CHAPTER II
DRAWING THE PLANS

THE first known discovery of any part of South Australia was made in 1672. The discoverer was a Dutch navigator. He sailed along the south coast. The new land was called Nuyt's Land. It was so called after a person on board named Peter Nuyt. The honour of a practical discovery of the country belongs to Captain Flinders. In 1802 he surveyed the southern coast, and named its several points. Flinders' Range, at the foot of which these lines were penned, was named after the illustrious navigator.

The first white man to get a glimpse into the interior of South Australia was Captain Sturt. In 1829 the Government of New South Wales commissioned him to trace the course of the Murrumbidgee. A whale-boat was secured, and the necessary provision made. At the head of a party, Captain Sturt set sail. The trip must have been a most fascinating one. They were gliding down a stream on which no white man's boat had ever been launched; they were passing through country that no white man had ever seen. The journey had its difficulties and dangers. Here and there in the stream were "snags," – submerged logs, - against which the boat might strike; there were rapids to be passed over, with the possibility of being upset. These added romance to the trip.

After sailing some time down the Murrumbidgee the boat suddenly shot into a noble river, flowing from east to west. This proved to be what is now known as the *Murray*. It was so named by Captain Sturt in honour of Sir George Murray, Secretary of State for the Colonies. This must have indeed been a surprise. The excitement of the party must have been intense. On the adventurers glided, not knowing whither they went, wondering, no doubt, what other revelations were in store. Borne on the bosom of the noble river they sailed past giant gums. Away in the distance the kangaroo bounded. Occasionally they got a glimpse of some of the natives of the soil. At times they were very hostile. Covered with war paint, brandishing their spears, and sounding their battle-cry, they rushed down to the water's edge. After sailing about two months down the Murray they came to a vast fresh-water lake. This was the reservoir into which the river flowed. This body of water Captain Sturt called Lake Alexandrina, in honour of the Princess who now, as Queen, sits upon the throne. The explorers were now in one of the most romantic parts of South Australia. This was the happy hunting-ground of the blackfellow. On the banks of the Murray, and round the shores of the lake, he built his wurlies, held his corroberies, chanted to his piccaninnies, taught them how to swim, to throw the spear, and to track emus, kangaroos, and enemies. Here he caught his fish, and noosed and netted wild fowl. No wonder that he was both awed and angry when he saw his territory invaded by mysterious whites. The Rev. George Taplin, who spent many years amongst the blacks, in the early days, says: "I know several men who remembered the arrival of Captain Sturt, and they tell of the terror which was felt as they beheld his boat crossing Lake Alexandrina."

Passing over the lake, Captain Sturt discovered the junction of the Murray with the sea.

It was the discoveries made on the coast by Captain Flinders, and in the interior by Captain Sturt, that lay at the basis of the schemes for South Australian colonisation.

As all roads led to Rome, so the history of the Anglo-Saxon race everywhere leads to a national centre. For the colonisation scheme of this vast territory we must turn to England. We have to go back to the time when the "Iron Duke" was taking an active part in politics, and when the great men of Methodism – Buntin, Newton, and Watson – were at their zenith.

In 1829 a "National Colonisation Committee" was formed in London. Its object was to "explain to the public the plan of colonisation on which the new province of

South Australia was to be founded." This came to nought. In 1831 a second committee was forme. This also had to be disbanded.

An old print that lies before the writer, published by Ridgway & Sons, Piccadilly, in 1834, gives "the outline of the plan of a proposed Colony to be founded on the south coast of Australia, with an account of the soil, climate, rivers," etc. It gives the prospectus of an Association, the object of which "is to found a Colony under Royal Charter, at or near Spencer's Gulf, on the south coast of Australia." The public is informed that "a Committee sits daily at the office of the Association, 8 Adelphi Chambers, for the purpose of giving information to persons disposed to settle in the Colony."

The "whole of the purchase-money of public land," in the new Colony, "after defraying the necessary cost of survey and sales," was to be "employed in conveying British labourers to the Colony." Emigrants conveyed to the Colony were to be "young people, of the two sexes, in equal number." Preference was to be given to "young married couples without children."

Among other reasons why this part of the world should be colonised by English people, the following are stated: - "There is every reason to believe that the whole of extra-tropical Australia is free from endemic disease. The seaboard advantages of South Australia were great. The magnificent harbour of Port Lincoln would be the chief emporium for the trade of that region, and Coffin's Bay would eventually receive all the produce of the line of the coast to the west. It was expected that the country would yield coal, woods of various kinds, and bark for tanning. Salt fish would find a ready market in Peru, Chili, and the Isle of France. Wheat and flour would find a market in the Isle of France, the Cape, Rio Janeiro, and probably China. Tobacco, flax, hemp, and cotton were to be grown."

In the light of more than sixty years' experience it is refreshing to read the glowing anticipations of those who drew up the colonisation plan. The "magnificent harbour of Port Lincoln" is so far of little use. It was to be the "chief emporium of trade for that region." Unfortunately, all the trade transacted there can be done with a few small boats. Coffin's Bay, which was "to receive all the produce of the west," remains much as it was sixty years ago. The "export of salt fish to Peru, Chili, and the Isle of France," will be one of the surprises of the future. We have done something in the direction of exporting wheat and flour, but the "cultivation of tobacco, flax, hemp, cotton," are parts of the original plan that generations to come must fulfil.

We leave No. 9 Adelphi Chambers and go to Exeter Hall. It is June the 30th, 1834. A great number of people are making their way to the historic building. Carriages are driving up and dropping their occupants. In the manner and address of the people there is great animation. It is a meeting of the promoters and friends of the projected Colony in South Australia. About two thousand five hundred persons, including many Members of Parliament, are present. There is excitement inside as well as out. A man who has caught the radical spirit of the times desires to speak. He rises. "I wish to ask a question." There are cries of "No! No!" and great uproar. "What is the gentleman's name?" the chairman asks. The reply is: "I am Thomas Goode, of Kettering, Northamptonshire, and I repeat that I have a question to ask." (renewed uproar.) "I am in the hands of the meeting," the chairman says; "it is for you to determine what would be the more convenient course." Thomas Goode sits down. Robert Owen is present, and no doubt feeling an interest in his radical friend, steps into the breach. "I beg to ask," he says, "whether this is to be considered a public meeting, or a meeting of the friends of the system?" "Most unquestionably," the chairman replies, "this is a public meeting; and I may add that it is the object of all who are interested in the undertaking to make the proceedings partake as much of a public character as possible; but in order that a fair opinion may be formed, will it not be better

for the subject to be fully before the meeting prior to any gentleman entering into a discussion of its merits?" The chairman has evidently voiced the opinion of the meeting. There are cries of "Hear! hear!" and applause. Several addresses in favour of colonisation are delivered. The meeting is now thrown open. The stranger, who describes himself as "Thomas Goode, of Kettering," again rises, and walks to the front. There are cries of "Off! Off!" and much uproar. "I am one of the productive classes," he says, "who work early in the morning and late at night for the rich." Cries of "Question! Question!" "I congratulate the gentlemen who have formed themselves into a Committee for the purpose of advancing this association, on their success. I would say to them in the language of Scripture: 'Be not weary in well-doing, for in due time ye shall reap if ye faint not.'… Colonel Torrens has said that the gentlemen who sought the advancement of the Colony worked not for their own benefit, but for that of others. If this be true it is certainly a new feature in the plan. (Laughter.) … I am glad to know there is a prospect of success in the Colony…. I hope that the success of this Association will stir up the energies of the Government to make improvements at home. I contend that there is ground enough at home for all the people it has to support…. Capital does much evil as well as good…. Though the labourer produces wealth, the rich man puts it in his pocket. The poor labourer is left to starve." Thomas Goode continues in this strain, airing his socialistic views, till the patience of the meeting is exhausted. There are cries of "Question! Question!" "Off! Off!" and hisses. "Why, gentlemen," Thomas says, "I am ashamed of you; you put me in mind of the geese in my country."

Another person rises in the body of the hall: "I will move the adjournment of this meeting if order is not restored."

Again the pertinacious Thomas attempts to speak, but there is groaning and hooting.

The chairman rises: "It is my wish, and the wish of all connected with the management of this Association, that the freest scope should be given to every gentleman to express his opinion on the subject; and if the gentleman who is addressing the meeting will put remarks in moderate limits, I am sure that he will be patiently attended to." (Applause.)

"Thomas Goode, of Kettering," proceeds to unburden his soul, and concludes by saying, "I have worked hard. I have a large family. We had twenty children. (Loud laughter.) If I go to Australia I will take two of them with me. I know how to plough, and to mow, and to sow, and to reap, and all other agricultural operations. Besides that I can dig, and I understand well-digging, and the feeding of pigs and poultry, and if the Colony wants such a man as me, I am the man to go."

Thomas sits down, apparently well satisfied. Whether he came to the Colony or not, history does not record.

The chairman puts the final resolution to the meeting: "That amongst the unoccupied portions of the earth which form part of the British dominions, the south coast of Australia appears to be a spot peculiarly suitable for founding a Colony." This is unanimously carried.

The labours of the South Australia Association were successful. Much credit is due to Robert Gouger, secretary of the Association, after whom one of the streets in Adelaide is named. In 1834 a Colonisation Bill passed both Houses of Parliament.

Theory is easy; practice often difficult. It is one thing to draw a plan, and quite another to make the plan effective. So the promoters of the new Colony discovered. It was probably that all their efforts would be abortive. The draughtsmen had been very exacting. One of the provisions of the Bill was that the British Government should not be in any way financially responsible. The Board of Commissioners, in whom the interests of the proposed new Colony were to be vested, had to raise the necessary

funds. A large sum of money had to be borrowed; - £35,000 worth of land had to be sold before the plan could be made operative. This was the difficulty. It was not likely that shrewd capitalists would invest money in a Colony which, as yet, had no real existence. Some were afraid of a second South Sea Bubble. The land would not sell. Wreck seemed inevitable. On every hand there were rocks, and the winds were adverse. It was here that George Fife Angas – one of the Board of Commissioners – came to the rescue. To give the Colony a start he proposed the formation of a company. It was to purchase the necessary amount of land, and to send out implements and workers. The "South Australian Company" was formed; the necessary amount of capital subscribed. In this way initial difficulties were overcome, and the way was opened up for giving tangibility to the colonisation plan.