

TRANSLATION OF FÉLIX DELAHAYE'S "BOTANICAL
CATALOGUE-JOURNAL" IN VAN DIEMEN'S LAND
(TASMANIA) JANUARY-MAY 1792³

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28 January-February 1792

The two chests delivered on 12 February to the officers for their eventual return to France on the next vessel, according to Monsieur d'Entrecasteaux's instructions.....

On the 23rd, three days after our arrival [?], I placed in tin boxes down in the hold of the vessel at larboard the remaining seeds and dried plants from the Cape of Good Hope, numbered 1 and 2. Number 1 is full of samples wrapped in paper; number 2 is full of samples and seeds, wrapped in the same manner. The lot is well dried and conditioned.

New Holland

Left Cape of Good Hope on 16 February 1792 at 1 o'clock in the afternoon. We set sail towards New Holland, at Cape Vanderdiemen. We sailed close to the Channel of Mozambique, where we experienced disappointment [?]
.....

We wanted to put into port at Amsterdam Island to collect some tortoises, but the wind did not allow us to. We came close to the Island of St Paul in the afternoon of 28 February; we saw fire, although it is not inhabited. It is believed to be fire from the sky, or some other vessel which had put into port. We did not stop since the wind was blowing strongly from abaft, and up to then we had experienced contrary winds. This island is situated at latitude 37 degrees South, and 45 degrees longitude. We then directed our route to the south. For most of the time we experienced wind from abaft, and very rough seas. At last we sighted land at New Holland on 21 March at 9 o'clock in the morning. The wind, which had been very strong, was now calm. We approached the land, which could be seen at a distance of two leagues, and into a large bay that appeared, but was unknown to us. At

³ Translation by Maryse Duyker. The text is based on the manuscript "Catalogue-Journal de botanique" held in the library of the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle (Paris), shelf number *Per-k-g-24*.

night it was nearly calm, and we anchored. We explored that region the next day and discovered a very good harbour, which was then unknown; and we remained anchored there for a month. During that time the vessels which were very battered were repaired. We took on water and timber, and a boat was sent to explore; a magnificent channel was discovered, through which we passed. This country has a very agreeable aspect. Close to the sea one can see low land which is covered with woods, and further into the interior a large chain of snow-capped mountains rises steadily. The tree that composes the forests is known under the name Calipsus [=Eucalyptus] by the English. It reaches a prodigious height. I have measured up to one hundred and 30 feet from under the branches that had fallen, to a thickness of 36 feet around (the trunk). This tree is evergreen, it has elongated leaves, white flowers, the fruit spaced in little groups on the branches; the timber is very hard and prone to crack when worked, and most of the trees

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are split at the heart. I believe that it is due to the land which is very swampy. Under the large trees the forests are thick with small trees, grasses, ferns, to the extent that in many places they are impenetrable and difficult to get through. Although with difficulty, we covered three leagues, collecting plants. The country is very fertile, and we found many plants, although the season was advanced

These woods are inhabited by savages, who are small in number. We did not see any in our first anchoring places.

But we found many huts constructed with tree bark, which are tied to props with a graminaceous plant very common in the area. It is shaped like a dovecot. The largest of those we have seen was about 20 feet in length by 10 feet in width and 6 high. Oyster shells are found near the huts. It seems that it is the kind of fish they eat most often, specially a species which is called *orurau* [=Ostrea?]. It seems that it is their main food, with lobsters. We found pieces of rather well constructed baskets in the huts, but they were rotten. When we passed through the channel, we anchored in the region in a large bay. We saw savages there, four in number, who ran away as soon as they saw us. One of them was tall, the other three were smaller. They cover themselves with kangaroo skins, the only quadruped that we have encountered. They are black, of rather tall stature, with woolly hair. They were sheltering in a hut, cooking *orurau*. They had a dozen baskets

full of fish, and their kangaroo skins, which they abandoned as they ran away.....

We left a can full of fresh water, and a few knives, handkerchiefs, some bread, cheese and a few small trinkets. We returned the next day. Nothing had been touched, although they had drunk the water in the can and eaten the bread. Since it was around the same time as the previous day, they were again cooking their dinner.

As soon as they noticed us they ran away. We did not have time to see them. We again left a few trifles. We returned the next day, they had not come back; their baskets and skins were in the same place. Since we departed the next day, we never found out if they had returned. Beyond fish which is named *gascon*, this place does not provide much more nourishment to man, other than dabs, a small shark, and a type of fish which is a kind of quadruped called a seal, which is very large. We caught one which weighed 300 pounds. The flesh is brown and tastes like hare when roasted. There are many oysters, and mussels and lobsters.

.....

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April-May 1792

There are lots of birds which are good to eat, among them small numbers of pelicans. We killed two parakeets. It is the most common bird, crows which are very large, a kind of thrush, quails and other small birds which are very tiny.

There are very few quadrupeds, we have only found one species which is called kangaroo, which is the size of a sheep. It has pointed front legs and forked hind legs, an elongated head with small ears, its hair the colour of ash and various shades. Vegetable plants which are good to eat are not large in numbers; there is a kind of *Apium* which grows on the edge of the sea, which we ate as a salad, which was rather good with marine cress [?]. As far as fruits are concerned, we have not found any. A type of fibre grows, which could be used to make cloth when cultivated. A kind of Liliaceae [?] which bears black fruit, which, when I cooked it, produced something like ink; it could be used as a dye.

A kind of casuarina is found, which reaches a height of 20 feet in the shape of an apple-tree. The timber has a red colour which would be beautiful for furniture. It grows profusely on the sea-side. It is named *bois de massue*.

Lots of aromatic plants are also found. The soil is usually difficult to cultivate; it is mostly swamp mixed with clay; the soil is poorer under the large trees. There are however plains that could be cultivated and which I believe could produce very good wheat. There are also a few sandy plains that are rather good. The temperature is approximately the same as in our southern provinces. It rarely freezes near the sea; this can be seen by the plants which are or seem to be always green.

On my arrival I sowed some cress which germinated well after three days; after eight days two men and myself tilled, with great difficulty, a piece of land measuring 28 feet square. I sowed plants suitable for the season, which are celery, chervil, chicory, cabbages, grey romaine lettuce, different kinds of turnips, white onion, radishes, sorrel, peas, black salsify and potatoes. I had large quantities sown everywhere in the woods, in the more open spaces and where the soil was more friable. It was not possible to sow any more in the soil which is very difficult to cultivate, and in the season which did not allow it. I sowed mixed seeds everywhere, thrown at random, where I believed they could succeed.

Translation by Maryse Duyker

Melbourne

TRANSLATION OF FÉLIX DELAHAYE'S JOURNAL IN
VAN DIEMEN'S LAND (TASMANIA)
JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1793⁴

**Second Anchorage at Cape Vandiemem
January 1793**

We renewed our excursions in the surroundings, and found many plants different from the ones we had already collected on one of our excursions. We discovered a plain which measured close to two leagues in length and half a league in width, on which we found a large number of plants.

On the 25th we landed in the morning, carrying food for two days in order to cross and inspect the plain we had discovered; but we were unfortunate enough to encounter very bad weather. As we continued our walk, however, we arrived at night at a cape which has been named Cape South West, where we looked for a place to sleep. Having made a fire we spent the night there, not in comfort, because we had never previously felt so cold. At last, on the 26th after a most uncomfortable night, we went to collect plants in the region. We met many kangaroos, a small quadruped, which is the only one that exists in the country, at least that we have seen. It rained a lot during the day, and at 7 o'clock in the afternoon, we were back on board, very tired and wet, without a good collection. We undertook a few more excursions in the region; and then, since we could see a large mountain which seemed quite close to the vessels, we got ready to leave to try to climb its summit where we were certain we would find many new items. We got eleven people together and

On the 31st we left for that important excursion, expecting to be away for four days. Travelling the two leagues across the familiar plain was easy, until we entered the woods which are impenetrable. We reached the summit of a small hill, climbing approximately a quarter of a league in two hours. We took the bearings of the large mountain on our North East. We fought our way through the forests, and it was becoming very hard, on account of the difficulty we were experiencing in penetrating the undergrowth. At two o'clock in the afternoon we had walked a distance of about one league,

⁴ Translation by Maryse Duyker. The text is based on a manuscript held at the Archives nationales (Paris), shelf number *Marine, 3JJ 397*.

when we stopped for dinner. After eating a bite, we kept going in the same order, that is: one was in front with a compass, and another to lead the way. All those who were not loaded followed; and those who carried our food and our equipment for the excursion trailed at the back on the more accessible paths. By 6 o'clock in the evening we had reached the summit of a small mountain with great difficulty. The large mountain was perfectly visible, but seemed as far away as from the vessels; and we were experiencing extreme difficulty in succeeding in this enterprise. The forests seemed thicker than ever. We could see a huge valley to cross, several mountains to climb; and they all appeared thickly forested.

Since from where we were we could see the sea, the bearings of which we had ascertained on the compass on the South West, we kept on with our march. We went down to the lower areas to find water and a place to spend the night. A quarter of a league away from there, water was found, and we built a hut close to it; we lit a huge fire and spent the night there resting rather than sleeping. Our excursion had lasted ten hours from the time we had entered the woods approximately one and a half leagues away. The day passed with reasonably good weather. Had it been raining, it would have been difficult to walk in the woods.

The next morning 1 February after a very bad night, everyone gave his advice on what route we should take to reach the summit of the large mountain. It was determined that it should take at least four days to reach the foot of this mountain, and since we had food for only 4 days, it was impossible for us to continue our route.

Since we could not work in this thick forest, we decided after considerable reflection to exit from it. We set off in the same order in which we had entered, but taking a different path, since the previous one would have required a great deal of climbing, which was very hard work. However the return path was not easier, since light rain had fallen, causing us to fall often, and it was just as painful for us to get out as to get in. We were concerned in case we had to sleep another night in these woods. We were however certain of having taken the bearings of the sea in the South West, but fearful of having been mistaken, we had someone climb up the trees frequently to try to discover the sea. But this turned out to be deceptive and had we not possessed a compass, we would never have got out. We stuck to our path, in spite of what those who had climbed on the trees were saying to us. After a lot of walking we came out at last utterly exhausted at two o'clock in the afternoon. We lit a fire to dry ourselves, since we had no dry

clothes after coming out of these woods which were so damp and after sweating as we walked in rough and inaccessible paths. After spending an hour to dry ourselves and resting, we separated. Out of eleven only six of us remained, the others went back to the vessels and we continued our research on the seashore. We slept in a hut which we had made a few days previously at Cape South West, but we did not sleep, since it was extremely cold.

2 February We set off at four o'clock in the morning, so as to cover as much ground as possible on the sea shore, but after travelling half a league we encountered a steep rock which blocked our way, and above which were impenetrable woods. Finally after a very great effort, we got through; but the men who were carrying our boxes could not follow us and we were obliged to collect plants in our handkerchiefs. After walking with great difficulty on the sea shore for approximately one league, we returned with hardly any plants. At night we went to the hut, lit the fire as usual, and slept somewhat better since the weather was milder.

3 February We set off to return to our vessels, still collecting plants. This four day excursion had not however been very successful, after the setbacks we had encountered. At last we arrived back at 3 o'clock in the afternoon with a ferocious appetite, since the food had started to run out. The following days were engaged in preparing our collections.

6 February We went ashore for a period of two days. Our excursion was directed towards the region where we had previously been lucky, as well as to inspect the garden which I had created. It was 5 o'clock in the morning when we left the vessels, Monsieur Labillardière and myself, and two men to carry our boxes. We collected plants all day in places where it was very difficult to pass through. At night we went near a large lake which we were already familiar with; and since it was not yet quite dark, we undertook an excursion in the lake region. In the evening we were in the habit of constructing a hut to protect ourselves at night; but we were so tired, that after eating a piece of biscuit and salted lard, which was our usual fare, we abandoned ourselves to sleep close to a good fire. We slept rather well, since it was very mild and the weather was kinder. During the night we heard the sound of branches being broken around us. We paid little notice, believing it to be one of those small quadrupeds which are called kangaroos.

7 February At four in the morning we got up to search for plants and seeds a league away from there, sending our two men to search in the opposite direction. Monsieur Labillardière and I left each with only our handkerchiefs

and a pruning-knife to cut our plants. Before leaving our two men, we had arranged a rendezvous at 10 o'clock; but an unexpected event meant that we were back at 8 o'clock, nearly halfway through our excursion. While we were gathering plants on the shore of the lake, one of us heard some talking. We drew together, and as we were behind a large bush, we remained silent for a moment. We heard a kind of talking. We were surprised, as we believed we were the only ones in the area. After listening carefully, we realized that we were listening to the savages talking. What surprised us the most, was that as we emerged from behind the bush which had been hiding us from them, they began to shout all together, uttering the word *houhou*; which really appeared to be a joyful shout. We were a bit nervous at seeing them so close to us, mainly since we were facing 40 savages, and our only weapons were a pruning-knife each. Since we were further than a gunshot distance away from them, we decided to run away as fast as we could, and join our men, who had guns, so as to be in a position to defend ourselves in case these islanders were troublesome. We crossed the woods in haste, and we met up with our men who could not believe that we had seen such a large number of savages. We proceeded however to load our guns with some cartridges, preparing ourselves to confront these savages and try to communicate with them. Coming out of the place where we had slept that night, which was in a hollow, armed with guns and an axe, we met 40 savages who ran after us as far as they could see us. They stopped quietly, forming two lines, the men in the front and the women and the children at the back. We signalled to them to come close, offering our hand in friendship. They came and offered their hands trustingly in return. We then gave them a few items like biscuits, handkerchiefs, vests, since we had more than one of these. We were facing 40 savages with only two guns, which could have been dangerous if they had turned nasty. We invited them to come and see the place where we had slept. They did not hesitate, and followed us with great trust. When we arrived and they saw our possessions, they seemed very surprised. We gave them a few more things, including a coat which I put on a girl; the latter, when she had it on her back, examined herself just as we do when a tailor tries a garment on us. We cooked sago and tea, but they would neither eat nor drink. They were surprised to see hot water. They seemed to be at pains to conceive what it was. We then made one of our men dance, and they seemed to have enjoyed this. When we fired a blank shot with our gun, they were terrified, especially the women, who ran away. However, after calling them back, we managed to convince them that we did not wish them any harm. They came closer, although fearful.

Monsieur Labillardière and I made one of them wear an old pair of breeches. This seemed to satisfy them. After spending two hours scrutinizing them, we perceived some kind of discontent on their faces. We judged that perhaps the gunshot had frightened them. This made us decide to go away. On seeing us taking our belongings with us, they showed astonishment. However, after some kind of signal which we did not perceive, the women and the children withdrew. As we were leaving our camping place, we saw them pick up their spears which they had dropped when they saw us, and give them to their women, together with the items we had offered them previously. Apparently it was to take them home. We made them throw one of these spears which they did with great dexterity at a great distance.

Eleven of them left the group and offered to escort us. We were very surprised that they were showing us the shortest route, while pointing out to us that our vessels were there. This led us to presume that they might have seen us get off the boat, and that they had been watching us since the previous day, since they made us understand with signs that they had seen us sleep during the night. This is consistent with the noise we had heard around us during the night, which we took to be kangaroos. The eleven who escorted us were the most robust. They came without fear, since they did not bring their weapons. We arrived back at our boat, arms locked, singing and dancing, but the boat was not there yet and I took them to the garden which I had created, which I found in a very poor state. All the seeds had nearly sprouted, but remained with their first leaves. I thought that it was the drought that had made them perish, since the soil was very hard. I only found potatoes. I pulled out several which were very small, and I did my utmost to explain to the savages that this root simply cooked on embers was very good to eat. I do not know if they understood. When we arrived back at the boats, we wanted them to climb in to take them on board. Three of them embarked, but the oldest ones did not want to go, and made the first ones disembark. We were therefore obliged to leave them behind. They made us understand, whilst showing us the sun which was very low, that they were about to retire for the night. We left them and arrived back on board at 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

8th and 9th [February] We remained on board to prepare our collections, the harvest of two days.

10th [February] We went ashore for an excursion in the region. The weather was reasonable during the day, but around 6 o'clock in the evening, the wind blew and it rained abundantly. We arrived on the seashore at 7

o'clock, when a boat was expected to pick us up, but we did not find it. We fired a few blank gunshots and lit several fuses to attract the attention of those on board. It was to no avail. After a lot of effort walking a distance equal to one and a half times the reach of a gunshot to the vessels, we returned to sleep in a hut made by the savages. The wind was very strong and the rain very cold. We lived in the hope that we would be picked up, since it was impossible that we could not be heard from the vessels. To add to our misfortune, we had used all our gunpowder, and it was impossible to make a fire. We spent the night in the most dismal situation. It was a vengeful act from the officer on duty, since we heard later from several sailors that they had heard our gunshots and our shouts. It was not the first time that such harsh treatment had befallen us.

11th [February] At first light the following day we found a way of lighting a fire by means of some gun-powder we had dropped the previous day when we had lit fuses, and this brought us back to life since we were all numb with cold. A boat was sent at 7 in the morning. Back on board we complained that there was no humanity in having allowed us to sleep ashore in such terrible weather. We were told that a boat had been sent on two occasions to pick us up, but we heard a contrary version from the crew. We spent the rest of the day on board. We left on the **13th [February]** and sailed through the strait that we had discovered the previous year. It took us until the **22nd** to go through the strait, and on that same day we anchored at Adventure Bay. We remained there until the **27th**. We collected more specimens in that place. While we were there, we discovered a small garden which had been started by the English. There was an inscription on a tree stating that Captain Bligh had been there in 1792, and that he had planted 7 fruit trees in the region. We looked around and recognized all the species, and one that had died. There were two pomegranate trees, a quince tree and 3 fig trees which had started to grow. They were very small and I pruned them and tilled the ground. There was also around there an apple tree which seemed to have been planted by the English. It was in a very bad state; I pruned it. Two trees were also found in the region, on which an inscription said that acorns and cress had been planted. We looked out for them, but found nothing.

On the **27th [February]** we sailed for the Friendly Isles.

FÉLIX DELAHAYE'S GARDEN AT RECHERCHE BAY

Légumes plantés par Delahaye à la Baie de la Recherche en 1792	Vegetables planted by Delahaye at Recherche Bay in 1792
du cresson allenoix (<i>cresson alénois</i>)	garden cress (as distinct from water cress)
du selri (<i>céleri</i>)	celery
du serfeuille (<i>cerfeuil</i>)	chervil
de la chicoré (<i>chicorée</i>)	chicory or endive
des choux	cabbages
romainegrise (<i>romaine grise maraîchère</i>)	grey romaine lettuce
navet de diferante espece (<i>navets</i>)	different kinds of turnips
oignon blanc	white onion
radis	radishes
oseille	sorrel
pois	peas
salsifi noir (<i>salsifis</i>)	black salsify (or oyster plant)
des pomme de terre (<i>pommes de terre</i>)	potatoes

The new cover illustrations for *Explorations*—particularly suitable for the present number—are taken from the first volume of plates (Paris, Briasson et al., 1762, folio) of the original Diderot edition of the *Encyclopédie*. They occur in the subsection of “Agriculture” devoted to gardening and show in particular a grand “jardin potager”. We are indebted to Richard Overell and his colleagues in Rare Books at Monash University Library for the opportunity to use this material.

W. K.