

Extract of the Journal of M. de la Gyraudais commanding his Majesty's Pink, l'Etoile, going from the Malouine Islands to the Straits of Magellan, 1766. [Pernety 1771, pp. 285-294]

I believe there is a greater distance between the Malouine Islands and the main land of Patagonia, than is marked upon the charts; for the Eagle found herself by her reckoning eighteen leagues ahead of the ship, as well in going as in coming back. We sounded frequently, and found sixty fathoms, mixed bottom, with white coral, and a gun flint, which was remarkable enough. Here we saw several whales, some sea-larks, larger than common, some penguins, divers, petrels, ospreys, and large gulls.

From the twentieth to the first of May we had thick weather, which hindered us from seeing land, when we were more than half a league distance from it: the sea seemed agitated as if we had been in a race. The water was here discoloured at eight leagues from the shore, but more so at the mouth of the Straits. At ten, the weather clearing up, we saw land, distance four leagues. By our reckoning we still found the Malouine Islands farther off from the main land, than is lain down by our charts.

On the fifth instant, about four in the afternoon, we saw a fire on the coast of Patagonia. Upon coming nearer, we saw seven men with their horses. We could not discern whether they were naked or clothed. When they perceived that we had got beyond the place where they had made their fires, they followed along the coast, mounted upon their horses, and dogs after them. Seeing that we continued our course, they shouted, but we could not comprehend their meaning. The wind and tide being in our favour, we lost sight of the Patagonians and passed the first narrows. It was a league and a half over. Between five and six we anchored in the Bay Boucaut, at three leagues from Cape Gregory, with ten fathoms water, muddy bottom of sand and small shells, at the distance of a full league from the land. One should not cast anchor in lesser depth of water; for the sea fell three or four fathoms in the night- time. The coast is well laid down in M. de Gennes' plan.

[Bay Boucaut: first encounter]

From the 6th to the 7th, in the night, we again saw fires on the Patagonian coast. At eight o'clock this fire was of one side of us, and we

distinguished some Patagonians on shore, by means of our spying glasses. The Eagle and myself put out our yawls to sea, and sent them with fifteen men well armed, including the officer, to the spot where we saw seven of the savages. They paid our people some compliment in their own language. Our seamen could not understand them; but imagined their faces and behaviour expressed a satisfaction at seeing us. After the first compliments, they conducted our people to their fires.

Here they examined the Patagonians at their leisure, and found them to be men of the highest stature: the least of them was five feet seven inches (French measure), and of a bulk beyond the proportion of their height, which made them appear less tall than they are. They have large strong limbs, and broad faces; their complexion is extremely tanned, their forehead high, their nose flat and broad; their cheeks are full, and their mouth large, their teeth are very white, and well ranged, and their hair black. They are stronger than our Europeans of the same size.

The words they pronounced were, Echoura, Chaoa, Didon, ahi, ahi, ohi, Choven, Quécallé, Machan, Naticon, Pito. These were the only words our people could gather, while they were warming themselves at their fires.

M. de St. Simon, an officer, who by order of the ministry embarked with us for the Malouine Islands with presents for the natives, acquitted himself extremely well of his commission. He gave them some harpoons, bludgeons, bedding, woollen caps, vermilion, and in short every thing he thought would be most agreeable to them. They appeared very well pleased.

They are clothed with the skins of guanacos, vicuñas [this is puzzling: the present-day vicuña does not range this far south, Ed.], and other animals, sewed together in form of square cloaks which reach below the calf of the leg almost to the ankle. They have a sort of buskins or half-boots, made of the same skins, with the shag on the inside, as it is also in their cloaks, which are very well sewed together in regular compartments, and painted on the outside with blue and red figures, bearing a resemblance to Chinese characters. The figures however are almost all alike, and divided by straight lines which form sorts of squares and lozenges /•/. They have something like hats ornamented with feathers, much in the same manner as ours. Some of these hats resemble very much the Spanish caps.

/•/ M. de la Gyraudais received as a present from these Patagonians, when he visited them at his return to the Malouine Islands, several of their cloaks, some of their weapons, some slings armed with stones, and some necklaces of shells from their women. He brought them to Paris, and gave part of them to M. d'Arboulin, who had some of them presented to the King, and kept the rest. I examined them at leisure, and although I am rather more than five feet seven inches (French measure) one of these cloaks thrown on my shoulders, (as the Patagonians wear them) trailed on the ground at least a foot and a half.

Several of our people went a-shooting at some distance, where they killed a few partridges, and saw some carcasses of vicuñas.

The country they went over is uncultivated, barren, and dry. There is nothing but heath upon it, and very little grass. The horses of the savages seem to be very bad, but they manage them with great dexterity. The Patagonians made some presents to our people who were returned from sporting. These were round stones, of the size of a two-pounder ball. They are placed in a strap of leather, fastened and sewed to the end of a string of catgut twisted like a rope. It is a kind of a sling, which they use very dextrously for killing animals a-hunting. On the end, opposite to that which fixes the round stone, there is another stone placed, half the size of the former, and closely covered all over with a kind of bladder. They hold the small stone in their hand after having passed the cord between their fingers; and then making a turn with the arm, as in calling a sling, they throw the weapon at the animal, whom they can reach, and kill at the distance of four hundred feet.

The complexion of the women is tolerably clear, for they are much less tanned than the men, yet they are proportioned to them in size. They are also dressed in a cloak, wear buskins and a kind of small apron, which only hangs down half the length of their thighs. They certainly pluck out their eyebrows for they have none. Their hair is dressed in front, and they have no hats.

These Patagonians are ignorant of the passion of jealousy, at least there is reason to think so, from their encouraging our people to handle the breasts of their wives and daughters, and making them lie promiscuously with them, when I paid them a visit on my return to the Malouine Islands.

We gave them bread which they ate, and some tobacco for chewing and smoking. By their manner of using it, we saw plainly it was no novelty to them. They would not drink any wine. When we had been five or six hours with them, they grew more familiarised. They were very curious, searched our pockets, were very desirous of seeing every thing, and examined us with attention from head to foot.

We mounted their horses, which were equipped with bridle, saddle and stirrups. They use both whip and spurs, and seemed satisfied and well pleased to see our people ride their horses. When I had a gun fired for signal to bring our people back, they showed not the least emotion or surprise. When we went away they entreated us much to stay with them, giving us to understand by signs, that they would supply us with food, and though they had nothing to offer us at present, yet they soon expected some of their people to return from sporting. We answered them also by signs that we could not possibly stay; and that we were going directly to a certain place, which we attempted to point out to them, endeavouring at the same time to make them comprehend that we wished them to bring us some oxen and horses. We know not whether they understood us.

On the eighth, having set sail from Bay Boucaut, and anchored under Cape Gregory, we went a-shooting on shore, and the soil appeared the same as on the last spot. After we had walked about a league, we met with two herds of vicuñas, each consisting of three or four hundred, of which we could not kill more than one with a musket charged with ball. I also shot a Stink-bingsem [probably the Patagonian skunk, *Conepatus humboldtii*, Ed.], which I left on account of its offensive smell. I likewise fired at a wolf, but all these animals are very wild, and will not suffer any one to approach them.

[Further into the Strait: loading timber]

At half past six in the morning of the ninth, we got under sail in very pleasant weather. M, de Gennes in his draft lays down the second narrows East and West corrected by the globe, but he has marked it two points too much to the West. I would advise to keep the Patagonian shore till you come to the North and South of Elizabeth's Island; on account of the strong tide which runs upon St. Bartholomew and Lyon Islands, and upon some shoals lying off those islands. We coasted close to Elizabeth's Island, till we came to Cape Noir [modern Cabo Negro, Ed.], where we

anchored in eight fathoms water, sandy and muddy bottom, with broken shells.

From Friday the ninth to the tenth, we kept along the Patagonian shore at the distance of a league and an half. The coast appeared woody, but on the return of our boat we were told the wood was not good for much. Being near a low point we sounded, and no ground at fifty fathoms. An instant after we saw the bottom, which was sandy, and at four fathoms water; this obliged us to haul off.

From the 10th to the 11th we had much wind, and foggy weather, with a very rough sea. As we were no more than five leagues from Port Famine, I determined to go and anchor there. The Eagle followed us, and we soon had reason to be pleased with this resolution, for a quarter of an hour after we came to anchor, we could not discern any object at the distance of half a cannon-shot from us, and the wind still continued blowing very hard.

From the 11th to the 12th, the fog and rainy weather continued. Having walked round the bay, we met with some fine wood, and discovered a very rapid river, on the larboard point of the mouth of the bay. This stream makes the sea as dirty and as turbid, as a river overflowing from abundance of rains.

On the water-side there were seven or eight huts belonging to the savages, which they had but lately quitted. I fired a gun, and hoisted our flag, in order to attract the savages from the neighbouring parts.

From the 13th to the 14th there was a high wind, followed by a prodigious violent storm, which ended in a great fall of rain, succeeded by snow and hail, which lasted till noon, when the weather grew calm.

From the 16th to the 17th, we met with some very fine wood, and sent an officer and thirty men on shore, to pitch a tent, and cut roads through the woods. We were constantly employed in cutting and shipping our wood till the 17th, when we unmoored, leaving the Eagle to complete her cargo, and bring up ours to the Malouine Islands.

[Cape Gregory Bay: second encounter]

From the 29th to the 30th, at ten in the morning, we saw a fire on shore, which the savages had kindled on our account. We steered towards the fire, and saw some men and horses.

From the 30th to the 31st, the night coming upon us unawares, we came to our anchorage by the light of two fires which the savages had made for us, one upon a mountain, the other upon the sea-side. We anchored in nineteen fathoms, black muddy bottom, with small shells.

At day-break the savages shouted, in order that we should come to them. I put my yawl and longboat to sea well armed, and with presents, I went on shore, where I found three hundred savages, including men, women, and children. Not expecting to meet with so many, I was obliged to go on board again to fetch some more presents.

From the 31st to Sunday the first of June 1766, the wind having driven our yawl from shore, which was empty, our people were under some anxiety for fear of losing it. The savages perceiving this, one of them who was on horseback, spurred his horse, and plunged with him into the sea, to swim after the yawl. He got hold of it, and brought it back to our seamen. Perhaps we who pique ourselves so much upon our politeness, affability, and humanity, and who call these Patagonians savages, would hardly have done so much for them, in a similar circumstance.

At seven in the morning the longboat went to shore with the rest of the presents, which the stormy weather had prevented us sending sooner. It came back with thirteen of our people who had stayed with the savages since yesterday morning. They told us that these Patagonian giants had treated them with the utmost civility according to their manner, and given them marks of the sincerest friendship, even so far as to invite them to lie with their wives and daughters; that they had given them some flesh of the guanacos, several of their cloaks, and some of their slings, and the women some of their necklaces made of shells.

They also made me a present of twelve horses, which I could not keep for want of forage.

The piece of civility most troublesome to our folks, was that of being obliged to lie promiscuously among the Patagonians, who often lay three or four together upon one of our people, to keep the cold from them, so

that their muskets and other arms became useless. They would therefore have had no resource left but in their pocket-knives, which would not have been of much service for defending them, in case of necessity against five or six hundred men, including women and children, and all of them proportionally of an enormous stature, both in height and bulk. Each man or woman, had one or two dogs, and as many horses. They seemed to be of a mild disposition, and very humane. It would be easy to establish a very profitable trade with them, for their horses, and for the skins of vicuñas, which are so much valued, and bear so high a price in Europe. The skins of guanacos are also excellent, though not so fine.

From the 7th to the 8th, a very high wind, rainy and thick weather. The sea was terrible, the wind blowing always by squalls.

From Sunday the 8th to the 9th, the sea was very rough, with rain, hail, snow, and fogs. At nine we saw land without knowing what it was: at noon we found it to be Sebald de Wertz Islands [extreme NW of Falklands archipelago, Ed.], which bore S. E. distance ten leagues.

On the 15th we cast anchor in Acarron bay [modern Berkeley Sound, Ed.], in the same place from whence we set out.