

5 Berens, Evgenii Andreevich Notes Kept During a Voyage Round-the-World in 1828-1830 in the Sloop Krotkii.

On 14/26 April, which was King George III's birthday, the Governor gave a ball and we too were invited. That evening the whole town was illuminated... The commonest dances here were the French quadrille and some ridiculous Spanish dance, which was performed incessantly all evening. The local maidens cannot abide the waltz. Many speak tolerable French, though, so I was seldom on the unfortunate position of having to play dumb. I discovered one secret way of holding a conversation with a lady even when we could not understand each other: I would merely recite the names of all our Russian officers who had visited Sydney before us. The ladies recalled them well, even informing us they had written the names down in their albums. I lunched once with a merchant named Doyws (Daws), who later took our captain into the interior of the country...

Van Diemen's Land is said to be a worse place than New Holland. The climate may be better there but natives sometimes harm the settlements and although officers with detachments are sent against them, little can be done. One officer who had been with a military detachment in Van Diemen's land told me the methods used to keep those natives at a distance from the settlements. A detachment is simply sent into the woods as if to hunt wild beasts; on spotting some natives, it surrounds them and kills them without mercy. But it not infrequently happens that the English themselves fall victim to those natives' revenge, for the accuracy and agility with which the latter can shoot their arrows is said to be remarkable. Proof of this is the fact that one particular soldier was killed by fifteen arrows, seven of which were around his heart. Very few natives now remain in the environs of Port Jackson. A passion for strong spirits had killed them off. Like Gypsies, they wander in family groups, the men dressed in various tattered European clothes, the women in something like a blanket. They nourish themselves on fish and mussels, spending the nights around

a fire on the shore. Even today, one can sometimes meet an almost naked man or woman on Sydney's streets... They are endowed with extraordinary sight and hearing, so the local English who hunt take them along instead of dogs. The natives point out game to the hunters at such a distance that the Europeans cannot see it.

Children born to European parents here are extremely healthy. They are usually light-haired, with pale faces and very lively black eyes. They have quick minds, good memories, and are very agile. Those of European settlers who keep to the customs and diet of their fatherland, however, are troubled by the same illnesses as their compatriots. Others die from the bloody flux or from some form of jaundice, which is rampant here.

During our sojourn here, an explorer returned to Sydney from the interior of this country. He had penetrated further inland than any previous traveller, one hundred and fifty versts in fact (100 miles), and had discovered a great number of new plants, quantities of bird species including two hitherto unknown parrots, two small rivers, and a native settlement never before seen by European eyes. The natives living there nourished themselves exclusively on fish caught in the rivers. The man himself told me all this, in the course of a dinner at the Governor's, but unfortunately it was not possible to expand the conversation further, since he spoke very poor French.