

Observations on the Streights of Magellan, and on the Patagonians, by Alexander Duclos Guyot, 1765 [Pernety 1771, pp. 262-266]

[Encounter with British squadron under Byron]

On Sunday the 27th, we had discovered three vessels coming from the West. On the 2d of February, seeing that they did not come into the bay, we set sail for the Straits of Magellan. The weather was rather changeable during our passage. On Tuesday the 12th of February, we had a prospect of Cape Lookout, on the Patagonian coast. After having tacked about, we found ourselves within cannon shot of a lurking rock as large as our longboat, which we had a great deal of trouble to get clear of, on account of the currents, and the roughness of the sea. This rock is not pointed out in our charts. On Saturday the 16th we observed three vessels steering the same course that we did. On the 17th we entered the Straits of Magellan, together with the three ships. On Monday the 18th, one of the three ships working to windward while we were at anchor, she struck on a sand bank. The weather was very fine. We sent our boats to her assistance, with an officer, with anchors and cables; but she soon disengaged herself, and got off without injury. We then found out that they were English. /•/

/•/ This was in reality Commodore Byron's small squadron. The fact is told in the printed account of his voyage round the world, in the following terms :

"At four in the afternoon, the master of the storeship (the Florida) came on board the Dolphin, bringing a packet from the Lords of the Admiralty to the Commodore. — He had likewise been several days in search of Pepys's island, but was like us obliged to desist. — To our great surprise in the morning of the second day, after we left the harbour in company with the Tamer and storeship, we discovered a strange sail, which indeed put us into no small consternation. The Commodore was inclined to believe, that this ship was a Spanish man of war of the line, who having got intelligence of our voyage, was come to intercept us; and in consequence of that surmise, boldly gave orders, that all on board the Dolphin and Tamer should prepare for a warm reception, by firing all our guns, and then boarding her from both ships; but while we were bringing to, and waiting for her, we found it grew dark, and we soon lost sight of her till the next morning, when we saw her at anchor, at three leagues distance, and therefore continued sailing towards Port Famine. We

however found that she still followed us, though at a great distance, and even came to an anchor when we did. On the 20th we were chiefly employed in getting up our guns; we soon got fourteen upon the deck, and then came to an anchor, having the Tamer astern, with a spring on our cable.

Thus busily were we employed in taking all the measures prudence could suggest, to defend us from an imaginary danger; when an unlucky accident, which happened to the storeship, showed that we had nothing to fear, and that the vessel, against which we were arming ourselves, ought not to be considered as an enemy; for while the storeship was working to the windward, she took the shore on a bank about two leagues from our ship. About the same time, the strange ship came up with her, cast anchor, and immediately began to hoist out her longboats, to give her assistance. But before they had come to the storeship, our own boats had boarded her, and the commanding officer had received orders not to let them come on board, but to thank them in the politest manner for their intended assistance. We afterwards found this to be a French vessel; and having no guns that we could see, supposed it to be a merchantman, who had come to those parts for wood and water. — On the 21st we got into Port Famine, where we moored our ships."

[Port Famine: friendly encounter]

On Wednesday the 20th, the English anchored in Port Famine, and we sailed on till the 21st, when we cast anchor at the distance of five leagues from the English, and called the place the Eagle's bay, as it has no name on the charts. The next day, being the 22d, M. de Bougainville discovering a very fine bay or port, at the distance of one league and a half to the South, we went there and fastened the ship to four trees very much under shelter, at the distance of a league from the French bay. We called it Bougainville bay. We took in some very fine wood here and shipped it conveniently, by hauling on board with a hawser the wood cut upon the shore. We stayed here till the 16th of March, it being all the time very fine weather. On the 25th of February, two English vessels, going to the South Seas, passed by us. On the 16th of March in the morning, after having left a French flag, hoisted upon a hut, and several clothes, kettles, hatchets, and other utensils necessary for the savages, we set sail. After having gone a league a calm came on, and we cast our anchor in Eagle's bay. On the 17th it being calm, M. de Bougainville met some of the

savages as he was out a-shooting. He went up to them, and they appeared very gentle. On Tuesday the 19th we set sail again; and on the 20th in the morning, the wind being against us, we anchored in Port Famine. On the 21st in the morning, some of the savages calling out to us, we went up to them. They expressed a great desire of coming on board: we therefore took six of them along with us, whom we entertained, and who did not appear to be much surprised. They are a set of men much like the Indians of Montevideo, having no other dress than the skins of sea-wolves, guanacos, and vicuñas; they appear very poor, have no taste for wine, but are very fond of fat. We dressed them in red clothes, and gave them several necessary domestic utensils; we then accompanied them to land; crying out all the way *Vive le Roi de France*, which they repeated after us very well. We left a flag displayed. They expressed much good-will towards us, giving us their bows and arrows. When we saw them they were painted white, and in spots, but as soon as we had given them some red lead, not cinnabar vermilion, they immediately painted themselves with it; and seemed to be fond of this colour. As we were returning to the ship, they saluted us with *Vive le Roi* in French, having remembered that expression; and then they hollowed after their own manner, standing all round the flag. As we got farther from them, they raised their shouts, and increased their fires.

This is nearly all I can tell you of these inhabitants of Patagonia. We did not land on the Terra del Fuego, I believe these are nearly the same kind of people as those who cross the Straits, in their canoes made of the bark of a tree. The first time we saw them, they had kinds of hatchets; but they took care to conceal them afterwards, as well as their wives and children.

[Departure]

At length, on Saturday the 23d of March, we sailed out of that famous strait so much dreaded, after having experienced there, as well as in other places, that it was very fine and very warm; and that three-fourths of the time the sea was perfectly calm.

It is remarkable that the sea ebbs as it enters on the northern side; we had a proof of this every day: in the middle the currents are distinguishable, but in the narrowest parts of the entrance they are very strong; they run at least two leagues and a half, and sink about four fathoms.

There is no wood at the entrance of the Straits, neither on one side nor the other. There are nothing but immense plains.

About four and twenty leagues up the country, both on the coast of Patagonia, and on the Terra del Fuego, the woods begin. We found very little game, and that much followed by the natives, very little fish, and in the places where we had been, none of those beautiful shell fish so much admired.

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Extract of the journal of Lieutenant Alexander Duclos Guyot, on board the Eagle frigate, in the Straits of Magellan, 1766. [Pernety 1771, pp. 270-285]

[...] On Sunday the 4th [of May], at break of day, we were about four leagues S. E. of Cape Possession. There is a ridge of rocks and a sand bank near Cape Orange. It extends a great way, so we were obliged to coast the land of Patagonia. Here we saw a fire upon the shore, and drawing nearer to it perceived some men on horseback, and many others on foot. When we came opposite to them, they called out to us, but we did not understand their language. We answered them with shouts, and hoisted out flag. Five of them followed us about two leagues round the coast, but night coming on we lost sight of them. They seemed to be good horsemen, managing their horses well, which were very active.

[...] We perceived about three o'clock in the afternoon [May 5th], that the sea began to enter into the narrows, the Moon being 26 days old; which would make the situation of the narrows E. and W. so that it would be high water there at twelve minutes past six o'clock on the day of new and full moon.

[Bay Boucaut: first encounter]

On Tuesday the 6th, the savages appeared about nine o'clock in the morning, and were kindling a fire on the shore by the small river Baudran. We hoisted our flag, and M. de la Gyraudais his broad pendant. Afterwards we both put our yawl and longboat to sea with men armed with muskets and cutlasses. In M. de la Gyraudais's longboat was an officer

with presents for the savages. In my yawl, we had seven sailors and three officers under the command of my brother. At eleven o'clock we saw them land, and some men on horseback who received them; which appeared to me a good omen of peace. Nothing particular happened till twelve o'clock.

My brother's account was, that the savages, who are natives of this country, were not the same as those we saw last year in Savage bay, and that they spoke a different language. There were six men and one woman who had but six horses, each guarded by a dog who never leaves them.

They received our people very well, coming up to them to show them where they should put into the shore and land. They did not appear surprised nor show the least sign of emotion. We measured the shortest of them, and my brother found him 5 feet 7 inches high French measure. The rest were considerably taller. They were covered with the skins of deer, guanacos, vicuñas, otters, and other animals. Their arms are round stones, whose ends are lengthened out and pointed. The round part is fixed to the end of a firing composed of several narrow straps, twilled and interwoven into a round form like the firing of a clock, and making a kind of sling. At the other end of the firing is another stone in form of a pear, not more than half as big as the other, and appearing as if it was wrapped up in a bladder.

They use these weapons chiefly to catch animals; at which sport they are very dexterous, as they showed our people by an experiment made in their presence. They have also other slings nearly of the same kind of construction. They manage their horses with great dexterity, and have a kind of saddle, very much like that we use for packhorses. These saddles are made with two pieces of wood, covered with leather and stuffed with straw. The bit of the bridle is a small stick, and the reins are twilled as the strings of their slings. They wear a kind of buskins or half boots, of skin with the shag [hair, Ed.] on, and two pieces of wood fitted to each side of the heel, joined together in a point, which serve them for spurs. Their breeches are very short drawers, much resembling those of the savages of Canada, and are of a very good cut. It is evident they have had some intercourse [dealings, Ed.] with the Spaniards, from their having a very thin two-edged knife, which they place between their legs. Their buskins are made like those of the Indians of Chile. They pronounced some words which were either Spanish, or derived from that language. On pointing out

the person who seemed to be their chief, they called him Capitan. When they wanted to smoke and asked for tobacco, they said Chupan.

They smoke in the same manner as the inhabitants of Chile, throwing out the smoke by their nostrils; and are extremely fond of a pipe. While they were smoking they cried Buenos, striking themselves upon the breast.

We gave them some new bread, and some sea-biscuit, which they eat with great appetite. The presents we made them consisted in some pounds of that red which we call vermilion: and some red woollen caps, which however not one of them could put his head into: these caps though very large for heads of a common size, were still too small for them. We also gave them some bedding, some hatchets, some kettles, and other utensils.

My brother put his pocket-handkerchief round the neck of the chief; who having accepted of it, immediately loosened his girth, made of straps twisted together like the girth of a saddle, having at each extremity a ball of stone half enclosed with leather. There was also another stone fixed to the middle of the belt, and a whetstone. He gave this belt to my brother, and fastened it round his waist, expressing much friendship for him. We gave them to understand we were going on much farther in the Straits, and they made us comprehend by signs, that they would go to bed as soon as the sun did, showing us at the same time that they would lie down, and making a noise as if they were snoring in their sleep.

As soon as our boats had quitted them and got out to sea, they mounted on horseback, and directed their course towards the place to which we had made them understand we were going.

They seem to be crafty, bold people, being more inclined to receive than to give. They wrap themselves up in beasts' skins sewed together, as the Spaniards do in their cloaks. Our people killed some partridges; saw some wolves, foxes, and a great number of rats, but nothing curious.

On Thursday at noon we cast anchor under the low lands of Cape Gregory, in 25 fathoms of water.

After dinner we put our yawls to sea to go a fishing and shooting. They came back in the evening without having taken or killed any thing,

excepting one mangy vicuña, which M. Gyraudais shot. There are numbers of vicuñas in this country, which is very beautiful. Our people saw a great quantity of foxes, wolves, and rats, and met with some few thickets of yellow wood, but no water.

[Further into the Strait: loading timber]

On Friday the ninth we set sail at day-break. At ten o'clock we got into the second narrows, and steered our course in order to pass between the islands of St. Elizabeth and St. Bartholomew. We afterwards anchored at 11 o'clock in the bay of Cape Noir, its point being N. N. W. 5 degrees N. where the wood begins to appear.

[...] On Saturday the 17th, we sounded the small bays to the North of St. Ann's point [modern Punta Santa Ana, Ed.], where we found some banks, extending far out.

On Sunday the 18th, we sent after dinner all our carpenters on shore, to cut some wood for burning and building; which was the reason of our being sent here, as well as to fetch away some trees for planting.

On Wednesday the 28th, M. de la Gyraudais being laden and ready, set sail at seven in the morning to return to the Malouine Islands.

[Port Famine: first contacts]

On Friday the 30th, in the morning, I perceived some savages upon the sandy island, which forms the South entrance of the bay where we had left them the year before, I went to them, and knew them to be the same savages. They were two and twenty men, without women or boats. Having no presents to give them, and not being able to make them comprehend me, I embarked again.

On Sunday the 1st of June, early in the morning, the savages made some signs to us; but the bad weather prevented us from coming to them. They made us understand, that they wished we should get into the river with our yawl.

On the 2d, two of the savages appeared at the bottom of the bay, calling out to us in their language. I sent an officer in the yawl, to ask them if they

would come on board. On the arrival of the yawl they fled towards the river beckoning us to follow them. The officer thought it more prudent not to do it, and came on board again. At eleven o'clock we saw them come out again in six canoes. They crossed the bay, passing within musket-shot of us, but would not come on board; they went and landed in a little creek under St. Ann's point. As I had put six men in this place to cut firewood, and the savages were very numerous, I immediately armed the yawl and the longboat, and went to meet them. At my arrival, some of them were employed in building their huts; others were fishing for shellfish, mussels, patellae [limpets, Ed.], sea-urchins, crabs, bucinna [type of shellfish, Ed.], taking all these only from the rocks. Notwithstanding this they have nets made with cat-gut.

After having renewed the alliance made last year, I distributed presents among them, consisting in some pounds of vermilion, some woollen bedclothes, small looking-glasses, chalk, knives, some cloaks, a hatchet, bread, &c. They would not taste any wine, I did not choose to offer them brandy, lest their acceptance of it might be attended with dangerous consequences.

Their company appeared to consist of twenty-six men or boys, and forty women and girls, among whom were a great number of young people. The Chief of them is called Pacha-chui. He is distinguished from the rest by a cap of birds' skins with the feathers on. When he receives any visits he puts it on his head, which is, no doubt, meant as a mark of his dignity. The presence of the men, who seemed excessively jealous, obliged the women to assume an appearance of great modesty.

I questioned the Chief as well as I could about his religion. He gave me to understand, at least I thought I comprehended by his signs, that they neither worship the sun, moon, men, nor animals, but only the heavens or the whole universe; this he repeated several times, always lifting up his hands joined together over his head.

During this time they continued throwing upon the fire, without any ceremony, all the wood cut down by our people. This obliged me to send my six men to cut wood at a greater distance from these savages, to avoid quarrelling with them.

They exchanged with our people some bows and arrows, and some



necklaces of shells in return for clothes. I then left them, and invited them to come on board. Four of them accepted my invitation. I made them dine with me, and entertained them in the best manner I could. They preferred bacon to every thing else. Their desert was a candle to each, which they devoured with great eagerness. When dinner was over, I had them dressed from head to foot, and gave them some trifles with which they appeared very much pleased; and then sent them to land.

In the afternoon I returned to the huts of the savages. The Pacha-chui came to meet me, and made me a present of a kind of flint to strike fire, like those which are found in Canada, appearing to be a marcasite of yellow copper [perhaps iron pyrite; all groups of canoe people valued it highly because of its scarcity. Ref. Bridges (1952), p.58, Ed.]. He afterwards distributed the presents I had made them in the morning.

One of them was continually muttering; I asked him the reason of this. He gave me to understand that he was saying his prayers, by pointing up to the heavens as the Pacha-chui had done in the morning. This seemed to imply that they worshipped some divinity, but I could not comprehend what the divinity was, nor under what title he was adored.

Both men and women have no other dress than the skins of sea-wolves, vicuñas, guanacos, otters, and lynxes, which they throw on their shoulders. Most of them are bare-headed. A bird's skin with the feathers on, covers their private parts. The men call themselves Pach-pachevé; the women Cap-cap. They taught me these names by showing me first their persons, and afterwards the parts which distinguish the sex. Both men and women are thin. Their canoes are ill-built, in comparison with those of the savages of Canada. The women are the persons employed in rowing and fishing. They have a number of dogs, resembling foxes; which they call Ouchi; and their canoes, Shorou.

It is to be observed, that the morning tides are always equal every morning; rise very little in open sea, and are only as the neap tides.

[Port Famine: relationship turns difficult]

On Wednesday morning the 4th, the savages made no scruple of burning five or six cords of wood, which our people had cut down, but they assisted in bringing the rest on board.

At noon the Pacha-chui came on board our frigate, attended by eleven men. I made him dine with me, and gave the others some biscuit, and a piece of tallow; and for their drink three pints of the oil of sea-wolves. They ate and drank all up with a most excellent appetite. I afterwards dressed the Pacha-chui, and giving some trifles to the others, sent them all on shore.

On the 6th, all the savages, pleased with the reception I had given their comrades, came in four canoes to pay me a visit. But as they had large fires in their canoes, I would not suffer them to come on board, at which they seemed displeased. I ordered them some biscuit and oil; and after dinner sent them back without giving them any reason for it.

On Sunday the 8th, the savages began to be troublesome: they stole several hatchets, some provisions, and clothes from us. As they seemed inclinable to theft and fraud, I took the resolution to let nobody lie on shore, and to submit to the inconvenience of having all the utensils and tools brought back, every night.

On Monday the 9th, the savages stole again some harpoons, hatchets, iron-wedges, and mauls. I complained of this to the Pacha-chui, and desired our tools might be returned, but to no purpose. I then gave them to understand, that if they persisted in these practices, we should treat them in a different manner.

Their boat, which had crossed the bay last night, now brought them a dying man, about forty years of age, who was exceedingly emaciated.

In the afternoon, our wood-cutters represented to me, that they lost a great deal of time in coming back to lie on board, and then returning in the morning to the wood: they therefore asked leave to lie on shore, I consented to this, desiring them at the same time, to treat the savages mildly if they came to visit them.

For this purpose, I placed a discreet person at the head of them, and with him his brother, a man of a mild disposition, and who, from being used to live among the savages of Canada, was in some measure acquainted with their manners: and after recommending it to them to keep a strict watch lest they should be surprised, I returned to the ship.

[Port Famine: mourning customs]

On Thursday the 12th, about four o'clock in the morning, we heard some noise among the savages. Three of their canoes, with a great number of women in them and some men, came up to our frigate. I gave them some pieces of bread, and some oil of sea-wolves, the greatest part of which they put into a kind of bladder they had brought on purpose, and drank off the rest. I would not suffer them to come on board, on account of their being so much addicted to theft, and because they had got large fires in their canoes. This day I observed, contrary to the common custom, that the men were not painted; only some few of them were painted black, which gave them a very frightful appearance. The women were all spotted with black, having their faces and necks bloody, as if they had scratched themselves with thorns. Two of their canoes doubled St. Ann's point going to the North.

On Sunday the 15th, in the morning, I went to pay a visit to the savages. Not seeing the sick man, I asked them what was become of him; they made me comprehend he was dead. The cries we had heard on Thursday morning were probably the marks of their mourning. They seemed all very much afflicted, and were all painted black, contrary to the usual custom; and the women appeared scratched all over, as if they had been torn with pins. I observed that they showed much regret for the dead man. I asked them by signs what they had done with him. They answered me only by lifting up their hands to heaven, repeating the same signs several times, in order I suppose to make me understand the deceased was there: from whence it may be conjectured that they believe in a future state. They would never tell me what they had done with the dead body. I am inclined to think they had transported it in one of their canoes, with which they had doubled St. Ann's point. I distributed some biscuit and oil of sea-wolves among them.

On Monday the 16th, I perceived two canoes of savages coming towards us, and all the rest going out of the bay. I put myself into our yawl, taking some bread and oil along with me. When I came near them, I made them a sign to follow me to land which they did very readily. I gave them the bread and oil. They broke up their camp, and those who staid behind were gathering up the remains of it. They made me understand that they were going to live at the distance of a league from that place, in one of

the small bays to the North of St. Ann's point, because the shellfish became scarce in the place where they were. The Pacha-chui was in one of the two boats, and was coming with an intention to thank me, and to apprise me of his departure.

[Port Famine: invitation to travel]

I then ventured to ask him, if any of his young people would come away with us, making him understand as well as I could, that I would bring him back in a twelvemonth. He answered by signs that he consented, and immediately presented one of them to me, who seemed satisfied. We then left each other, and I brought away my young savage with me, to put him on board, I dressed him, and entertained him as well as I could. The Chief went out of the bay to join his troop.

On Tuesday the 17th our savage seemed to be pleased with us; and even looked contented and cheerful. About ten o'clock, seventeen savages coming by land from a small bay which lay North of us, and where they were encamped, paid a visit to their companion. We went to meet them, taking him along with us; and I gave them some bread and oil for their breakfast. As we were going back, another of them asked leave to come on board to stay with his comrade. As the offer was voluntary I took him along with me.

Towards six o'clock in the evening, I perceived that our two savages were so melancholy as even to shed tears, and that they were constantly looking towards land. I was not at a loss to find out the cause of this uneasiness; and thought it natural that they must on reflection regret the resolution they had taken. Notwithstanding my desire of bringing them away, in hopes that I might afterwards receive some useful information from them, I determined to send them back, and restore them to that liberty which they certainly imagined they had lost. I made them get into our yawl, and had them conducted back to land. They expressed much joy when they came on shore, and desired they might go to their families.

[Port Famine: fatal attack]

On Wednesday, at 9 o'clock, they came to ask for some bread and oil. I ordered some to be distributed to them, and having assisted in loading our longboat, they went back to their first encampment. At four o'clock in

the afternoon they left us, making me understand that they were going to rest, because the moon, which they call Sercon was up; but that they would come back, and bring with them the two young men who had been on board of us. When we got back to our ship, we heard two guns fire; the signal agreed upon between us to call, for help, in case we should be attacked by the savages. I then suspected that our people were engaged with them. I immediately had our boats armed, and sent them to their assistance, but it was too late: the victory was already gained, and the savages routed when we landed. The affair happened in the following manner:

Twenty, or six and twenty savages, as we were told, came down secretly and silently through the wood behind the workshop; and three of them entered suddenly into the hut where our people were, who thinking that the savages seemed to have some mischievous design, placed themselves at the entrance of the hut to hinder the rest from coming in. They then attempted to force their way, and not succeeding fell upon our men, some attempting to seize their legs, in order to throw them down, and probably to bind them, being provided with large straps in form of slings, having at the end a dart about six inches long, made of a jagged bone; the rest beat them with large sticks. Our people, though they were surprised at so sudden a declaration of war, were not discouraged. They seized their cutlasses, and exerted themselves bravely against their enemies, destroying as many of them as they could; by which means they threw the savages into confusion and routed them: our people however were but seven against twenty-five; three savages remained dead upon the field of battle, exclusive of the wounded; three of our people were wounded; the master carpenter received several blows upon the head with a stick; another was dangerously wounded in the head with a cutlass; and his brother was cut on the hand with the same instrument, which has quite disabled him. The wounded were dressed as soon as they came on board. One of the three was afterwards trepanned.

On Friday the 20th, in the morning, I sent the longboat to fetch away the timber, and to bury the three savages in the same grave. After having raised the ground to a certain height, we placed their skins or cloaks, with their shoes on the top, that the other savages might find out the place where their dead companions lay; and that they should not think we had eaten them; which perhaps they might do, if they were unable to find the dead bodies.

[Cape Gregory: leaving - unable to make contact]

On Sunday the 23d, we were at the entrance of the narrows; and at eleven o'clock we saw several fires on the low lands of Cape Gregory. In coasting these, we discovered about 90 or 100 men, most of them on horseback, who followed us to the place of anchorage; thinking, without doubt, that we should anchor there. But I was prevented by the wind blowing fresh, and the weather being favourable for sailing out of the Straits. We made twelve leagues since morning, the savages making signs to us all the while. At nine o'clock in the evening we cleared Cape Virgin, and left the Straits. [...]