

NARRATIVE OF FOUR VOYAGES

Captain Benjamin Morrell Junr.

CHAPTER VI

Strait of Magellan -- Face of the Country -- Hailed by a Troop of Patagonians -- Arrival at Port Famine -- History of the Place -- Ledger River -- Natural Productions -- An Excursion into the Interior -- Ruins of Philipville -- Cape Froward -- Indians of the Highlands described -- A Visit to their Village -- The Visit reciprocated -- Excursion up the River Capac, accompanied by two Chiefs -- Adventures in returning -- Filial Affection of a Chief's Son -- Character, Manners, Habits, Customs, Employments, and Dress of the Natives -- Their Canoes, Arms, &c. -- Their Want of Cleanliness, moral Condition, and probable Origin -- Enter the Pacific Ocean.

Terra del Fuego, generally represented as one large island, is in fact composed of several islands, the cluster being separated from the continent of South America by the Strait of Magellan. The passages between these different islands are very narrow, and have never yet been explored. The interior of the largest presents a cold, dreary, cheerless, and desolate appearance; rising into rugged barren mountains, the summits of which are covered with snow. One of these is a volcano, the fires of which occasionally brighten and illumine the snows, which they can never melt.

"Here it was," says Burney, "that the sailors observed fires on the southern shores of the strait, for which reason the land on that side was called Terra del Fuego." Another writer says, "Narrow channels, strong currents, and boisterous winds render it dangerous to enter into this desolate labyrinth. The coast, which is composed of granite, lava, and basaltic rocks, is inaccessible in many places. Cataracts interrupt the stillness that reigns there; seals sport in the bays, or repose their unwieldy bodies on the sand."

Notwithstanding the cheerless and forbidding aspect of this country, it is not destitute of vegetation or inhabitants. In the valleys are to be found several sorts of trees of a large growth, which are frequented by various kinds of birds. Here, also, a rich soil of considerable depth is clothed with beautiful verdure. At the base of almost every hill is a brook of good water, having a reddish hue, but not ill tasted.

The Strait of Magellan, at its eastern entrance, is between six and seven leagues in width, and has from fifteen to fifty fathoms of water. Many vessels have passed through this strait to the Pacific Ocean, though the navigation is said to be difficult, which is not the case. There are many good harbours to be found in this passage, and anchorage under either shore, all the way through; the bottom generally good holding-ground. Within the strait the wind never blows fresh from north-north-east, round by the eastward to south-east-by-east;

consequently a shelter from these points is unnecessary. Wood and water can be procured with ease, fish may be caught in great abundance, and antiscorbutic vegetables are found on both shores.

The rise of the tide at the east entrance is about sixteen feet, and about eight feet at the west entrance, running regularly each way, and not swifter than two miles an hour, excepting in the narrows, where it runs about five miles an hour. Violent gales are never experienced here from any quarter; the passage through is perfectly safe for vessels of any size, and the navigation is pleasant and easy. If the navigator have before him the latest edition of Arrowsmith's chart, he may avoid every difficulty, as there is but one dangerous impediment in the whole passage more than two cables-length from shore, that is not readily shown by the hand-lead. The danger alluded to lies about five miles north-cast of the narrows, and always betrays itself by the kelp or rock-weed which rises from it above the surface of the water. Vessels must keep to the north of this shoal, and leave it under their larboard quarter.

Ships bound through this strait may run day and night by keeping the north shore on board, until they come up with Indian Sound, and then keeping the south shore on board until they reach Cape Pillar, at the west entrance, on the Pacific coast. By following these directions, they will have the advantage of the prevailing winds, and keep smooth water.

On arriving at Cape Pillar, if the wind blow from the westward, and it is thought inexpedient to put to sea, vessels may come to anchor in a perfectly safe harbour, about three miles south-east of the cape, on the shore of Terra del Fuego. The entrance to this harbour is covered by two small islands, which may be passed on either side, in twenty fathoms of water. Then double a point which runs out from the land in a north-east direction, and enter the cove behind it, which extends to the south-west and west-north-west about two miles, and come to anchor in from four to ten fathoms of water, mud and clay bottom, and sheltered from all winds.

It would be tedious to the reader, as well as to myself, to enumerate and name all the safe and commodious harbours in this noble strait. Let it suffice, that there is such a one every five or ten miles, or equally safe anchorage for ships of any size.

Magellan's Strait is about three hundred and seventy-five miles in length, from its eastern entrance on the Atlantic coast to its western entrance on the Pacific coast. But let it not be inferred from this that the continent in this vicinity is of that extent from one ocean to the other, as the course of the strait forms two sides of a nearly right-angled triangle; a third side would measure the distance across this part of the continent; say one hundred and ninety miles. Terra del Fuego, from east to west along the south shore of the strait, is about three hundred and sixty miles in length, and about one hundred and sixty in breadth, from north to south, measuring from Cape Horn to the strait. This part of the country contains a large population, especially in the vicinity of the strait.

Before I proceed any further into the strait, it may be proper to give

the reader some idea of the face of the country, as the eastern and western parts are very different from each other, not only in their aspect, but also in natural productions, as well as in the appearance and character of the natives.

I have not the least doubt that the Cordilleras, or chain of the Andes, once extended in an unbroken range to Cape Horn, and perhaps still farther south; and that earthquakes, eruptions of volcanoes, or some other convulsion of nature, have broken the chain, and thus separated Terra del Fuego from the continent; at the same time shattering the former into several smaller pieces of irregular shape. I am led to this opinion by the exact correspondence which exists in the aspect of the country on both sides the strait.

At the eastern entrance, the land is low on both sides. The island formed by St. Sebastian's channel, on the left or south side of the passage, is a wide rolling prairie -- an extensive field of low land. The land on the right or north side is of a similar character, and continues through the whole extent of Patagonia; which is, comparatively a long strip of meadow, stretching itself at the base of the Andes, and fringing the margin of the sea.

Thus from Cape Negro, where we were now lying at anchor, to the Atlantic, the land is low, undulating, and destitute of trees; while westward to the Pacific, it wears a very different aspect. Here the country begins to rise in broken ridges, which finally become rugged mountains; being evidently but smaller links of the vast Andean chain; of which Cape Froward appears to be the point of fracture, reduced by attrition to an ordinary elevation. The sides of these mountains are covered with ancient forests, while the verdant bottom lands abound with shrubbery, grass, and plants of various descriptions.

May 3d. -- On Saturday morning, being at anchor in the harbour of Cape Negro, at four o'clock, A. M., we saw many of the Patagonian natives on the beach abreast of the vessel, making signs for the boats to come on shore. At five, A. M., we were making preparations to land, when a man at the mast-head discovered about two hundred of the natives on horseback, in a small valley, about a quarter of a mile from the beach. On being apprized of this fact, we declined going on shore; and at six, A. M., got under way, and steered to the south for Port Famine.

As soon as the savages perceived that we were bound to the south, they all showed themselves; being about two hundred horsemen, armed with long spears and bows and arrows, with a drove of about four hundred guanacoës. But being now under full sail, with a smart breeze from the west, I thought it inexpedient to alter our course for the sake of holding any intercourse with these copper-coloured strangers. If they desired an interview, they might easily follow us along shore to Port Famine, a distance of about fifty miles. We therefore left them to their own reflections, and kept on our course. At four, P. M., we came to anchor at Port Famine, in five fathoms of water, muddy bottom.

A brief history of this place will account for its present meager name. In the year 1581, the Spaniards selected the spot for the establishment of a colony, and brought hither about four hundred persons of both sexes to commence it. A fortress was soon erected to protect the new colonists from the neighbouring savages, and a small town built for the families of the Spanish emigrants. This infant settlement, which was called Philipville, in honour of the then reigning monarch of Spain, was intended to command this passage to the Pacific, and their valuable possessions on the western coast of the continent; a passage round Cape Horn not being known at that period. The site was judiciously selected, being about one hundred and twenty miles from the eastern entrance of the strait, having a good harbour, with a back country susceptible of much improvement. Had not the inviting riches of Peru, Mexico, and the West Indies diverted the attention of the Spanish government from this project, it could not have failed of success, and none but Spanish ships would have been permitted to pass the strait without paying for the privilege.

Here these unfortunate settlers were left, without a sufficient stock of provisions to sustain them, until the land could be prepared and crops produced by labour and perseverance. Spaniards are proverbially indolent, and are seldom willing to work, until driven to it by necessity. Expecting to be regularly supplied from the mother country, they probably did not exert their faculties much to provide for the future. Had they been such men as are daily emigrating from the New-England states to our western wilderness, so far from suffering from famine, they would in a few years have converted this region of Patagonia into a fruitful garden, and Philipville would at this moment have been a splendid city.

About seven years after the establishment of this colony, it was visited by the celebrated English navigator Cavendish, who entered the strait in 1587. On arriving at Philipville he found the colony annihilated, only one individual out of the original four hundred being left alive! All had perished by famine, except twenty-three; who, to avoid such a horrible fate, had undertaken to explore their way through the wilderness to Rio de la Plata; and no doubt fell victims to the savage ferocity of the natives, as they were never again heard of. To perpetuate the sad fate of this colony. Cavendish called the place Port Famine, and took the unhappy survivor to England.

In this harbour, or rather in this fine capacious bay, twenty ships of the line might be moored in perfect safety, and supply themselves with wood and water with very little trouble. The bay abounds with fish of various kinds, and a plenty of birds may be had at the expense of a little powder and shot. By this means, during our whole passage through the strait, our table was daily furnished with a tempting variety; such as geese, duck, teal, snipes, plovers, race-horses, &c. embellished with wild celery, which may be gathered in any quantities. The banks of Ledger River, which empties into this bay, abreast of the anchorage, are covered with trees of various kinds, and the finest that I ever saw. Here are white-oak, red-oak, beech, and a sort of bastard cedar, which, in my opinion, would make the finest masts for line-of-battle ships that

have ever yet been stepped in a keelson. Some of them are of great height, varying from five to seven feet in diameter.

In a subsequent voyage, I explored this river for about twenty-five miles from its mouth, and found the country on both sides extremely fine; the soil being rich and mellow, and not less than eighteen inches in depth. The valleys are clothed with luxuriant verdure; the clover-fields of Pennsylvania, if suffered to go a few seasons unmowed, would alone furnish a parallel. This clover was so completely matted and entangled that it was difficult to determine its actual height; but it was certainly not less than two feet. On the banks of the river are copper, lead, and iron ore, of which I obtained specimens. Some fine wood is also found here, two kinds of which I examined. One was red, and the other a bright yellow; the grain of each very fine.

The valleys are seldom visited by the frost or snow, so that the berries are found on the bushes all the winter, without being touched by the frost. There are some streams descending to this river which would make fine mill-seats. I found the country very pleasant from Point Negro to this place; undulating in hills and dales, and covered with groves, flowers, clover, and grass of various kinds. Many of the flowers were not inferior in beauty or fragrance to those which are cultivated in our gardens. I am not, however, sufficiently acquainted with the science of botany to describe them. In short, if this land was in possession of a civilized industrious people, who well understood the theory and practice of agriculture, I have no doubt that it would become, in a very few years, one of the finest countries in the world, as the inhabitants would be far more moral and happy than if every thing grew spontaneously to their hand. We cannot know the real value of any thing unless we labour for it. This fact converts the original curse into the greatest earthly blessing.

Having passed through Magellan's Strait six times, at different seasons, and always with sufficient leisure to examine the natural productions of the country, the result of my observations is a conviction that the Spanish navigator Cordova has given a more correct description of the plants, trees, and animals on the northern border of the strait than any other writer. But he did not sufficiently penetrate into the interior, which abounds with productions that are unknown in the vicinity of the shore. It was my misfortune, however, to be destitute of scientific aid in all my researches, or I am confident that Cordova's catalogue might have been much enlarged.

We anchored in the harbour of Port Famine at four o'clock, P. M., in the afternoon of Saturday, the third of May, corresponding to the third of our November -- a month distinguished in the United States by a period of mild, soft, pleasant weather, called the Indian summer. The weather at our anchorage, on Saturday evening, so forcibly reminded me of this peculiar period, that I determined to make an excursion into the country in search of valuable die-woods and minerals, and to see if these southern forests wore the same variegated dress in autumn as distinguishes our own at that season. I therefore selected as my companions three worthy and intelligent young men, viz. Messrs. John Simmons, William Cox, and Charles Cox, all natives of New-York, where

they are yet citizens.

Having given the necessary instructions to my first officer, and ascertained that we were all well armed and equipped, we started on our expedition towards the southern extremity of the lofty Andes. Our weapons were muskets, pistols, and cutlasses, and our provisions a week's supply of bread, as we trusted to our arms for venison and poultry; and I had never known them to deceive me, if any thing came within musket or pistol distance. We took a west-north-west course by compass, and travelled several miles without seeing such game as we considered worthy the honour of a civilized death, by powder and ball. Our vigilance, however, began to sharpen with our appetites; so that before nine o'clock we had sufficient fresh meat for a much larger party, having killed a fine deer and two guanacoës.

We now selected our quarters for the night on the bank of a freshwater rivulet, where there was but very little underbrush; but where the forest trees grew to a great height, interweaving their thick and lofty branches so closely, that had there been a noon-day sun over our heads, we should hardly have been sensible of it. While my companions were employed in skinning our game, I was busy in building a fire; which, as there was no want of fuel, was soon large enough to have barbecued an ox. A saddle of one of the guanacoës was soon spitted and suspended, in the gipsy style, on the windward side of our flaming volcano, where we contrived to present every side to the influence of the heat until it was fit for the table. The fat, of course, was mostly wasted, except so much of it as we caught with our bread. Each of us being supplied with pepper, salt, and a good appetite, it must have been our own fault if we did not enjoy a good supper, equal to the best roast mutton I ever tasted.

After giving our dogs a share of the supper, and having piled on about two cartloads of wood, we all stretched our weary limbs and bodies by the fire, with each a bunch of dry autumnal leaves for a pillow. Thus moored, as we thought, for the night, we soon fell asleep, each with one hand on a pistol, with as much composure as if we had been in bed at the far distant homes of which we were dreaming.

We slept very soundly until about midnight, when we were suddenly alarmed by the distant barking of our dogs. In a moment every man was on his feet, with his firearms in his hands, primed and cocked. The dogs continued to bark, and the sound evidently approached nearer and nearer. A rustling noise was now heard in the underbrush. Every one was prepared for the approaching crisis, with an undaunted front, and his finger on the trigger of his musket. At this moment of anxious suspense, there suddenly appeared before us -- one of our dogs, with a small gray fox in his custody, which had been surprised and captured while in the very act of approaching our fire!

After caressing and rewarding these faithful animals for their vigilance and fidelity, we again "addressed ourselves to sleep;" but in about two hours, we were again alarmed in the same manner, and with a like result, viz. another gray fox. Finding our repose thus liable to be constantly broken, we concluded to sleep no more. We therefore resumed our journey towards that stupendous range of mountains which extends through more

than seventy degrees of latitude, or about four thousand three hundred miles!

May 4th. -- It was now Sunday morning, and we still travelled by compass in the direction of west-north-west, as nearly as we could lay that course; being often compelled to deviate from it by the face of the country, interspersed with elevated ridges, watercourses, precipices, &c. This day's journey, though fatiguing, was very pleasant and interesting. Parrots, and other birds of the most beautiful plumage, surrounded us on every side (several of a species which I have never seen in the museums or the private collections of naturalists). I also examined various trees, which I have no doubt are highly valuable, some for cabinet furniture, and others for drugs, and perhaps for die-stuffs. I regretted extremely that we had not a scientific botanist and mineralogist with us, as my own knowledge of those sciences is very limited. But I am confident there is abundance of valuable wood in this unexplored country; and the specimens of copper, lead, and iron which I brought away with me were pronounced to be, by the late scientific Doctor Mitchill, the purest and most free from alloy of any that he had ever seen.

The interior of this country, I also discovered, abounds with some very valuable vegetables for mariners who are pursuing long voyages; such as celery, scurvy-grass, and a variety of berries of very agreeable flavour. To this circumstance Byron imputes the healthiness of his whole ship's company, not a single person being affected with the scurvy in the slightest degree; nor was a single individual on the sick-list from any other disorder. Among other curious trees which I examined in this excursion is the pepper-tree, or winter's bark, noticed by Commodore Byron. These grow here in great plenty, as do many others, with the nature of which I am totally unacquainted.

We continued to proceed in the same direction until ten o'clock, P. M. when we found ourselves on the eastern declivity of a mountain which ascended gradually towards the north. This we concluded to be a part of the celebrated chain before mentioned, the Cordilleras of the Andes, and judged ourselves to be now about thirty miles from the vessel, and forty-five from Cape Froward. Here we built a large fire, and made a hearty supper of venison, having killed a fat deer but a short time before. We then sought a few hours' repose; but found it almost impossible to sleep, as the dogs were engaged the whole night among wild animals of different kinds. We therefore relinquished the hope of rest, and at two hours after midnight, began to retrace our weary steps towards Port Famine.

May 5th. -- This was Monday, the fifth; and we laboured through the underbrush and matted clover with very little intermission, in the direction of east-south-east, until noon, when we thought it expedient

to take some rest and refreshment. At two, P. M., we again set forward, and reached the schooner in safety at eleven o'clock the same evening, almost exhausted with fatigue and the want of sleep. We brought on board with us, among other curiosities, several birds we had shot, of the most beautiful plumage; but which, for want of proper preservation, we were obliged to throw overboard afterward. I believe, however, that the richest museum in the world might derive some new and valuable acquisitions from the interior of this unexplored country. If immense resources are as yet entirely unknown, as the avenues which lead to them are still guarded by the dragons of traditionary fable.

May 6th. -- Having recruited our strength and spirits by sleep and refreshment, we again went on shore, and examined the ancient ruins of Philipville. During the day we also shot several otters, and saw many of the Fuegian natives on the opposite shore. We likewise visited the fort which had been erected to protect the Spanish colony from the natives, and to command the strait. It appeared to be but little decayed, considering the length of time it had been abandoned. This fortress was built only eighty years after the first discovery of the American continent by Columbus; and a very little labour would now restore it to its original condition, and render it an effective protection against any attacks which the natives could make. The ruins of the town bear much stronger marks of the withering touch of time. The remains of some stone edifices are yet visible; but the walls have generally crumbled into complete decay. After examining this part of the country to our satisfaction, and inspecting a number of wigwams of a conical form, which the natives had recently deserted, apparently from fear of hostilities on our part, we prepared to leave Port Famine, and double the cape which forms the centre angle of the strait, and the most southern extremity of the continent.

May 7th. -- On Wednesday, the seventh, at five o'clock, A. M., we again got under way, and steered to the south, with the wind from west-north-west, and a light rain. At ten, A. M., we passed Cape Froward, and changed our course, first to west, then to west-north-west, which is that of the strait from this cape to the Pacific Ocean. In passing this angle of the strait, we saw many of the natives on the shore, apparently just landed or landing from a fishing excursion. But no sooner did they see our vessel than they abandoned their canoes, and all started for a neighbouring wood, where they remained until we had doubled the cape, and left it behind off our starboard quarter. These Indians are a distinct race from the Patagonians, as will appear presently.

This unexpected timidity on their part led me to suspect that they had lately experienced foul play from some /civilised, Christian/ navigator, who, conscious of physical power, had forgotten humanity, and perhaps justice. I therefore came to the resolution of opening an intercourse with the next tribe I fell in with; and, if possible, of inspiring them

with confidence towards foreigners and strangers.

May 8th. -- On Thursday, the eighth, we continued our course towards the Pacific, nearly in a west-north-west direction, passing York Road and some very picturesque scenery on the northern shore, resembling the Highlands of the Hudson. At eleven o'clock, P. M., we came to anchor at the mouth of Indian Sound, where a vast number of the natives were fishing by torch-light. From attendant circumstances I concluded that we were now near the location of an extensive tribe. In order that we might not alarm them, I had the vessel moored with as little noise as possible, while the binnacle-lights were promptly extinguished. We had anchored in four fathoms of water, with clay bottom, and with such precaution that the natives continued their vocation, totally unconscious of our proximity, until after midnight. Our watch on deck consisted of one-half the crew at a time, every man well armed and prepared for any contingency; but with orders never to act, except on the defensive.

At four o'clock, A. M., I ordered the boats to be lowered, manned, and armed. In a few minutes afterward we started for the Indian village within the sound. After pulling round the point which covers its entrance, and opening a beautiful valley, we discovered the village within one hundred and fifty yards of the boats. In a moment after, we saw about four hundred dogs rushing towards us, while the natives were seen flying from their huts, men, women, and children, apparently in a paroxysm of alarm.

As my object was to conciliate this inoffensive people, we paused in our progress, and lay off on our oars; making amicable signs for the natives to lay down their weapons, bows and arrows, which they did without hesitation. I then pulled in to the shore, and landed a short distance from the Indians; and by signs invited six of them to meet me. This they also did, with evident willingness. After giving them a friendly and even cordial reception, which inspired them with renewed confidence, I invited them to enter one of my boats, while I advanced and saluted their friends. This request they complied with, but with some reluctance; when I ordered the boats to haul off, and lay about the fourth of a mile from the shore.

Having thus secured a sufficient number of hostages for my personal safety, I advanced along the beach to have an interview with the whole tribe, consisting of about two thousand, of both sexes and all ages, by whom I was received in the most amicable manner. They took me to their wigwams, and showed me every mark of hospitality in their power. I remained on shore with them about two hours; a part of which time I spent in examining their habitations and mode of living, and the remainder in shooting birds at some distance in the woods.

At length the natives began to evince some symptoms of uneasiness respecting the fate of their friends and countrymen in my boat. On perceiving this, I promptly repaired to the shore, and ordered the boat

to pull in. The moment she reached the beach the six Indians leaped on shore, apparently rejoicing at their safe deliverance. I then entered the boat, and invited the one whom I supposed to be the chief of the tribe to accompany me to the vessel. To this proposition, however, he would not accede, until I ordered one of my men to jump on shore, and run up to the village, to show them how much we relied on their fidelity. On seeing this, the chief instantly appreciated the motive, and stepped into the boat, with a confidence that bespoke intellect and feeling. In a few minutes we were on board the Wasp, where we found a warm breakfast prepared, awaiting the return of the boats.

This chief appeared to be a man of amiable disposition, and considerable mind, the evidences of which were legibly written in his countenance. As soon as he found himself on the deck of the schooner, he looked around him with an expression of strong curiosity, not un-mingled with surprise, and in some instances astonishment. These sentiments were still more forcibly expressed when I conducted him to the cabin, and invited him to take a seat at the breakfast table. He examined every thing as if he wished to become acquainted with its nature, principles, causes, and effects ; so that I set him down for an Indian philosopher. He seemed to combine the spirit of deep investigation with the childish simplicity of the untutored Indian.

At table he evinced a degree of diffidence, and even delicacy, which is not common in the savage character. He seemed to relish our food, however, and showed a particular partiality for molasses and sugar. After breakfast we took him on shore, and restored him to his anxious family and subjects, who received him with the loudest demonstrations of pleasure.

May 9th. -- This afternoon we were visited by a great number of the natives in canoes. As soon as they had approached within hearing, they commenced singing in a plaintive strain, accompanied with a variety of gestures, which I afterward learned were symbolical tokens of friendship. When they had come within a few yards of the vessel they ceased paddling, and appeared to be waiting for some encouragement to advance. I therefore made signs for them to come on board. These signs were either misconstrued or else they wanted more time to examine the exterior of the schooner before they ventured on board. From their manoeuvres, inspection, gestures, and consultations, it appeared to me as if they were doubtful whether the Wasp was actually a big canoe or a monster of the deep.

After paddling round the vessel, and critically examining her fore and aft, some of them approached her on the larboard side, and two of the men at length ventured to come on board. I received them in the most friendly manner, and invited them to partake of such provisions as we had at hand -- beef, pork, potatoes, and bread, to which I helped them plentifully. They readily partook of the beef, and appeared so extravagantly fond of the potatoes that I regretted I had not a larger supply, having only a limited quantity on board as a preventive of the

scurvy. The pork they promptly rejected, and scarcely tasted of the bread. This circumstance might lend some support to an hypothesis lately advanced, and sustained with considerable ability, that the aborigines of America are descendants of the lost tribes of Israel.

As many of their canoes were now alongside I distributed food and some trifling presents to all of them. As they appeared to set a peculiar value on scraps of iron, or any article made of that material, I contrived to supply every one with a piece of an old hoop, a broken hinge, a crooked pump-bolt, or a rusty spike; while to the females I gave each a string of beads. They seemed much delighted with my apparent liberality, and frequently pointed upwards as they mumbled over a few unintelligible words, among which I could distinguish one which sounded like /Setedos/, which I afterward understood to signify the Deity.

Previous to their departure, the chief, whose name was Cheleule, made a short speech to his subjects, who immediately responded to it in a kind of chorus, or devotional anthem, in which they often repeated the word /Setedos/, at the same time pointing to heaven with much apparent awe and reverence. When this ceremony was finished they all paddled for the shore, and repaired to their wigwams in the village, which was about three-quarters of a mile from the vessel.

May 10th. -- This day about fifteen hundred of the natives came alongside, men, women, and children; and now that they had acquired confidence in our amicable intentions, they became amusing and interesting. I permitted them all to come on board by turns, and partake of that hospitality which had so delighted their friends the preceding day. Previous to their departure I succeeded in making Cheleule understand that I was going up to the head of the sound with two boats on the following morning, in search of die-woods; and wished him, with three or four of his tribe, to accompany me. To this proposition he readily assented, and took his leave.

May 11th. -- This morning our boats were lowered, and prepared for a week's cruise. A brass swivel with plenty of ammunition was placed in each of them, together with a due number of muskets, pistols, and lances. I selected ten men for our contemplated excursion, who were armed with cutlasses. When every thing was ready, my first officer having received his instructions respecting his deportment to the natives during our absence, we left the vessel and pulled for the village. The chief, Cheleule, was awaiting our arrival on the beach with four of his people: I immediately requested him to leave orders with his tribe for no one to go off to the vessel until we returned. With this request he readily complied, and his orders were strictly obeyed, for not a single canoe approached the Wasp during our absence.

Having received these honest savages on board our boats, we put on the

sails, and at 5, A. M., steered for the head of the sound, in a west-north-west direction, with the wind from south-west, and clear weather. Although we passed along the shore very rapidly, I was enabled to perceive that the soil was rich, and the country very fine. The farther we advanced up the lagoon the heavier we found the timber, and the thicker the grass. In fact, the more I saw of this part of the continent the better I liked it, and the firmer became my conviction that there are few finer countries in the world.

At 12 o'clock we partook of a cold dinner with excellent appetites; and as we had now a leading wind, and were going at the rate of about seven miles an hour, I concluded not to stop until night, as there were no indications of the head of the bay being near at hand. In the evening my savage friend Cheleule informed me that a very large tribe of natives was located about ten miles farther; and therefore he thought it would be best to land at a spot he pointed out, and encamp for the night. I immediately adopted the suggestion, and steered for the point proposed.

At 9, P. M., we landed in a beautiful valley, covered with verdure, and interspersed with groves, meadows, and other rural scenery of the most picturesque description. I judged that we were now about eighty miles from the vessel; the southern extremity of the Cordilleras was far to the eastward of us, and other indications bore testimony that we were fanned by airs from the Pacific Ocean.

It being low water when we landed, we found an abundance of mussels and clams, and caught about two hundred fine mullet at the mouth of a small fresh-water river a few rods from the boats. Our four natives soon had a fire kindled, while the sailors were employed in felling some red-wood trees, they being the best fuel-timber that grows. The heat it produced was so intense that we could scarcely approach the fire near enough to cook our suppers, which was done by boiling about two barrels of clams and mussels, and frying a quantity of the mullet.

About 11, P. M., we all turned in, or, more correctly, lay /down/ by the fire, keeping one man on the look-out through the night. At daylight I was awakened by Cheleule, who gave me to understand that it was time to be moving. Every man was soon on his feet, when we found a warm breakfast ready prepared for us by the sailor who had the morning watch. As soon as this agreeable duty had been properly performed, we re-embarked in our boats, and again proceeded on our northwesterly course.

May 12th. -- At 11, A. M., we had arrived at the head of the bay, or salt-water lagoon, and were now about one hundred miles from the vessel, on nearly a west-by-north course for eighty miles, and north-west-by-west for twenty miles. Here we found a tribe of Indians comprising about four thousand souls, men, women, and children, in a village situated in a very extensive valley on the west bank of a river called by the natives Capac. This river extends into the country about seventy-five miles in a northerly direction, and it was my intention to ascend it as far as practicable, in search of die-woods.

We were favourably received and hospitably treated by the chief and people of this powerful tribe of natives, and as soon as the usual ceremonies of introduction were over, Cheleule prevailed on the chief, whose name was Calexchem, to accompany us up the river; he accordingly took a seat in my boat, and at 1, P. M., we were all ready for a start, with a fresh breeze from south-south-west, attended with a light rain. As we proceeded we carefully examined both banks of the river for the purpose of finding die-stuffs.

After ascending this river about twenty miles, against a strong freshet, we landed at 7, P. M., for the purpose of taking up our lodgings for the night in the skirts of a pleasant valley which extended to the river. Here we pitched our tent-fire and supper followed in the usual style of exploring parties; after which each man gathered from the trees as much moss as would serve for a pillow, and then stretched himself by the fire, on which we had placed a plenty of fuel, to keep the tenants of the forest at a respectful distance.

About daylight we were alarmed by the roaring of some wild beast, which the natives called /faiche-ani/, and which we afterward discovered was the South American lion. After daylight we saw many droves of guanacoës and deer; and by 8, A. M., we had shot seven gray foxes and four deer, the flesh of which was not unacceptable after our previous lent on clams and mullet. We now resumed our search for die-woods, but could discover nothing but inferior kinds of fustic and redwood, some specimens of which I caused to be conveyed to the boats.

May 13th. -- At 9, A. M., being convinced that any further attempts to discover valuable die-woods on the banks of this river would prove fruitless, we gave up the pursuit, and embarked in our boats to return to the vessel. We descended the river leisurely, gliding down with the current, and stopping occasionally in some beautiful valley or variegated grove, to shoot foxes, birds, and deer. We arrived at Calexchem's village at about seven in the evening; and, after landing the old chief, with many thanks and some trifling presents, we proceeded about ten miles down the bay; when at 10, P. M., we landed near the mouth of a fresh-water river on the north shore.

After cooking part of our venison, and making some bread coffee, we all partook of a hearty supper. As it was now raining severely, we were obliged to pitch our tent, which was never done in fair weather. About midnight the watch was set, and the rest turned in, soon forgetting their fatigues and wet jackets in dreams of home, and those rural scenes which smiling May was at this moment decorating in all the charms of nature, at the distance of six thousand miles from the sleepers.

May 14th. -- At daylight I found the wind blowing a strong breeze from

the south-east, and as we could make but little headway in pulling to windward with the tide against us, I ordered the men to prepare themselves for hunting; and after breakfast we all started in pursuit of game of any kind that could be found. It was 5, P. M., when we returned, having strayed many miles into the country; and the result of our sport was five deer, three foxes, and a number of birds of different kinds. During this excursion I paid more attention to the qualities of timber than to the duties of a sportsman. I found the same kinds of trees here that I examined at Port Famine, and the wild-celery, scurvy-grass, &c. were shooting into seed in almost every direction. What marks of Divine wisdom are to be seen in every thing! The bane and antidote, if not placed side by side, are generally found within hailing distance. High southern latitudes are thought to produce the scurvy on board of ships, and the same latitudes produce on land the best possible antidotes to the disease, in the greatest abundance.

Our sportsmen were all fatigued and hungry, and therefore enjoyed a good supper and a night's repose with the greater zest. At 2, A. M., I found that the wind had changed to the westward, and produced fair weather; I therefore called upon all hands to turn out, and prepare for a cruise towards the entrance of the sound.

May 15th. -- At 3, A. M., the tent was struck, the remainder of our game put on board the boats, and every thing in readiness for a start. We passed down the north shore with a gentle breeze from the westward, frequently landing in some charming valley or waving forest, to enjoy the scene and search for die-woods, but always without success. We reached the Wasp at 9, P. M., finding every thing in the same order as when we left it. I kept our friend Cheleule and his companions on board during the night; and the next morning, after giving them a good breakfast, and many little presents of high value in their estimation, I set them on shore at 8, A. M., where Cheleule was received by his people with the strongest demonstrations of joy. On taking leave of the old chief I expressed a wish to take one of his sons with me to the United States, promising to bring him back again in about two years. The father consented without hesitation, and presented me one of his boys on the spot, who seemed much rejoiced on the occasion, and after receiving the farewell embraces of his parents, went on board with the most cheerful alacrity. I immediately had him clothed, and he expressed much satisfaction in being placed under my care and protection.

It being now calm, we could not get under way, and the consequence was that we had a great number of visitors to see and take leave of my young savage protégé. This appeared to affect him, and he evinced more sensibility on the occasion than I had anticipated, as the savage character has never been distinguished for a vivid expression of feeling.

May 16th. -- At 7, A.M., a light breeze sprang up from the west-south-west, when we immediately got under way, and commenced plying to the south-west, to get hold of the Fuegian shore. Before we had proceeded far, the mother of young Cheleule came alongside to take a final leave of her darling boy. This was too much for the poor fellow: he burst into a paroxysm of tears as soon as his mother left the vessel, and earnestly begged me to let him go on shore with her. Perceiving this to be the wish of both, and that they were much affected, I recalled the old woman, and restored her son to her, which rendered both of them extremely happy. As a testimony of his gratitude the youth begged me to accept of his dog, which he set great store by, it being a present from his father. This dog was remarkable for his cunning and sagacity, resembling a fox both in form and disposition. The head, in particular, bespeaks its relationship to that animal. It is a little larger than our terrier, and is the only canine breed that I saw among these natives.

The dress of this people, which is the same in both sexes, is formed of the skins of the sea-otter, guanaco, fox, deer, or seal, sewed together with the animal's sinews, entrails, or thongs cut from the skins, in the form of a blanket. This is thrown over the shoulders, and tied under the chin; the lower part being wrapped round the body like a cloak. Both sexes paint their faces in such a manner as to give them a hideous expression, and yet I scarcely saw two of them alike. Some were painted red, with a large black circle round each eye; others were distinguished by horizontal streaks across the face of alternate black and white. However grotesque they appeared to us, they evidently prided themselves on this display of fashion and taste. Every one of them with whom I had any intercourse, was as ready to give as to receive trifling presents, if I expressed a wish to that effect. From these mutual kindnesses, however, they very soon caught the idea of quid pro quo, and became adepts in the science of trade. But I never detected one of them in the act of stealing to the value of a nail, either from the vessel or the boats; nor did I see or hear of a single quarrel or contention among themselves.

Their canoes display much ingenuity and mechanical contrivance. They are constructed of bark peeled from the entire trunk of a large tree resembling our white birch, which grows here in great abundance. Three such pieces will form an entire canoe, from twelve to eighteen feet in length, two feet in depth, and two feet six inches in breadth at the centre, or widest part. One piece forms the bottom, and two the sides, neatly sewed together with leather thongs or the sinews of animals. The ribs are generally made of slender branches or saplings, split in the centre as coopers do their hoop-poles. These are bent into a semicircle with the flat side outwards, and fastened to the inside of the canoe, which is thus kept distended to its proper shape, and rendered sufficiently strong. The gunwales are formed of the same material, sewed on in the same manner.

Each of these boats is commonly divided into six distinct compartments: viz. the first contains their fishing tackle and apparatus; the second is occupied by the women, who handle the forward paddles; the third is their fireplace, having a hearth of sand; the fourth is the well-room, or place for bailing; the fifth contains the men, who ply the stem

paddles; and the sixth is the place where their spears, bows and arrows, &c. are carefully deposited. In the management of these frail barks, skill and dexterity are more requisite than physical strength; and yet they are made to ply to windward at a surprising rate. Some of them are made more square, but are not so easily managed, nor do they move so swiftly.

Besides the weapons already mentioned, the sling is much used by this people, and with such effect, that the descendants of Benjamin ought no longer to boast of their left-handed progenitors. It is made of the sea-otter's skin, of the usual form, and nearly three feet in length. Their spear-heads are made of hard bone, about six inches long, well pointed, with a barb on each side about three inches from the point. These are attached to straight poles, smoothly finished, and about twelve feet in length. This weapon, which they use in taking seals and sea-otters, is thrown, like the ancient javelin, from a level with the eye, duly balanced in the right hand, and seldom fails of its intended effect. Their bows are made of an elastic wood, which is hard and susceptible of a high polish. They are generally about four feet in length, strung with slips of the otter-skin or plaited sinews. The arrows are made of finely polished wood of great hardness, pointed with a sharp flint of triangular shape, and are about three feet in length.

The arms of these Indians, however, are no certain indication of their being a warlike people; my own impression is decidedly that they are not, their habits and manners being timid and pacific. The weapons just described are rather their tools of trade by which they procure a livelihood, the flood and the forest being their principal resources for food, which generally consists of shellfish, seal flesh and blubber, sea-otters, shags, and a few wild animals that inhabit the forests, as I have before mentioned. They keep their game until it is nearly putrid before they eat it.

Their natural complexion is a pale yellow, inclining to copper-colour, as can easily be ascertained by those parts of their bodies which are not daubed over with paints of different colours. I found no difficulty in conversing with them by signs, though whenever they were at a loss for my meaning, they invariably imitated my motions and repeated my words, which rendered our intercourse somewhat tedious. It must be admitted that they are sadly deficient in the virtue of personal cleanliness; but not so horribly offensive and loathsome as has been represented by Cordova and others. In almost every respect, however, they are a race of people far inferior to the Patagonians, and not much less degraded than the natives of Terra del Fuego, whom all navigators unite in pronouncing the most wretched race of mortals on earth.

Though the women are of much smaller size than the men, the former are compelled to do all the labour and drudgery. They build the wigwams, gather the shellfish, paddle the canoes, &c., while the men either sit at their ease, or enjoy the pleasures of the chase. The men, however, occasionally evince considerable fondness for their wives and children. On the whole, I became somewhat interested in this apparently wretched race, especially when I reflected on the probability of their ancestors having been driven from more genial climes to this mountainous region by

the barbarity of strangers, who professed to be patterns for the human race in civilization and religion. If such be the fact, I wish these poor Indians might be informed that the iniquity of their invaders has been severely visited on their own children, until most of them, at the present moment, are more indolent, quite as filthy, almost as ignorant, and far less innocent than the natives of Magellan's Strait. Who shall say that the latter are not as much in the keeping of the Deity as the former?

May 17th. -- We left Indian Sound on Friday, the 16th, at seven o'clock, A. M., as before stated, and laid our course across the strait towards the Land of Fire. On the following day, at seven, P. M., we were close in with the southern shore, when the wind hauled round to the south-south-west. Having relinquished the hope of finding any die-woods in this strait, although there are other woods of great value, I concluded to make the best of our way to the Pacific Ocean. We had now a fine breeze off-shore, and light snow-squalls during the night. At daylight we were about five miles to the eastward of Cape Pillar, which forms the north-western extremity of Terra del Fuego, in the Pacific Ocean.

May 18th. -- At one o'clock, P. M., we landed on the Four Evangelists, where we took one hundred and twenty-seven fur-seals. At six, P. M., we were fairly clear of the strait, and floating on the bosom of that immense ocean which stretches between America and Asia in one direction, and the Antarctic circle and Bering's Strait in another. We now commenced examining the Pacific coast to the north of Cape Victory, which is the northern boundary of the western entrance of Magellan's Strait I have already stated that the southern boundary of this entrance is Cape Pillar, lying south-south-east from Cape Victory, distant eight leagues. About midway between these two capes are four small islands, or rocks, called the Four Evangelists, just mentioned. Three of these are low, but the fourth is moderately high, in appearance resembling a hay-stack. These islands lie in lat $52^{\circ} 34' S.$, long. $75^{\circ} 8' W.$ The passages between them and the last-mentioned capes are easy and free from danger. Variation per azimuth $23^{\circ} 47'$ easterly. Cape Victory is in lat $52^{\circ} 24' S.$, long. $75^{\circ} 3' W.$