

## SELECTED WRITINGS OF ARTHUR BUTTON

### "FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF PATAGONIA"

... Punta Arenas, better known then as Sandy Point ...

"Do not go" I was advised by various persons. "You will die of cold, and misery awaits you there. You will get bronchitis or pneumonia. It is near the Antarctic: the climate is fog and rain. You will know nothing but ice and cold and terrible winds."

"You do not know what you are doing. There is nothing there. It is a land of barrenness. You will find that for hundreds of miles there is no grass, only tufts here and there. It is fit only for cold-blooded Indians, who keep a fire perpetually burning: hundreds of them, all over the land and in their boats, when changing camp; them, and the sheep that have wool on their backs to keep them warm."

"It is not fit for civilized man, for he soon dies, if he does not return to a warmer climate."

"You say there are sheep farms? Then they must have lambs; and surely, if lambs are born and reared, man can live."

"Yes, but they quickly have wool, and so do not feel like a human being."

"I can live, I tell you."

### Little Public Interest in Colonization

It was all in the newspaper here in Buenos Aires, with photos of snow metres deep, which lay for months. They put the land up for colonisation, and the Government could get no one: only a few were interested in the land. The climate was too terrible to live in: the few that did have interest got the land at their own offer price.

The papers gave a good clear account of what they may expect. There were photos to prove what they wrote about. The Government was very fair: there could be no charge against them if results were bad. Such were the ideas in Buenos Aires, a near neighbour and administrator of Patagonia.

I do not pretend to have superior knowledge, but I think that at that time (42 years ago) people in Buenos Aires, like in Santiago, knew very little about climate, or the value of these lands and their possibility. Also I think the articles in the papers had been written specially to devalue the land.

## Arrival in Punta Arenas

However, first port of call -- Falkland Islands, Port Stanley. Magnificent weather all the days to Punta Arenas; air a little crisp, but sunny; no strong winds. I could not wish for better weather.

Except for one day's hurricane, when iron chimneys and zinc roofs blew off, this continued for at least a week, until after my arrival in Ultima Esperanza. We have had few latter ends of winter since then of such magnificent weather.

"You say the weather is good" says the /hotelero/. [hotel-keeper, Ed.]

"Yes, I was told it was not fit for human beings: always snow, always fog or rain. This is just the reverse of what I expected."

"You should have been here two weeks ago -- nay, one week. You would wonder and hope for the snow to go, for we have had snow drifts for some 3 months." And there was snow in holes and ditches, showing that he spoke the truth.

## First Impressions

My first impression of Punta Arenas, from the steamer, was that it was a straggling place and somewhat bleak; cold winds, not a tree to adorn the gardens of the houses; nearly all the houses of one storey or /mediagua/. [lean-to, Ed.]

But it impressed me as being in a splendid position to receive water of the best quality from artesian wells. There was a rise of land at the back, which reminded me a lot of Lincolnshire, where a 2- or 3-inch pipe-bore, some 20 feet to 40 feet down, gave water perpetually. Naturally the condition of the earth has to be considered. Later, on landing, I found it was considerably different; but surely there must be springs to tap, not far back.

Well, it was not difficult to land: I was asked to step into a launch, and in a few minutes I was on land. No questions, not even any police officer to ask "where are you from?", or questions of any kind. I was as free as a bird. No examination of luggage. What a change now from those days, and naturally there should be, since every class of evildoer can enter with intentions against Government or person. But I can say, the air, the people, the surroundings, all seemed full of freedom.

## A walk around town

It was not long before I walked around. The plaza was devoid of trees and plants: it had plenty of mud. Puddles in the streets; the houses and

stores were of all shapes and sizes, built of wood or iron. The Braun and Blanchard store was of iron, with a lean-to roof. There were, as far as I saw, four buildings of brick. Not one tree or plant did I see, nor scarce a flower in the house windows.

When I returned to the hotel, I told them I had not seen any trees, not even a fruit tree: neither apple nor plum. They laughed at my question. I should not see any fruit trees or forest trees in this part of the world: they would not grow. There were only the natural trees of this region, some four in number, and flowering plants or trees. Garden seeds would not grow.

Well, it was a fact that I did not see any garden produce. Of course, as it was the beginning of September, perhaps this was the reason. But their reason for there being none was that it was too cold. I said that the weather was equal to or better in warmth than in Lincolnshire, England, two weeks before spring season.

However, days passed, and so my walks became longer and farther inland. Patches of snow drifts I was little interested in, but the green vegetation, yes. I could watch its increasing greenness each day I passed. I found violet roots: that was a marvelous find. Naturally I thought of the blue, sweet-scented violet of my young days in England, when I went with my sisters on favourite walks in search of them. But no, neither the hotel owner nor his clients had noticed. They had no interest in the flowers: they seemed half-witted[?] one might say, only drink. Ever thirsty, they had not particularly noticed any flowers.

My walk took me to the gold mine one day. It ought I think be called a stone quarry, for the machine was turning over pure stone, scarcely a sign of sand or earth. Years after, here in Natales, I came to know the man working on the shovel. Then, one day, I received notice that he was frozen to death in bed, as firm as a piece of wood.

## Local Economy

I remember seeing coffee priced at 80 cents and \$1.20 a kilo; tobacco 20 cents; /papas/ [potatoes, Ed.] 50-100 cents a kilo; /capón/ [mutton, Ed.] \$2.50 (the whole sheep, with the head cut off); housing lots \$1,000-1,200 with /mediagua/; many houses for sale, up to \$800; more centrally, up to \$2,500.

Taking all things into account, it seemed a funny place. I saw no industry, except shipping. What they bought, and what they took away, was not really clear. There seemed to be no statistics, no entries in diaries and no interest. Ask about the climate, and you got no sound answer. No one knew, except that this winter was not as bad as the last, or the summer was wetter than the one before.

One thing I was pleased to see -- that was the 18th of September. [Independence day, Ed.] The plaza was the fairground, and the electors of Punta Arenas were trying to make it a success. I firmly agreed that

was right. They competed in the sports, trying to lance an apple suspended on a string, and other games on horseback.

Well, I was soon to be on board a steamer to Ultima Esperanza, when something happened in my inquiries. "Had no one grown anything new to the country?" "Yes, in Ultima Esperanza, oats had grown." It was a marvel, and caused a marvelous discussion in front of the bar. Between drinks, the oat-growing and the dinosaur (or Mylodon) was the talk of the town.

## Gold discovered

Another excitement was at hand. A fellow /pensionista/ [hotel resident, Ed.] had found in the back yard a piece of mineral, just large enough to see nicely. "Yes, it was gold." An old gold-miner lodging in the hotel had said so, but he was no more interested in that matter. Nor was I, for I saw that the piece was bright, as though it had been in someone's pocket a very long time.

However, the man was more than interested and, encouraged by the others in their drinks, was told to take it to the mineral assayer. "Ah, do" says the proprietor. "Tell him to come here. He can see the place you found it, and can say if there possibly is more". He went: then they talked. The piece of gold had no doubt fallen out of someone's pocket when going to the W.C. The assayer was a terrible boozier, and the men had better come early in the evening to hear what he had to say. The assayer was not a bad fellow, and readily stood drinks.

Presently he arrived, and then the fun started. "Yes, it was gold: it had been someone's trinket, crushed to appear a solid piece, and then carried in their pocket a lengthy time. There was nothing else in the yard except filth." But, naturally, plenty of drinks passed, and by the time he had finished assaying, all were fairly hot. More drinks, and more drinks, until the assayer was completely senseless.

One of the men helped him home, and next morning the bill was sent. He had drunk with others champagne, whisky, gin and port to some 120 pesos. These drinks at that time were whisky 3-50, gin 3, /oport/ [port Ed.] 3 pesos a bottle. The man did not know that he had drunk so much. Thank goodness I never accepted a drink. It was all a trick; and the assayer's wife was worried almost to death with his drunkenness.

Such were a great part of these persons that trickled into Punta Arenas. I noticed that there seemed to be more foreigners than natives, perhaps because the native was principally at work in /camp/. [countryside, Ed.]

## Voyage to Ultima Esperanza

Eventually, I was on my way to Ultima Esperanza. I thought the islets of the channel very beautiful, nearly all covered with trees; quite

different to some years later, when I passed to find that nearly all had been burned. Passing the Maria Narrows, after being in the shadow of the mountains, it opened out to magnificent sunshine and warmth. This, I thought, gave the answer to the dreadful ideas about the cold weather. We had scarcely entered into spring, and the weather was equal or better than in England at the same period of the year. For three weeks it had been good.

As the steamer was passing Natales for Puerto Prat, a boat signaled the steamer's Captain to stop. Upon its arrival, the boatman asked if they had brought flour. "Could they pass a bag into the boat? They had not eaten bread for weeks." The answer was "No: it was in the hold; they could not unload here. He must go on to Prat, or wait until they returned to disembark other stores."

And so we passed on. There were vast numbers of /bandurrias/ [the /black-faced ibis/, Ed.] overhead: they were making nests in the forest near the River Natales. They reminded me very much of the crow rookeries near our village in England. Also ducks of various kinds, white swans, and white swans with black necks. I thought this country too was splendid, for there were water springs far back inland. In later years, I saw I was right in my thoughts, for I got into a nest of springs at Dorotea when on a journey to Punta Arenas. This was before Natales was built upon, for there were only Stubenrauch's house and a hotel at this time.

Each hour that passed on the journey seemed to bring better and warmer weather. It was a delightful country. Perhaps I felt it better, and appreciated the weather more, because I had expected nothing but cold and misery.

## "THE ARGENTINE FRIGATE"

Ref. "/April 20 1951, Pacific Mail/" [the /South Pacific Mail/ was an English-language newspaper, published in Chile, Ed.]

I see that on this date of your Paper you are going to write about the Havens of Chile and West coast of America. I look forward to reading this account of yours and hope, if living, to buy the book, if published. In your foreword you mention this part of Chile, namely the settlement of the boundary with Argentina, and the possession of the Straits of Magellan. Perhaps the following may interest you and certainly ought to interest your readers, as there are few, very few that have hold of the facts. I venture to write of what I know and without hope of giving offence to a few young ones of the family. It is for this reason that I write the following.

When I was at school 75 year ago, I read that William Tell, a Swiss patriot and rebel, was ordered by the local Duke or King to shoot an apple placed upon his son's head by bow and arrow: no other course would

save his life. All Europe wrote of this in articles and in short stories, all Europe believed it. So often was the story repeated that it was thoroughly believed that it happened. I thought, all thought, him a great hero. "Shoot Father", cried the boy. "I am not afraid." Some twenty years after my short schooling I read that the story was a myth. I scarce could believe it. The account, read in my young days had so impressed me, and I then believed that all printed matter was true. I have found out since then that this is not true.

### The truth about Puerto Consuelo

And I should feel sorry for the person who comes along later, perhaps 20, 50 or 100 years from now and reads the account of the Port of Consuelo, and does not read of any protest or written matter giving the facts of the visit of the Argentine Frigate in 1896. If this story were kept to the canteen and drinking or private talk, perhaps it would not matter. But when put in a newspaper, medals put upon the person's chest, a tablet and monolith put up in the plaza, then the yarn becomes public and invites criticism. And so, like the William Tell story, if investigated, becomes a myth, after making clods[?] of many people. And I am sure it takes very little effort to do that.

I live near Consuelo, by the channel or sea, 300 yards to the nearest part of the channel in front of Consuelo (not my land) and say 3 kilometres from my house to Consuelo. There Consuelo is always within sight when I feed fowls or seek water from the well. My visits have not been as numerous as I should have liked, owing to having to have to pass up the canal, which is almost impossible in a small boat most times, and hard work. The person in this account has been dead some 10 years or more, and it is years since I visited there: in fact, about 2 years before he died in Punta Arenas, making 12 years ago. I mention all this to show I know what I am talking or writing about.

I suppose there is not a person living or dead that has heard the story from Mr. Kruger's lips more often than me. It was told me so often in my house, in his house, in my shed, in his employer's shed, on the launch, and in the local hotel or canteen: in fact, anywhere and everywhere. He had no other story to tell. A person got used to expecting him to tell the yarn again, and not a yarn at that: it only gave a little imagination and excitement, because at that time (1896) there was no traffic here, no life except wildlife. A hawk, fox or cat would give excitement, and one can imagine the pleasure it gave to have a visit of a steamer. This I know, for have not I been isolated for years; and a steamer passing up the canal gave life to the district, which is small -- some 5 houses it has grown into since 1896; and at that time, nothing but full grown Nature with Indians (in imagination). Now, I was not here in 1896 -- I arrived 10 years later -- and the news and adventures that passed prior to this date were told and retold by persons, always in the same words. There was no ambition to lie, and I felt as though I had lived here all the time.

## Alarm in Argentina

The day before I left Buenos Aires, I was advised by the office men not to go to Chile, as possibly the war was on new, and I was going right into the part where fighting was probably now on. The Chilean army was crossing into the part in dispute, I was informed they had read it in the paper, the correspondent had sent the report the day before. However I took no notice and arrived in Punta Arenas. The army I saw was one policeman on the street near landing, and one near the bank, near the plaza. Both had lassos around their waist and a baton[?] I believe there was not another policeman or military man in the 300 kilometres of territory to Ultima Esperanza until at least 1907, or later; and even then, 2 policemen only for at least 200 to 300 miles.

## Local Lore

The men of the sheep company would talk of what happened in the past. All had different accounts of various subjects: from the discovery of the Mylodon and the supposed existence of some now in the mountains. An expedition was now seeking the place where they lived (or just ended). It was reported that a tribe of Indians were living in the mountains, locked up in a valley like paradise. No one could get in, none could get out. Perhaps Allan Quartermain or Rob Roy accounts had worked in some one's brain, for from one high mountain peak they could see the Indians working, harvesting corn with animals as large as mylodons, and almost buried in the corn. And needless to say many had belief in the yarn.

But I can say that the story of the Argentine Frigate was one solid story, rightly told by all. It came to explore the canals of Ultima Esperanza, especially to see if there was a deep water canal or river running in or out of Argentine Territory. This was the understanding by all, and told and retold by numbers of newcomers to older settlers. It was a settled fact, well known.

## First Meeting with Mr. Kruger

In early 1908, I was introduced to Mr. Kruger, /capataz/ [foreman, Ed.] for Mr. Eberhard the explorer, of the Consuelo farm and port in Last Hope Inlet. Mr. Eberhard was /comisario / [sheriff, Ed.] with no police, and was the gentleman first to come by sea as a settler here. We were not together long when Mr. Kruger told me and a friend and wife. We sat by the fire and he told us the story of a visit by the Argentine Frigate. It broke the monotony, for as to then there had been only one or two steamers exploring, which they had not seen. I asked:

"What did it come for, touring or training the men?"

"No", he said. "It came to explore the canal, to see if a deep water passage ran into Argentine Territory."

Then I remembered what the men had talked of many times, and this was the Mr. Kruger who entertained the Frigate crew. He continued with the story that they passed to the beach, made an /asado / [barbecue, Ed.] , and with wine they had a happy time for some 3 or 4 days, taking photos (for it's a nice vista is Puerto Consuelo), fishing and rowing about to the finish of the canal. Then they went away. These were his words:

"There was no talk of aggression or discourtesy, nothing but good feeling and friendship throughout."

The questions asked:--

" 'How far off is the boundary of Argentina?'

They (Kruger) did not know exactly, but they thought 30 miles.

" 'It is strange. We had been some days with the ship steering North, Northeast, Northwest. The journey seemed long. Does the other canal enter Argentine Territory.'

" 'No, they did not know.' They had not been up there yet. but they thought the canal stopped at that high Mountain, Balmaceda.

" 'I like this. It did not go far inland?'

" 'Did they know of any canal or river that entered Argentine Territory?'

" 'No.'

This was the story for some 20 to 25 years, as told by Mr. Kruger. Then, in 1925 to 1935, things changed. Everything was different. Men who had worked under him now had farms. Men who worked in /almacenes / [general stores, Ed.] were occupying land or sending in /solicitudes/ [petitions, Ed.] for land.

"And I", he said, "have nothing. I was first here with the Boss, and done the worst."

"That is your fault. You should have taken up a bit of land before."

### Ironing The Flag

Now, in 1935 (or thereabouts), he was full of rheumatism and suffering. He could scarce stand or walk, and was about 70 years old or more. I noted in the newspaper he had sent in a /solicitud/ for 5,000 Hectares of land.

Sometime after this, I visited him, for he had notice to leave. He was pensioned off, as he could not any longer go around the land and manage the farm. Calling at his house, his wife Mrs. Kruger asked me in. She was ironing the Chilean flag. Turning the flag over then, she said:



"That has done that. I have patched it, I have stitched it, I have washed it, I have starched and I have ironed it. Thank God, I have finished with it. Now it is for Dick to send it off. It is all ready. I am tired. Send it off."

"Where to?" I asked.

"Dick (her husband, Mr. Kruger) is going to send it to the museum in Santiago."

"What for?" I asked.

Then Mr. Kruger, hearing us talk, stepped from an inner room and said:

"I am going to send it to the Government. I am going to make them get a move on if I can, and I think that will do it. I sent in asking for some land and I have not received any answer. This flag is the one I hoisted up the pole when the Frigate came, and it should move them."

"You are too late", I said. "Forty years ago was the time to ask, not now. You are too old to be bothered starting a farm. Your money will be lost in starting."

"That is what I say", says Mrs. Kruger. "He is too old, he can do nothing. The boys are all away. They have no interest in a farm."

"You have washed the flag, made it like new. That I think is wrong. I have seen flags hanging in the Cathedral, perhaps hundreds of years old. They were not mended. They were full of bullet holes sword cuts, mud, blood of battle. They were historic features of what they have gone through. Look at them, and it needs no words. You could visualize what had happened although they were mute. This of yours you have wiped it all out, it shows nothing. I do not know, but I think it is wrong to have washed or mended it!"

"That it what I said." says Mrs. Kruger. "But he wanted it doing to present it clean: so I did it as he asked."

Meeting with Mr. Eberhard Jr.

Conversation went upon other things, and a short time after he went to Punta Arenas to live. Then persons began to say, and papers began to print a terrible trouble over the visit of the Frigate. Mr. Kruger had repulsed the Argentinos. He had defended the flag and challenged them to pull it down. He would stand in blood, mud and \_\_\_\_\_ [blank in original, Ed.] up to his waist in protecting it. He was /comisario/ and had the right to fly the flag. Other wild talk was blown about. Then an officer of the Army pinned a medal upon his chest.

One day, after this reading, I visited Mr. Eberhard, his employer, son of Mr. Eberhard the explorer and pioneer, now in charge of the farm (his

father died or was dying in Punta Arenas at the time of the introduction of Mr. Kruger to me). In conversation, I said it was a pity that persons should say these things about Kruger. There was no aggression on the part of Argentina, or discourtesy. The history of the visit ought to be written, not have all this rubbish talked of.

"What do you want me to do?" he asks.

"Nothing" I said.

"Well, I am not going to Punta Arenas or Natales to tell them they are saying, writing and believing a lot of lies. If they want to know the truth, they know where to come to; and I am not going to chase Kruger about contradicting his statements, as long as he does not mention me or my family."

"But when the public takes the question up, it is for the public to see that it is the truth", I said. At that, I changed the subject.

#### Visit of a Friend

Next, some time after, I was visited by a person (Alec) who like me had heard Kruger's yarn so often that it was an expected yarn to hear when they met. He said and confirmed what I have stated. He never used the word aggression. The Argentinos came to confirm or deny the report that there was a deep water canal running into Argentina.

"The story now is invented by \_\_\_\_\_, [blank in original, Ed.] one who would say anything or do anything crooked to make money out of it", he said.

#### Visit of Kruger's Brother

One night, a short time ago, Kruger's brother came to visit me. I asked him in and to stay the night, as his home was some 6 or 8 hours ride.

"How are you?" I asked. "What is the news? Have you got any?"

"Yes, I have. My brother is letting people say that he is a hero, a big man. Why is he doing this? What big man? What hero was he to hoist up the Chilean flag, to salute a steamer? We did not know until later of what nationality. This story that people are saying, is all false. He did not run to the flag to prevent them from taking it down. They never questioned the right of the flag. They asked,

" 'What Territory was this? Argentina or Chile?'

" 'Chile' Kruger and men answered.

" 'Who told you to use the flag?'

" 'The Governor of Punta Arenas.'

" 'How far is Argentina Territory from here?'

" 'Some 30 to 50 miles.'

" 'Does this canal run into Argentina Territory?'

" 'No, it finishes a few kilometres up.'

" 'Does the other canal run into Argentina?'

" 'No, they thought it was not explored yet.'

" 'Did they know of any canal that entered Argentina Territory?'

" 'No.'

" 'Well, we will go ashore. Bring the flags and the mast.'

" 'What are you going to do -- pull the flag down?'

" 'Do you think we could not? We have near 200 men. How many have you?'

" 'Six.'

" 'Oh well, I think we could manage that. Come along to the beach, plant the mast, hoist up the flag -- Chile at top, Argentina underneath -- and a shout, hurrah.'

"Then the face of Kruger changed from fear to laughter.'

" 'Now for a drink and an /asado/.'

"Everything was courteous, questions and answers. They thought they must have got into Argentina Territory, for they had been some days always steering north by east, and north, north by west. It seemed a long journey, expecting to collide with some hidden rock, for the passage was thought to be perilous in those days.

"And what the people are saying, the /alcalde/ [mayor, Ed.] and the newspapers are telling, is a lot of lies, damn lies. I know, for I was one of the 6 men that were there; and I know that he (my brother) should not let these false things be said."

## The Senador's Visit

Some 4 or more years passed, when I visited a person who was ill. In fact, he had been in a responsible position for some 20 years or more and was soon to die. His first words to me, after bidding each other well, were:

"Did I know about Mr. Kruger and the Argentine Frigate?"

"Yes."

"I thought so. Well, I will tell you. I was asked some time ago to pay attention to a gentleman from the North. He was a /senador/, [senator, Ed.] a very able lawyer and a great writer upon Chilean history and events; and he was a gentleman in his actions. He asked me to introduce him to Mr. Kruger, as he had heard it said that he repulsed the Argentinos solo against aggression.

" 'I want to hear personally his account, as told me.'

This person went with him, and introduced him. They entered the house and my narrator stayed outside.

"I did not go in: I wanted to see the panorama view, for it is a nice view at Consuelo. But I got tired: he was about 10 minutes less than two hours before he came out of the house. As we returned, the /senador/ said to me:

" 'I am very sorry to have kept you waiting, and am very sorry to have used up your time. I asked them to ask you in, but they could not see you, they said.'

"Havers." [Nonsense, Ed.]

" 'I will tell you it is a journey for nothing, but to find that he is a liar. Not a single thing he said, as what I had been told, had any foundation. I am a lawyer, studied law, have been interested in cross questioning all my life. I know how to proceed, and in this case permitted him to say what he liked, until he finished. Then I questioned him. He would say anything, and then I cross questioned; and not a single thing he had stated but he contradicted himself. This is why I have been a long time. It is necessary, to give a chance to them to reflect. I can only say, there is no truth in what he or the others say as to the aggression of the Frigate. The man tells lies.' "

## A Mess of Lies

Well, I had not come out like that. But I do say, and I know when he invented this yarn of aggression. He and others, talking and drinking, have said, upon hearing of the Frigate journey, "Oh if it had not been for you, this land would have been Argentina's. You stopped them all right. Chile owes you a good farm for it. Send in a /solicitud/."

And the lies have grown into bigger lies, until they have made themselves believe a real /mêlée/ happened, and that Kruger saved the Territory by repulsing the Argentinos; and now I hear they have placed a monolith in memory of the myth. I have never read or heard of these deeds in 50 years of discussions over the boundary, by the no doubt

ablest men of both countries. Nor, I believe, has anyone enquired whether Kruger was /comisario/ or not. Nor have they asked Mr. Eberhard any questions over this matter. They have hatched the whole matter up in clubs and canteen, and so made one of the clumsiest lying accounts it is possible to make up. They have ignored the agreement arrived at between the two nations, of 1892, and the ratification of the agreement to put the boundary to arbitration; or that the Argentines could have planted a flag every metre of the way from a few kilometres outside of Punta Arenas to Ultima Esperanza, and possibly not been noticed for weeks or months, for there was no inhabitant except Indians.

How did Mr. Kruger become of the idea that he was a /comisario/? His employer, Mr. Eberhard the explorer, was /comisario/. At that time, 1896, there was little or nothing to do in this part; however, he was named for the position. He wanted to go to another farm, some large distance away near the coast, to see about buying some animals. Who he was to leave in charge troubled his head a good deal, for all men were about alike -- their chief ability was to consume drink. As he was preparing his horse to depart, Mr. Kruger hurried up to him to ask him what to do.

"Oh, you can guard the place until I return. I shall be away for a few days, perhaps two weeks." At that he left.

Some two or three days after, the ship came; and, like the impudent Doctor's door servant -- "the Doctor's away, I am the Doctor" -- so he, Mr. Kruger, said "I am /comisario/." It sounded big.

Such is the story of Puerto Consuelo, just as told by the narrator[?], without cutting anything out to make it brief.

## "WILD PLANTS"

The flowers interested me a good deal. Especially the geography of the plants. In the Castillo pampas there were wild pansies. Here I have not seen any, around Prat or the Peninsula. Nor have I seen the Winkie Tree here. [/lomatia ferruginea/ or /'huinque'/, Ed.] Yet, forty years ago, there was this interesting and curious flower tree, of beautiful leaf and flower form, on Sierra Ballena. A plant in the wild state, that suggests it would be a splendid tree to adorn a garden or plaza, again these are no more. One, I will call it a willow, is growing here yet, on Ballena or at Switzerland Bay. These are beautiful, bushy, large trees, with leaves large and broad, that are fit to adorn any person's garden or plaza.

Yes, Sierra Ballena in those days of forty years past, certainly suggested to your mind that you were in another country: semi-tropical; the vegetation was enormous; forest trees of giant size, and of a variety not found on this side. The Kenally Plant [/drimys winteri/ or /'canelo'/, Ed.] is of beautiful form and leaf: its white flowers were

like orange blossom, enough of it to adorn a great number of Chilean brides, for there were plantations of it in deep recesses of rock and soft earth. No wonder it was one of the Indians' sacred plants, both medicinally and for adornment. There are none growing on this side of the channel, or "sea", three kilometres wide, more and less.

Nor does a bush tree, that grows there in profusion. It is not the beauty of this plant that attracts you, but the flowers: like the "Lily of the Valley" form, with the shape of an umbrella, as it is generally named. [possibly, /*maytenus magellanica*/ or /*leñadura*/, Ed.] It has hundreds of flowers, and the scent is as sweet as the Lily of the Valley. It does not grow here, nor any of those mentioned, for possibly miles further up the channel. A small flowering plant grows thick, like as a carpet: it has a flower of Canterbury Bell size and numerous; also of colour pink or red. And a white flower, of not exceptional beauty, but of exceptional thickness -- a magnificent border plant. The strawberry plant and the cypress tree [/*pilgerodendron uviferum*/, /*ciprés de las guaitecas*/, Ed.] are abundant, but there is not one here; also a sister bush to the /*calafate*/ [/*berberis buxifolia*/, Ed.] ("*michi*") I think is the name) -- a plant with larger fruit, larger flower, and larger leaf: a plant that would be passed by an uninterested person as only a /*calafate*/.

These plants are not here, only on Ballena. "Why?" I ask, and so occupy my brain at night upon this question. And if I do not solve it, I at least have an idea and I gain, if only to prolong my sanity.

When I was in England, our neighbours had narcissus and jonquils. These flowers are a favourite: lovely scented and popular for the home, selling three to six for two or three pence. But, from my memory, they had one flower upon one stem. Here, on my side of the channel, and I believe in this region generally, I see them and have marked them for gathering: two to thirteen flowers upon one stem. I have covered the plant with brush, I have put wire netting around them and I have particularly marked or noted the place where one has grown seven to thirteen flowers. "The seed I will gather when they are mature." Then, after visiting them to see if they are ripe, I find they are all gone: birds, mice, hares, or whatever have eaten them -- not even a sign of the stalk.

I have always wanted to experiment with the /*calafate*/ but other work has always prevented me. And now I am plenty old enough to do my usual day's work without seeking other. I have encountered on various occasions a bush that produces a fruit -- the /*calafate*/ -- with only one seed; and on two occasions, a fruit without seed. I am sure it is possible to cultivate, by selecting and crossing this fruit to produce a fruit without a seed or with only one or two seeds: this fruit, I think, would sell well in England and Europe.

There is a plant that grows upon rocks and banks, some times of enormous size, with myriads of red flowers. [probably, /*anathrophyllum desideratum*/ or /*neneo*/, Ed.] It is rather nice in its natural selection of site. I have tried to move it at times, and found for my trouble that it grows from a small opening in rock, and that I could

insert no more than a knife blade.

## "SWANS, FLAMINGOS & DUCKS"

The swans were not equal in number to the water-hens, [perhaps a variety of /coot/, Ed.] but they too were countless from the point of Peninsula Jamón, near Isla Guanaco, to the end of Ultima Inlet. They were so numerous that one adventurer and writer, in his book "A Rolling Stone", had the idea that a fortune could be made by traversing the canals with a net, a mile long approximately, and drawing it in. I venture to say it would not answer, but the idea gives you the number of birds: there were thousands.

The white or /cuckeroo/ [/coscoroba coscoroba/, Ed.] swan is much tamer than the white and black [/cygnus melancorypus/ or /'cisne de cuello negro/, Ed.]: its sense of curiosity brings it near your boat or near shore, to where you are working. One day I was occupied for some four hours, cutting firewood near the beach. There were some eight swans, twenty yards from me. At this time, a friend came down to see me. We talked for some time, and then he asked how I reared the swans: wouldn't the eight eggs be too much for one sitting hen? I told him they were /silvestre/, [wild, Ed.] and were tame because I did not frighten or molest them. Those some two hundred yards away came sometimes: there were some 250 of them.

"They are beautiful to see."

"Yes, that is what all persons say. It's a lovely sight when they arrive at top of that bank, but I am always expecting someone to fire at them; and, if they do, the swans will certainly go and my taming will be of no use."

A few days later, a number of visitors came. The sight was magnificent, and they were very happy with the vista. Some few days after, a number of persons /medio curados/ [half drunk, Ed.] came, who wear too large a hat to cover their brains. These persons fired at them: they did not kill one, but the shot no doubt injured many. They flew up, like a white cloud, and away they flew.

That was in the year 1925, and not until this year, 1948, has there been more than four, eight or ten swans. It has taken twenty-three years for them to forget the injury: various times this year, I counted twenty to two hundred. People will not think that birds and animals suffer. But I am sure they inform each other, just like human beings.

## Flamingos

The Flamingo calls for a few days in early Autumn or Winter. Its number

is about the same as forty three years past: some five to twenty birds, many of them young. No doubt they have not the strength to keep up with greater flock. They make a beautiful picture, showing up their pink plumage with the white swans and black water-hens.

## Ducks

Well, at first arrival on this land, the numerous small lagoons were simply full of ducks. We have lived upon them, and the lagoons being all surrounded by bush and trees made it very easy to get near them. But I have not shot ducks for years, one reason being they are much fewer in number, and another I like to see them enjoying life just as we humans do. One thing is certain: if the duck and other birds decrease in the coming forty years as in the last forty years, they will be very rare and in many parts none. There was more variety than now. Of course, you must understand I write of here, around Peninsula Jamón. The proper name of the variety? I may be wrong, but the name I give is the Large Teal Duck. [perhaps the /yellow-billed pintail/, Ed.] The Small Teal. [perhaps the /speckled teal/, Ed.] The Mallard, [perhaps the /Chiloé wigeon/, Ed.] is a very pretty duck: this I have not seen for a great number of years.

Also another duck -- at least I call it a duck. I saw it once only, some thirty five years ago. The feathers were very much like the wild goose; it had a crest like a hen and it was so tame as to permit me to row my boat alongside of it and to note it well. [perhaps the /crested duck/, Ed.]

## Laughing Duck

Then we have a duck that used to be in vast numbers. We, or rather my children, called it the Laughing Duck. [perhaps a type of /ruddy duck/, Ed.] Its voice was drawn out like a person's laugh. It fed with water-hens, and came and left with them at the commencement of autumn and spring. In all the years I never saw it feed, nor swimming about as the water-hen. No doubt it fed at night, for in the day I never saw it other than head-under-wing and floating. It was extraordinarily inquisitive, and would come close to the boat or near the mole or the beach if you were working. It had no fear until you molested it: then it would dive so rapidly that even shot could scarce reach it. The colour of its feathers varied from a deep Rhode Island Red hen color to black, blue, and mixed, as if it were a cross with some other distinct coloured bird. Its feet are not web from toe to toe; the meat is exceptionally rich; it is not near so numerous now.

## Patagonian Barking Duck

And we have what is commonly known as the Patagonian Barking Duck. [perhaps the /spectacled duck/, Ed.] This is a large black duck, colour



blue slate, with white spots upon the head; of very bright plumage, and fewer than formerly.

### Steamer Duck and Logger Head Duck

This latter [probably the /flightless steamer duck/, Ed.] cannot fly, with all water [?]: it used to spend the night in a bay and small island in front of our house. They came from all quarters, flying over the house to settle in the sea. The air overhead was in one constant swirl and swish of the wings steadying, when ready to settle. This is one reason we noticed the change, for now we never hear or see them, in comparison to formerly when hundreds would come. In fact, it is no longer a night sanctuary, neither is the channel in front of the house, nor at back of house on right or left, and they are only met with casually in various parts of channel.

Here, and at the house on the other side of the channel, the ducks would bring their young to sea, flying from their nesting places and carrying the young upon their backs; the little ones would fall off in the garden, or near the house. The Small Teal was the worst, I think, for holding on. They were so swift in flight, and naturally had to put on more brake power to steady alighting. The Steamer [probably the /flying steamer duck/, Ed.] was equally swift, but has a much broader back, and its wings I think are higher on the back, perhaps through diving, so making a slight hollow and better for the young to sit upon when in flight.

### Tame Bird

The Logger Head Duck is a very intelligent bird, easy to tame. It responds to kindness even more than the ordinary house or domestic hen or duck. Kindness it does not forget, and any /molestia/ [annoyance, Ed.] it remembers. I have one now: it is some eight years or more old. It goes away for two to five months, many times. On return, it knows my call or its name, and races me to shore, swimming, when I am in the boat. It comes to me on land and sits at my feet or nearby, while I cut wood for the fire. It lets me pick it up or stroke it. It sits down beside me when caulking my boat. It jumps up for maize, when I tell it to jump. At the first time of me training it, it fell upon its chest with such a thud I thought it must have broken its breast bone. This it did several times, so I lowered my hand with maize: that way I taught it to stretch its legs and not draw its feet up, as in swimming; I gradually lifted my hand, and so it gradually used more force to jump.

These birds cannot fly: its legs and feet are used to one position, and not used to carry weight; not even in walking, for so little walking they do -- that is the reason it fell upon its chest. Its wing feathers are very short, and tail equally so: it is easy to see that for centuries or for thousands of years they have been used for underwater travel. They have been cut away by the friction of water, until inheritance has claimed its part. The feet: well, they are feet almost,

or perhaps equal to the swan: outside, from leg bone to toe, three inches; centre toe from leg bone, five inches; inside toe from leg bone, two and a half inches.

It scare ever [?] and only walks a few yards in wild state; but with me it wobbles along quacking, and cares to follow me some thousand yards to the hotel: but this I cannot permit, so I return with him to the house. Its feed is principally mussel and weed, and by my way of thinking it kept to this while its brothers and sisters took to liking fish and weed. The fish travelling, the bird took to flying to keep up with them and to search; also could be frightened by seals, otters, and sea hawks, their enemy. The two birds, Steamer and Logger Head Ducks, are almost equal in colour, the Logger being the heavier bird.

I had one, years past. It used to take short walks with me. Then one day a gentleman came. I suppose he thought there was too much happiness in the world, for he put a rifle bullet through the skin of its back. It was such a shock to it that it lay on the beach when we found it, as if ready to die. Balsam and good feed brought it back to life, but it shook him up in giving confidence to strangers. I then thought of a name and would call it by that name; and as strangers did not know or use a name, it made off on the appearance of a person. Then one day it went for some three or four month's adventure. One day, I drew my large /chata/ [small, flat-bottomed rowing boat, Ed.] on the beach. I sat under it caulking, when I heard something moving at back of me. Turning round, it was the duck: it had returned from its expedition. I spoke to it, and its excitement and talk and quack was telling me all his troubles, as if I understood. The expression of its eyes gives an abundance of thanks for a bit of kindness.

Well, all these ducks are considerably less common now than formally: and that is to be expected, when parties of persons take it as a first duty to shoot at them, without considering whether they can collect the killed birds or not. My idea is this: such persons ought to live in a lifeless desert at once; for certainly, as far as birds and small animals are concerned, at this rate of shooting their offspring will do so, in a very few years or centuries.

## Darwin's Theory

If my memory serves me aright, Mr. Darwin, in his book 'The Voyage of the Beagle', a voyage that all intelligent persons know was made in these parts, thought the winds here prevented the Logger Duck from flying: it got out of the custom, hence developed the swimming, and the wing feathers gradually shortened. So eventually, years or centuries passed and it became unable to fly.

This I cannot accept, for the reason I claim: the winds are too inconstant, and the intervals of wind and calm would surely in the beginning rectify any disuse of wing action. Now if, as I state, it feeds principally upon mussel and sea grass or herbage with other small water insects, then it is more content; mussel or feed is more abundant;

its feed is more constant; it has not to travel far in search for food; has less use for its wings for flying, and more use for a short flapper-like wing for diving and swimming under water.

Well, when now I think of it, I believe it is sixty-three years ago when I read that book of Mr. Darwin, and I may not have quoted his observations properly.

### Logger Head's Character

As to the Logger Head Duck's social character or companionship with other birds, and even with its own specie, I can only come to one conclusion, and that is -- its character is rotten. I have seen them kill a whole clutch of young goslings many times, and ducks and domestic fowl. They seem never content until all around them are completely gone or dead, even their own specie. Young or old, they're ever at war, and it is this murderous habit they have that keeps the numbers down, and possibly is the reason the channels are not over-full of this bird. The eggs are much larger than the goose, and I believe of better flavor. Their viciousness is such that both dog and cat would hurry from it, rather than suffer /molestia/ by it. The Logger Head is a great nuisance where fowls are, or any other domestic fowl.

### Gathering Eggs

We used to gather the eggs of this bird in large quantities. I remember the family going for an outing. The youngest child, just newly walking, found a nest of seven eggs. He wanted them for his mammy, to show what he had found. Lifting his pinafore up, I put the eggs in: he was as proud as the best, when he arrived at his mother, a fifty yards off. "/See what I hab dot mammy./" He opened his pinafore, and they all had hatched. Well, to see that child's facial expression: he was completely staggered by it.

### "THE THIEVING FOX"

One day a boat arrived with four or five men, and a dead man in a coffin; they were going to bury him on the Island near here. The man had been killed at Bories when unloading a steamer. There was no cemetery in Natales then. Calling at the house, they asked for tea, bread and meat to make a sandwich for the journey back in the boat. A few days before, I had bought a hammer, that I had left at the beach near my work. I naturally was confident that they would not interfere with anything, in view of the favour the wife did them. Anyway, they paid me by taking the hammer!

Now I wanted to make a gate. Not having a hammer, I had to go to Condor and buy one. The wind got up, and so it took a day and a half before I got back. Then, while putting my boards together, night fell. I would start to make it in the morning. My hammer I placed in a small but thick bush, well hidden, in case a fox came along. My two kilos packet of nails I placed in another bush, also well hidden from the fox, as I thought.

After milking, I went to make the gate, but that was not to be. I passed to the bush for the hammer; it had gone. Well, of all the things that could have happened! There seems no way out of hindrance to get on! How can I find it in this paddock so full of bush?! It may take me days. Perhaps it is a person that has stolen it. Then I noted the cow track to the milking pen, then a fox foot mark. That settles it: it is a fox, not a human thief. Following the track, I found the hammer; the handle bitten so badly I scarce could use it -- good only for light work.

Then I went to the bush for the packet of nails. They had gone and, as I thought I had hidden hammer and nails so carefully, the nails having gone was worse than the hammer. I could not find them in the grass. Passing around the bush there was another cow track, more worn, with less grass than the hammer track. And there a nail, and another, and several; and then I was pleased: I shall have some nails anyway. Time I will lose in the picking of them. Well, here goes! And I set to, on hands and knees. I picked for some number of yards; then, some twenty yards away, I found the packet. It had many teeth marks in it, showing that the fox had got a fresh hold of the packet as it emptied. A boy could not have done the job better.