, however, a synonym in a quite different part of the world. Johann Schöner's globe of the year 1520 bears the inscription "*America vel Brasilia sive Papagalli Terra*," placed between 10 deg. and 20 deg. S.; Petrus Apianus places in a similar position the legend "*Brasilici sive Paragalli*." *Cogniti orbis tabula*. Ingolstadt, 1530. How comes it that lands so far apart as Brazil and the legendary *Terra Australis* should be brought into conjunction? The answer is to be found in comparing the letter of Cretico, as translated in the *Novus Orbis*, with the version in the *Paesi*, published twenty-five years earlier. We

shall find that the cartographers were right or wrong in their location of the *Regio Psittacorum*, according as they took the one or the other of these texts for their guide.

The critical method of Kant has taught us moderns to place no faith in second-hand testimony, or in reasonings based upon plausible conjecture to which antiquity and authority have added a specious prestige. But in the days of the *Novus Orbis*, and even down to the confines of our own age, a conjectural theorising held the place which criticism now holds. The theory which taught the existence of an antipodal continent as necessary, in order to maintain the globe in a condition of counterpoise, is to be met with in a multitude of geographical treatises, in maps, and even, at a later period, in actual expeditions undertaken with the object of discovering the antipodal world—a striking instance of the influence of the philosophic upon the practical mind. When any fresh discovery was made, this favourite theory and the innate love of systematisation combined to induce geographers of the Ptolemaic school to identify the new land of fact with the old land of phantasy, and so a southern continent was pieced together out of the figments of men's brains and the inadequately recorded details of actual voyage. The compiler of the *Novus Orbis*, Jans Huttich, was, like his contemporaries, predisposed to adjust any fresh discoveries to the current misconceptions regarding the configuration of the globe and the distribution of land and water.

The *Paesi*, one of the first, if not actually the first collection of voyages compiled in modern times, was the work of Montalboddo Fracan, and was first published in Vicenza in 1507, and in Latin and German versions in 1508. The passage referring to the discovery of the *Regio Psittacorum* is thus worded in the Italian version:—"Di sopra dal capo d Bôasperâza uerso garbi hano scopto una terra noua la chiamâo d li Papaga." The words "uerso garbi" are those over which the translator has stumbled. They mean "towards the south-west." The German version has "gegê nidergâge auff d' seitê"—"towards the side of the west." The passage will run thus:—"Above the Cape of Good Hope they discovered a new land towards the south-west, which they called the Land of Parrots." With this indication of Cabral's landfall the above cited inscriptions of Schöner and Apianus agree, as well as the independent accounts given in Ramusio (i., 121), and in the letter of Emanuel to the Spanish sovereigns. (Navarrete, *Viages y descubrimientos* iii., 94.) Instead of lying to the east of the route to India the *Regio Psittacorum* actually lay to the west of it,—was in fact the Vera Cruz of Cabral, which appears on a map by Johan Ruysch in a Ptolemy published in Rome in 1508—"Univer-

salior cogniti orbis tabula”—under the name “*Terra sancte crucis sive Mundus novus*,” but which was known to French sailors as “*Terre de Brésil*.”

II. MISCONCEPTIONS OF FRENCH CARTOGRAPHERS.

At the time of the publication of the *Novus Orbis* a French geographer and mathematician, named Oronce Finé, had just published, perhaps in Venice, a heart-shaped map of the world,—the second of its kind known to us. It was entitled, *Nova et integra universi orbis descriptio*, and dated 1531. This map was issued a second time in 1532 in the Paris edition of the *Novus Orbis*. It represents a *Terra Australis* brought up to about 25 deg. S. in longitude 210 deg. to 240 deg. E. from Ferro, and bearing the legend “*Terra Australis recenter inventa sed nondum plene cognita*,” a phrase of which the “*sed nondum imploravere*” of de Jode’s map sounds like an echo. There is no *Regio Psittacorum* on Finé’s map, but there is what we have seen to be its true equivalent, a *Regio Brasiliæ*, transferred, however, from its true American position to the legendary *Terra Australis* without further note or comment, and as if to clinch the error, a *Regio Patalis*, or *pratalis* as well, that is, the country of silver, of La Plata.

This obvious and hopeless confusion of places was further augmented in the MS. maps of other French cartographers. Jean Rotz, Guillaume le Testu, Nicholas Desliens, and others, mostly Norman pilots, represent a country which they denominate “*Jave la Grande*,” midway between Africa and South America, and inscribe on it a number of names, some in French and some in Portuguese, and the figures of men and animals. That this *Jave la Grande* is only an imaginary place is admitted by one of the draughtsmen himself. In a MS. atlas, finished in 1555, and dedicated to Admiral de Coligny, who was then sending out a Huguenot colony to Brazil, are twelve maps numbered xxxi. to xliii., in which the space comprised between 1 deg. and 84 deg. S. is occupied by a fertile country. “But these twelve maps,” says their author, Guillaume le Testu, of the town of Françoise de Grâce, “are only meant to warn those who may voyage in these parts to be careful when they think they are approaching land. Further than that, all is imaginary, for no man has made any certain discovery there.” (Margry, *Navigations françaises*, p. 138.) The title “*Jave la Grande*” on these charts is derived from the travels of Marco Polo, who designated Borneo under the name “*Java*,” whilst the island known to us as Java was named by him “*Java Minor*.” (*Marco Polo’s Travels*, edited by W. Marsden. Book iii., chap. vii.) The coast lines and coast names are not, as Le Testu says, “all imaginary,” for they are in part derived from

the actual names and outlines of the South American coasts, with which, in some charts, the purely imaginary outlines of the *Terra Australis* of previous geographers are combined. Only the east coast of South America is inverted and so becomes the west coast of "Jave la Grande," whilst the east coast of "Jave la Grande," less salient in its physical features than the west coast, and therefore less easily identified, may be either inverted or simply transferred from the west coast of South America, or may be, as Le Testu says, "all imaginary." In some of these charts, as in the Dauphin map (about 1530), one of those of Jean Rotz (1542) and that of Desceliers (1550), the eastern coast-line ceases or becomes a vague featureless line at about 35 deg. S. The chart of Desliens (1566) prolongs that coast to about 65 deg. S., and gives to this prolongation features as specific as to the northern part of it.

By inverting the western coast line of "Jave la Grande" we find the following coincidences with the east coast of South America. Beginning from the north we have a "Grant Baye," and another unnamed inlet, probably representing the mouths of the Amazon and Tocantins. "R. Grande" in some of the charts forms a strait between "Jave la Grande" and an island named "Jave;" in that of Desliens it is a deep bay and unnamed. "Baye Bresille" in about 18 degrees S., may coincide with Porto Seguro, immediately to the south of which place, and in the same latitude as the "Baye Bresille," a "R. da Brasill" is marked on these charts. To the French sailors is due this name "Brazil," as the distinctive appellation of the country whence they brought brazil-wood to Europe. "The French alone," says La Popelinière, "called it 'Terre de Brésil,' in ignorance of what is above narrated,"—(namely, that Cabral had called it "Vera Cruz")—"because they found brazil-wood there in abundance, although it is only in one part of it, and that produces many other woods as well." *Les trois mondes*, iii. p. 16. verso. A number of names cluster round the vicinity of Cape Frio and Cape St. Thomé, such as C. Quiesco in Desliens, C. de Sr Drao, and C. de Grace in the Dauphin chart. The last is probably a Norman sailor's reminiscence of his native Havre de St. Francoyse de Grâce; the second may be mis-written for the name of some merchant adventurer—"sieur," in the language of the time. The next notable feature is the Havre de Sylla, between 25 deg. and 30 deg. S., apparently intended for Rio de Janiero. Desliens marks a Golfe des Ysles in from 40 deg. to 45 deg. S., resembling the Gulf of St. Mathias. If we so understand it, and if Havre de Sylla represents Rio de Janiero, then the River Plate has been omitted. A parallel to this would be found in the voyage of Diaz de Solis, who sailed along these coasts from

Cape St. Augustine to 40 deg. S., without observing the mouth of that river. The coast-line of Desliens is prolonged about 10 deg. south of the actual termination of the American continent. This excessive southing is characteristic of maps of that period and of that continent. Thus Schöner in his globe (1520) places Bahia 10 deg. or more to the south of its true position.

The intercourse of Norman merchants with Brazilian ports very early in the sixteenth century, gives us to understand how the outlines of that part of the American coast should have become known in Normandy; and the fact of the extreme ignorance of longitude, and how to ascertain it that prevailed at the period we are speaking of, combined with the confusion already existing in the minds of cartographers between Brazil and the *Terra Australis*, all this explains to us, in a great measure, how the South American coast-lines came to be transferred to so distant a part of the world. It can, however, only be matter for conjecture why Rotz and the others made an eastern coast into a western one. We only know that it was the western part of the *Terra Australis* that the Portuguese were supposed to have discovered, whilst it was, in all probability, the eastern coast of South America that was first and best known to the French.

The advent of French ships in Brazil about the time of Cabral's visit, or earlier, is well attested. Ramusio preserves a memoir written in 1539, in which we are told that "a portion of Brazil was first discovered by the Portuguese; and thirty-five years ago Denys de Honfleur discovered the other part." iii. 357, F. The results of an inquiry into the date of the first French traffic with Brazil were published in 1845, in the *Revista trimensal do Instituto do Brazil*, vi. pp. 412-413. "In the year 1504," says this journal, "the French arrived in Brazil for the first time at the Port of Bahia; they entered the River Paraguaçu, in that Bay, did their traffic there and, when they had done a good trade, returned to France, whence three other ships came afterwards. Whilst these ships were trading at the same place as the former ones, four ships of the Portuguese fleet entered the river and burnt two French ships; and took the third, after killing a number of their people. Some of them, however, escaped in a boat and found at Point Itapuama, four leagues from Bahia, a French vessel about to return home." The *Revista* is at fault in assigning to the year 1504 the earliest appearance of the French in Brazil. I do not require at this stage to ask where was the much disputed landfall of De Gonneville, but only to quote some remarks of his regarding the country at which he touched to freight his vessel on his way home from the "Indes Meridionales" of his six months' sojourn. "Then having passed the tropic of Capricorn and taken our position,

we found that we were furthur from Africa than from the West Indies, where for several years the Dieppese and Maloinese, and other Normans and Bretons have gone to fetch red dye-wood, cottons, apes, parrots, and other commodities; as the east wind, which we observed to prevail between the said tropic, and that of Cancer impelled us thither, it was unanimously agreed to go in search of that country, in order to load with the above-mentioned articles of merchandise, so as to recoup ourselves for the expenses of the voyage; and we arrived there on the day of St. Denis (October 10, 1504), as aforesaid." *Voyage du Capitaine de Gonneville*, par. M. d'Avezac, Paris, 1869, p. 104. This mention in the year 1505 of the West Indies,—the name by which South America was generally known,—as a resort since some years of French ships throws back their advent in that country to the end of the fifteenth or beginning of the sixteenth century. La Popelinière states—"The French, especially the Normans and Bretons, always maintain that they first discovered these lands and traded with the savages of Brazil, on the Rio San Francisco, at the place since called Port Réal. But thoughtless in this, as in other things, they had neither spirit nor discretion to leave a single public document to inform us of their designs, which were as lofty and generous as those of other people; thus it is that the Portuguese arrogate to themselves the prerogative of indisputable lordship there, in consequence of the action of Pedro Alvares." *Les trois mondes*, iii. p. 16 verso.

The illustrations of the native life of "Jave la Grande" are referable to South America. The llama—the sheep strong enough to carry a man as one old geographer describes it,—is frequently depicted. In one chart (Dauphin) it is harnessed and being driven along. The cannibalistic practices of some of the tribes are signified by Desceliers, by a drawing of a dog-faced man engaged under the direction of a woman in quartering a dead body, whilst a human limb hangs suspended from a neighbouring tree. This reminds one of Vespucci's account of the fate of a young Portuguese of his third expedition, and of the human flesh which he saw exposed in the villages. In the same map of Desceliers, under the heading "Angania," the inhabitants of that country are described as dog-faced Anthropophagi. The huts of the aborigines of Jave la Grande are in the Dauphin map identical with those of the South Americans, being roofed with palmate leaves, but they are without the hammocks of the latter, which were characteristic of the tribes inhabiting the north of Brazil. Desceliers has drawn clusters of anthill-shaped structures on his Jave la Grande, and on the West Coast of his South America. On Jave la Grande he has pictured the worship of the Sun, common to Peru and some

other countries, as well as the worship of cattle, both of which cults are ascribed by him to the Javanese.

The deer, of which numerous small species exist in South America, and the peccary *Dicotyles torquatus* and *labiatus*, are both portrayed. Perhaps both, certainly the latter, is represented as tame; the Indians of to-day keep it as a domestic animal. (Humboldt's *Travels in America*, ii. chap., xx.) Two species, at least, of palms are represented, one with palmate and the other with pinnate leaves; a tree of the former species, the *Corypha tectorum*, or roofing palm, is described by Humboldt as affording the Chaymas Indians the leaves with which they roof their huts. (i. chap. xx.)

The existence in France of a MS. chart as early as 1530, which shows the east coast of South America to about 25 deg. S., and which is derived from French sources, is thus no matter of wonderment. But the possible acquaintance on the part of the French with the western coast of South America, even at that date, is a matter on which we can as yet throw but little light. In these circumstances a passage quoted by M. Margry from the MS. *Cosmographie* of Jean Alfonse (1545), is not without interest. "La Grande Jave" says the writer, "is a land which extends to the Antarctic Pole and joins the Terra Australis on the west and the land of Magellan's Straits on the east. Some say that it consists of islands, but as far as I have seen it, it is a continent, and when all is said, the whole world consists of islands, for land and water form one body. The ocean encircles everything by means of arms of the sea, which are in the ball (pomme) of the earth. What is called Java Minor is an island; but Jave la Grande is a continent." In another place Alfonse remarks:—"There have been no discoveries beyond Java on account of the great cold under the Antarctic Pole. I have been in a place there where day lasted for three months, allowing for the reflection of the sun; I did not wish to remain longer in case night should surprise me." Margry, *Navigations francaises*, pp. 316-317. The only continental land to which this description can approximately apply is the west coast of South America. That coast joins the land of Magellan's Straits towards the east, and although there is no *Terra Australis* of fact with which it can be joined towards the west, there was a *Terra Australis* of fiction real enough to Jean Alfonse in the position required. At another part of his *Cosmographie*, Alfonse brings his "Grand Jaive" up to 21 deg. S., or about the latitude to which Desliens traces the eastern coast of "Jave la Grande."

Besides the French names on the MS. charts, of which I have spoken, there are others in Portuguese. The latter generally differ from the former, inasmuch as they are rather nautical than topographical, and correspond to the phrases

printed on the Admiralty Charts for the purpose of directing masters of ships where they are to look out for shoals, eddies, or other dangers. Thus we find *terre ennegada*, or *anegada*,—sunken shoal—and *baixa*,—shoal. This introduction of Portuguese nautical expressions is an indication of the superior skill of the Portuguese pilots of the time, which has left traces in the adoption of their language by foreigners,—as in the word *abrolhos*, breakers,—just as in our own day English nautical terms have been adopted in continental navies. But we know that the intercourse between Portuguese and French, as well as Spanish and French sailors, was from the fourteenth century onwards a peculiarly intimate one. Commercial privileges with French ports were accorded to both these nations. (Margry, p. 123 note.) On the other hand the vessels of Honfleur merchants had access to the port of Lisbon, and in 1503 three of these merchants, De Gonville, Jean l'Anglois, and Pierre le Carpentier, having seen at Lisbon the rareties that had lately arrived from the East in the ships of Vasco da Gama and Cabral, engaged the services of two Portuguese pilots who had been to Calicut, Bastiam Moura and Diego Cohinto, in order that they might despatch a ship of their own to the same destination. The two Portuguese accompanied the ship in its wanderings about the Atlantic; and touched at several points of the South American continent. Barros relates that a vessel from Dieppe, commanded by a Portuguese captain, Stevam Diaz, arrived at Diu in July 1527, and that in the same year another French ship, piloted by another Portuguese sailor, called "O. Rozado" or "The Rosy," was in the Indian seas and was ultimately lost on the west coast of Sumatra. (Margry, p. 192.) Similarly, French sailors sailed in Spanish and Portuguese vessels, and Navarrete preserves the names of twelve French companions of Magellan, the half of whom were Normans, or Bretons. *Viages*, iv. 12.

III. MISCONCEPTIONS ARISING FROM THE VOYAGE OF MAGELLAN.

A claim to the discovery of the *Terra Australis* has been recorded on behalf of Magellan in an atlas by Fernando Vaz Dourado, Goa, 1570, in which a coast lying to the east of New Guinea, and trending east and west with a little southing, bears the superscription "Esta costa descubrió Fernão de Magalhães natural portugues por mandado do emperador Carillo o anno 1520." This claim occurs also on maps by Rumoldus Mercator (1587), Ortelius (1587), and De Jode (1589), in the words,—placed on a northward projection of the *Terra Australis* immediately to the south

of New Guinea:—"Hanc continentem australem nonnulli Magellanicâ regionem ab inventore eius nuncupant."

From the facts that the coast-line so described is in the map of Dourado disconnected by an intervening scale of latitude from the rest of the map, and that it bears some of the same names as were bestowed by Magellan on places visited by him in South America, Mr. Major supposes that it is "a memorandum or cartographical side-note of the real discovery by Magellan of Terra del Fuego." *Terra Australis*, p. xxvi. The position of this coast on Dourado's map may have led to its being confounded with the north coast of New Guinea by Mercator, who adopts some of Dourado's coast names; but transfers them to the above-mentioned island. Amongst these are C. de las Virgenes, and C. del buen Deseo equivalent to Cabo Deseado, Magellan's names for the capes at the entrance and exit of the Straits. Some of the names used on the coasts of Jave la Grande much resemble others in the atlas of Dourado, and on a map by De Jode, entitled *Brasilia et Peruvia*, but they are placed by these cartographers in or near the Straits of Magellan. Such are Baia Fremosa in Dourado and De Jode, corresponding to C. Fromose in the Dauphin map, and in De Jode, C. Blanco corresponding to Coste Bracq, C. de las Baixas to Baye Bassa, B. d muchas islas to R. de Beaucoup Disles, and Costa dos Ilheos to Baye des Ys. This parallelism is suggestive of a community of origin, and raises the question whether the voyage of Magellan may not in some degree have contributed to originate the MS. charts of Jave la Grande.

It has been recently upheld by Mr. Petherick that Del Cano on his return voyage in 1522, sighted some part of the west Australian coast. (*Athenæum*, May 24, 1884.) This opinion is based on a passage in Galvano's *Discoveries of the World*, to the effect that that navigator discovered certain islands one hundred leagues beyond Timor and under the tropic of Capricorn, and further on others, all peopled thenceforward, when he was shaping a course which should carry him well south of the Cape of Good Hope. It is not impossible that in a zig-zag course Del Cano may have sighted some islands very near the Australian mainland.