

Extracts from "Through the Heart of Patagonia" (Chapters XIX and XX)

Author Hesketh Prichard, New York, 1902

March 11 - March 24, 1901 (approx.)

/"An important river flows into the end of the north fjord (of Lake Argentino) with clear waters -- a sure sign that it proceeds from another great lake still unknown." /

In these words, taken from the /Journal of the Royal Geographical Society/ for September 1899, under the head of "Explorations in Patagonia," by Dr. Moreno, you have the idea which was the spring of all our efforts in bringing down the launch to Lake Argentino and the aim of the subsequent voyages made in her.

The opening to the north passage or fjord is locally known as Hellgate, so called on account of the rough weather which usually prevails there. The spot is the opening of a long winding channel that, running up between beetling cliffs and forested mountain-sides as it were into the heart of the Andes, becomes simply a vast funnel through which the winds and storms discharge themselves upon the lake at all times and seasons. I cannot give a better description of Lake Argentino than by using the following extract from Dr. Moreno's account :

/"Lake Argentine extends sixty miles to the west ; and the fjords of the extreme west divide into three arms, which receive the waters of large glaciers from Mount Stokes up to the vicinity of Lake Viedma. An important river flows into the end of the north fjord, with clear waters -- a sure sign that it proceeds from another great lake still unknown. The western end is closed by the main chain of the Cordillera with its glaciers, which cross to the Pacific fjords of Peel Inlet and St. Andrew's Sound, and one can distinguish peaks more than 10,000 feet, as Mount Agassiz (10,597 feet)."

On March 11, having mended the launch to the best of our ability, we intended to make a start from Cow Monte Harbour. As we rode down from Cattle's, driving my troop of horses before us, the calm weather which had attended the period of repairs broke up and a strong wind began to blow out of the south-west. A start was, therefore, rendered impossible. We accordingly camped beside the launch, to be ready for an early departure. All night long the wind held, and the sheepskins in the after-hatch, where I was sleeping, took in water. It needed little waking, therefore, to get me out in the morning. The false dawn was still lingering in the sky when the wind fell and we were off in double quick time, heading in a northerly direction, and steering by a clump of /Leña dura/ bushes on a promontory, behind which lay Hellgate.

The swell of the previous night was yet big upon the water, and the launch crawled over it at about three knots. The entrance to Hellgate /[nowadays Boca del Diablo, Ed.] is possibly one of the most menacing and sinister-looking spots in South America. The great grooved cliffs tower over the yeasty cauldron of water, and down the channel between them, as I have said, the wind hurtles as through a funnel. On this particular morning a squall had darkened the great and houseless unknown beyond. Several icebergs were huddled together, stranded upon the shallows of the eastern shore.

After running through the black throat of Hellgate we put in, beneath a big rock, in order to take shelter from the squall that was fast coming down upon us. We had started on a /maté/, and so, while we waited, a roast was got under way. As we were eating, the squall that had brooded so ominously in the west broke over the lake, and after raging for a few minutes passed with a shiver that you could follow with the eye, till it lost itself in the distance of the early morning waters. Then the sun glowed out suddenly, as if some gigantic power had lifted an extinguisher from its glory. The farther and middle distances were peopled with snow-peaks, rising in minarets above their girdles of dark forest, which last stretched downwards until they lipped the black water at the mountain bases. For a moment after the outburst of radiance the water alone remained black and angry, and then the squall flicked away its skirts and passed from view, leaving a picture of cold and austere purity extending to the rim of sight. In words I cannot give you any reflection of the scene, and no photograph could ever do more than reproduce its outlines, and yet I suppose few human eyes will ever look upon it.

To describe the kaleidoscope of colours and the scenery through which we passed in that north-west passage of Lake Argentino would merely leave me a beggar in adjectives. Suffice it to say that for that day at least the mist and gloom of the clouds shared short watches with the gold and white of flying sunshine. For the first time in our experience of her the launch played us no tricks, and our progress went on at a steady three knots. Soon a gigantic glacier showed in the channel, seeming to block all farther advance. The Fjord looked full of icebergs ; there must have been three thousand of them lying, an inanimate fleet, in their mountain-bound harbour of wind and mist.

A nasty squall caught us as we dodged among the ice, the smallest ripple set us gripping our frail craft, and I am afraid that a moderate sea would have drowned her fires and sent us to explore downwards rather than onwards. Indeed, our entire life on the launch was one long history of danger-dodging. I do not give the details, because some of the same sort have already been written, and repetition is needless. I grant there was more risk in taking the launch and using her in such waters than, perhaps, wisdom would have approved. Without her, however, we could have had no chance of exploring the North Fjord and solving the mystery of the "river with clear waters." Moreover, those who accompanied me went of their own free will, and I must here record my gratitude to Mr. Cattle, who willingly risked his life on our voyages in the launch, and also to Burbury -- who accompanied me on my first journey

-- as well as to Bernardo, who was with me throughout the whole of my Lake Argentino experiences. Wherever I may travel in the future, I can wish for no better companions.

Bernardo, the most willing of men, kept our nerves in a state of less than pleasurable excitement. He drove the launch, when I took my eye off him, with 145 lb. of steam in her worn-out boiler -- her safety-limit at the best of times had been 130 lb. On shore he succeeded in firing off my jungle-gun by mistake, narrowly missing killing himself at close quarters and myself at some few feet distance. But even after this involuntary attempt at manslaughter one could not be angry with him, he was so genuinely sorry, yet one could not help foreseeing that he was eminently likely to do something of the sort again. He was, to use slang, such a "decent chap," he never grumbled when he had nothing to eat, or a bout of bitter cold labour when we were obliged to turn out in the night to get up the anchor or do some other job. He was also a glutton of the first water for work, but we were all persuaded that he would end by slaying us, in which case I have not the slightest doubt he would have said to me as we were being ferried across the Styx, "By go-od, Mr. Preechard, I am sorry, the old launch she bust up!" From looking on the launch, as he did at first, with considerable awe and respect, familiarity with her bred contempt, and all her parts lost their novelty to him, save the whistle. When he blew that his face would betoken the intensest satisfaction. In many ways the placid Swede caused us much amusement.

One of the most singular things to be observed during that day was the absence of life in the forest which bordered the shore. It was strange to sail along under the vast masses of vegetation and rarely to see or hear any sign of life. On March 12 we continued our advance, and finding that the Fjord here split up into three or four channels, we chose the most westward of them. Our progress was very slow owing to the west wind having packed the ice. In the evening we made our camp among some dead trees upon the margin of the water, and I wandered off into the thickets, where I saw a Cordillera wolf I picked up a stone and threw it at him, but this had no effect until I hit him with a small twig, which made him growl. Finally he took refuge in a bush.

It was while at this camp that we cut for the first time some /Le-a dura/ as firing for the launch. It proved better than califate [sic] and gave at least three times the amount of heat to be had from /roblŽ/-wood [sic]. Afterwards, whenever possible, we burned no other fuel than /Le-a dura/.

The following is from my diary :

"/March/ 21. -- During this trip we have had a collapsible canvas boat in tow of the launch, which boat has saved us many a wetting in boarding and in leaving the launch. We go ashore in relays, one man remaining on the launch. This evening, while Cattle, Burbury and I were on the beach wood-cutting and tent-pitching, I heard Cattle shout, and, looking round, saw, to my disgust, the canvas boat already some twenty yards out and drifting quickly away from the beach. The wind had caught her

broadside on, and she was being blown out into the current beyond the calm of our sheltering promontory. Cattle and I ran down to the shingle, casting off our clothes as we went. I thought we were in for a long swim, no pleasant prospect in that ice-cold water among the floes. But, as luck would have it, there was a little point of land projecting from the cliff of the promontory, and to this we made our hurried way, leaving behind us a spoor of shed garments. We arrived in the nick of time to secure the boat, and Cattle rowed her round to the beach beyond the camp.

"There is one enormous glacier visible almost due north. It had evidently been throwing many bergs of late. We called it the Giant's Glacier /[nowadays known as Upsala Glacier, Ed.]/. This glacier is marked with double lines of brown reaching from the clouds right down to the margin of the water, for all the world like the tracks of the chariot wheels of some giant. We are now very much in the kingdom of the ice. Away beyond the immediate foreground of the shores and forests is spread a panorama of unnamed peaks. The silence is seldom broken save by the scream of the wind or the crashing fall of some mass of ice from the glaciers.

"I find my camera has been damaged. This is unfortunate, but hardly to be wondered at. It is a difficult matter to prevent mischief when the launch rolls and everything gets adrift, and one's time is taken up with keeping one's balance, steering, or in doing the myriad little jobs that crowd one upon the other. Although the camera reposed in the sheltering care of various rugs in the after-hatch, the heavy weather defeated all our precautions. In this difficulty a novel of Miss Marie Corelli's has been of the utmost assistance, and saved us from the misfortune of being unable to take photographs. The colonial edition of the 'Master Christian' has a thick red cover, and with the help of some flour paste we have succeeded in making the camera light-proof. Thus I owe a second debt of gratitude to Miss Marie Corelli, beside the pleasure of reading her book."

The next day broke clear and still, raising our hopes as to our progress through the ice. I must say that we took our fine blue weather -- little of it as we were blessed with -- with a hearty pleasure, and enjoyed it most thoroughly. We might be cold and wet an hour later, but between the squalls it was not so disagreeable, and we made the best of the breaks.

It was not long under these favourable circumstances before we reached the last curve of the channel, and were confronted by another glacier of considerable size, coming down through a depression in the midst of a mountain. Below the glacier the shoulders and base of the mountain were covered with dark forests. All round under the cliffs was, as I have said, deep water, how deep I do not know, as we had no means of taking soundings of such depth.

As there seemed little to be gained by landing at the foot of the glacier we ran back to the camp of the previous night, where the harbourage was at any rate somewhat better. While we were yet ashore, a squall began to grow up in the sky to the west and came down upon the water in an angry spatter of rain. It subsided, however, as quickly as

it had arisen, so we got afloat again. Running back through the narrow throat of the channel, we found that the wind, which had veered several points to the north, had almost blocked it with a fleet of icebergs, that were grinding together on the swell of the water. These we managed to make our way through, and it was with some thankfulness that we presently reached the farther shore on the east of the main Fjord. We had no sooner arrived than it began to blow in heavy gusts, and five minutes after the first of them -- so quickly do the seas rise upon this lake -- we had to shift our anchorage.

In an hour or two, having in the meantime laid in a good store of firewood, and the heavy wind being succeeded by a series of cold showers, we took advantage of the lull and headed up the main Fjord to the north. But the wind, that had temporarily dropped, soon resumed its fury, and the launch was hard put to it to keep her position, far less to make any headway, and then, as was usual in moments of need, the pumps ceased working altogether, and Burbury shouted that no more than ten minutes' steam remained in the boiler. There was nothing for it but to turn her and to run for the land. We found, however, small hope of anchorage, for a bare fifty-foot cliff rose sheer out of the water and so continued for a long distance ahead. Seeing we were unlikely to discover a suitable position, we decided to cross the lake, but we had not gone far when the propeller wheezed into silence. Strong squalls caught us and made the launch roll and heave. Cattle got into the canvas boat with the idea of trying to tow her, and I forward, put out the long oar, which we generally used as one of the bulwarks ? and we both endeavoured to keep her from turning broadside on to the waves, in which case she would have been swamped.

Cattle shortly gave up his attempt to tow her ; in the sea then running such an effort was hopeless. The wind increased. Cattle came aboard, not without difficulty, and tried rowing with a short oar. Meantime Burbury was baling water into the boiler with a cooking-pot. The launch was rolling in a manner which made rowing a difficult matter. Presently the oar I was using broke off short and the launch was drifting ominously near to a reef. It was a race as to whether we should get up steam before we were cast upon it. We watched the index of the register slowly beginning to quiver, and when it marked 30 lb. we were not much more than a score or so of yards from the rocks. This was, however, enough to enable us to get way on and forge slowly out of danger.

Our steam did not last much longer than to allow us to find shelter under the lee of a line of low rocks, which thrust themselves out and served as a little breakwater in the lake. We remained there while Burbury again filled the boiler, and, having got up steam, we made the mouth of a deep inlet which afforded us good harbourage. Here we landed, and found ourselves upon a peninsula shaped like a spoon, the handle that connected it with the land being very narrow. At its upper end it joined the moraine of the great glacier which I had called Giant's Glacier.

As we came in to the beach, three guanacos cantered down and stared and neighed at us. The sight of these animals brightened the prospect, as it was pleasant to see living creatures in what had hitherto seemed to be

an empty amphitheatre of hills. The bay where we had anchored was a shallow lagoon, into which flowed a little stream that wound away out of sight through a thin belt of forest over land comparatively flat. This peninsula carried a light soil and good grass, but bore the appearance of a spot that the winter would strike with peculiar severity. The wood was all /roble/ and /Le-a dura/ and the scrub included califate-bushes, from which last, however, the purple berries had long since departed, much to our sorrow. Huemules, guanacos, pumas, and the red fox gave evident signs of their presence. I observed a pigmy owl {/Glaucidium nanum/) and several caranchos. In the evening, when speaking upon the subject, Cattle informed me that several kinds of fish were to be found in Lake Argentino. Often as we used to make our meal of fish and fari-a (a compound in the concoction of which for good or evil Bernardo stood alone), I used to regret my inability to bring back specimens of the fish from this lake, but I had no means of preserving them.

"Fish and fari-a," indeed, became a standing joke with us. We might threaten to blow each other up by the agency of the launch's peculiar engines, and the threats would pass as nothing ; but the expressed intention of any one of us who proposed to go and catch fish with a view to preparing a meal of "fish and fari-a" soon became too much for the strongest and bravest among us. As a matter of fact, the fish was far from tempting, having a muddy flavour and being full of small bones, which mixed themselves up inextricably with the fari-a.*

* Two kinds of fish came under my observation, but I understood there were four.

That night shut down with a gale and much rain. The trees groaned, and one close to us was blown down. It was with a very thankful heart that I woke up in the middle of the storm and reflected upon the glorious safety of our new-found harbour. Next morning I was awakened sometime in the dusky grey of dawn because a couple of Chiloe widgeon had come in close to the launch, and roasted duck was voted good by the wakeful Burbury. I sleepily thought the widgeon might have waited, and after all something scared the ducks and they flew off to a distance of a couple of hundred yards. My stalk only resulted in my securing one of the birds.

The ice we had observed earlier in the mouth of the most westerly channel had by this time completely blocked the opening. We spent the day wandering about upon the peninsula, and I tried to get some photographs, but the attempt was rather hopeless in the mist and rain. Indeed, although advantage was taken of every lifting of the weather, four pictures were all that this trip allowed of my completing.

The following day, in spite of bad weather, we made a third attempt to head up the North Fjord, at the end of which we hoped to find the "river with clear waters" mentioned by Dr. Moreno, and at the end of that again the unknown lake. We made two hours very slow progress, the north-west wind quickly beating up a troublesome sea. We observed bits of wood travelling faster than is usual in cases of drift, and now made sure that, could we but reach the end of the Fjord, we should find the river whose current we believed to be responsible for the comparatively rapid movement of the wood.

Our hopes were on this occasion destined to disappointment, for, in spite of all our efforts, we were unable to go forward or to make head against the bad weather, which continued for some days. Besides this, the injector of the launch failed to perform its office, and as the machinery was badly in need of repairs, and the cracked plate was letting in water, I thought it better to run before the wind to Cow Monte Harbour, which was, in fact, our headquarters, and where such tools as we had were stored. One point that was always in our favour while making these attempts to force our way up the North Fjord, lay in the fact that the prevailing winds from north-west or south-west, as the case might be, helped rather than hindered us on our return passages.

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May 3 - May 13, 1901 (approx.)

After our return from our trip to the South Fjord the weather became very threatening, and I was beset with many anxious fears that the winter might set in rigidly, and entirely preclude any attempt to solve the problem of the yet unvisited and unknown river and lake whose existence was conjectured at the end of the North Fjord. Snow fell and blocked the pass to Punta Arenas,* which was our south road to the coast, but luckily a milder spell followed, the snow melted and I was encouraged to remain just a little longer to carry out my original idea of making another effort to thoroughly explore the North Fjord.

Storms, however, swept over the lake, and although we under took a couple of short expeditions in the launch, we waited for better days before again facing the difficulties of the Hellgate passage. Again and again we saw squalls and waterspouts come curling down the channel between the frowning cliffs. Day followed day with heavy winds, the coming of the light seemed to be the signal for the gales to rise, whereas on many nights the weather was fairly still, and the water in consequence calmer.

* Burbury made his way south just in the nick of time. I was obliged to send him to the coast to meet Scrivenor, who was, according to my arrangements, about to leave for England.

/[paragraphs omitted]/

At length, weary of waiting-on the wind's vagaries, we determined to start by night, during the quieter period we usually then enjoyed, and make what progress we could up the intricacies of Hellgate, Accordingly, at 1 o'clock P. M. on May 3, We began our voyage. We passed through Hellgate and left many silent bays behind us as we kept on our course just outside the inky shadow of the cliffs. The water was still working after the blow of the daytime, but on the whole we had favourable weather and the stars shone brightly. With dawn the wind arose and we were forced to put in to an anchorage on the east shore of the Fjord.

Afterwards, travelling by day, we made our way to the peninsula, rocks often jutted out into the fairway, but these were easy to locate, as we had been through the channel before and had some knowledge of its reefs. A number of icebergs had been blown down out of the western channel. but the water had fallen considerably since our last visit, and when we reached the peninsula we found it impossible to resume our former camp there, so we were forced to pass an uncommonly cold night on a bare bit of beach without so much as a bush to shelter us.

From time to time we spent a good while on this peninsula. It was studded with erratic boulders, and the soil on it varied from six to twelve inches in depth. On this visit I saw a red-crested woodpecker. The views from the higher part of the peninsula were infinitely grand. The gigantic glacier, the dark forests. the innumerable icebergs floating below the black cliffs - all these combined to make up pictures which I should like to be able to reproduce.

In time the weather moderated, and we made a last essay to penetrate to the farther end of the main Fjord. As we proceeded the water became shallower, so that it was necessary occasionally to take soundings. There were also many rocks. We once more noticed dry sticks and leaves drifting past, and presently ahead of us, through a gap in the Cordillera, we caught a glimpse of flat country. This time we fulfilled our desire and attained to the termination of the Fjord, where we came to the mouth of a river of considerable size. It swung out from round the base of a cliff. and had thrown up a slight bar where it joined the waters of the lake. I named it the River Katarina.

We camped at this point and began at once to explore the valley of the river. It flowed over a stony bed. presenting much the appearance of a large Scotch trout-stream. The /ca-adon/ through which it passed was very wide, and the stream wound greatly. At the time of our visit the river was very shallow, and there was not water enough to float the launch, in fact a stone picked up from the bottom lodged itself between the blades of the propeller and we had to haul up for repairs. This business of repairing was one we often had to perform, and necessity being the mother of invention, the dodges we resorted to were original.

The launch, if once hauled up on the beach and sunk in the sand, would have been too heavy for the three of us to get back into the water. On these occasions we therefore used to cut the largest tree-trunks available and roll them under the keel while still half in the water, then the two heaviest of us would go into the bows, which were, of course, in comparatively deep water, and our weight in this position served to raise the stern sufficiently to allow of the third man to execute the repairs needful to the propeller. In the present instance it was found that the machinery was severely strained, though fortunately no damage had been done to the blades of the propeller.

Though the river was shallow in May, we saw abundant evidence that it must carry a greatly increased volume of water in the earlier part of the year. But not finding it possible to take the launch up the channel, we decided on anchoring her as securely as we could and continuing our expedition in the small canvas boat. This we did a day or two later.

Our camping-ground on the bank of the Katarina was among high and rather coarse grass, which would have made excellent feed for horses, but I should not think it possible to keep horses in that /ca-adon/, as, being encircled by hills, the sun would seldom reach it during the winter. There were many patches of wood, composed of rather stunted trees, but it was difficult to penetrate among them, their trunks grew so close together. A certain amount of game lived in the valley, huemules, guanacos, pumas and Cordillera wolves.

The extraordinary tameness of the huemul here was, of course, accounted for by their entire ignorance of man. During my wanderings from the camp I had opportunities of making many interesting observations on this point. They would almost always, if you kept still and made no attempt to approach them, advance timidly towards you. It was in this valley of the Katarina that I met with the most remarkable instance of boldness on the part of these animals. I have given this story in full in another chapter, but I may shortly allude to it here. I was some miles from the camp, among thick grass and scrub, when I perceived emerging from a thicket at a little distance the spiked horns and red brown sides of a huemul buck; behind him were two does, half hidden in the thicket. Finding that they had perceived me, I lay down on the grass and watched to see what they would do, One could read in their movements and attitudes the battle between timidity and curiosity that was going on within them. A third half-grown doe now appeared, and all four began to drift, as it were, slowly in my direction, keeping their eyes fixed upon me all the time. Now and again they would stop. then move on a few steps nearer, but after a long time they grew courageous enough to come right up to me, and the younger doe sniffed at my boot, then started back some paces, her companions naturally following her example. I could easily have touched her with my hand during a good part of the time. At last the buck lowered his horns as if with the intention of turning me over, but the sun was now sinking, and I was obliged to take my way homewards. As I stirred the huemules made off, but halted at a short distance to stare again at the queer object which had for the first time in their lives entered within their ken.

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Our next move was to trace the river up to its source. After assuring ourselves that the launch could not go up the stream, we made all ship-shape in the camp and prepared to go ahead by putting our bedding and food in the canvas boat. We set out one grey morning, following the left bank of the Katarina. Parallel with the course of the river ran a chain of small hillocks, and behind these again a series of reedy lagoons. These last were literally black with duck. especially the variety known locally as the "white-faced duck," otherwise the Chiloe widgeon. The lagoons contained brackish water, and I fancy the whole depression in which they lie is flooded in the spring.

On this day Cattle and I, from the top of a hillock, descried what we took to be water in the north end of the /ca-adon/. This was our first sight of the lake the shores of which I afterwards reached.

In the evening we camped at a spot opposite to the mouth of a tributary of the Katarina that flowed from the hills on the eastern side. At this point Bernardo knocked up. He had had hard work all day with the boat, for the stream was full of shoals, and wind and current were strong against him. He had been in the river off and on, and as he was already suffering from a slight cold when we set out this treatment had not improved it. By night his chest seemed a good deal affected, and his breathing was difficult. The rain of the afternoon turned to snow in the night, and it became very cold, a comfortless position for a feverish man. Our means for dealing with illness were limited, but hot cocoa and rugs seemed the best treatment under the circumstances, and we further sheltered him under the canvas boat, which, being turned over, made a tolerable hut.

Having brought a certain amount of provisions with us, we did not shoot much. There can be little question that, had Patagonia been a country rich in trophies, its less remote valleys would long ago have known the crack of the rifle. Fortunately for its */ferae naturae/*, the small horns of */Xenclaphus bisuleus/* do not offer sufficient attraction. There is no sport on earth finer than big-game shooting in moderation, but in all parts of the world I should like to see a universal law prohibiting any one sportsman or professional hunter from shooting more than a limited number of a particular animal in a year. This idea, as a universal law, is, of course, impossible of fulfilment, but surely in sport moderation and a due regard for the survival of the various kinds of game should be the guiding rule and principle. However, my pen has carried me away. I merely say that it would be well if public opinion trended more resolutely towards censuring the hunter who selfishly makes immoderate bags. At the present moment he is looked upon as rather a fine fellow by those who lack any real knowledge of the subject, for no man is more strongly opposed to such doings than the true sportsman.

Owing to the unfortunate accident of Bernardo's illness, the general advance of our party was out of the question. It only remained for me to push on alone, and to give up any attempt to take the boat farther. Cattle stayed with Bernardo, to look after him, while I went on lip the valley along the banks of the Katarina.

There can be little doubt that all the */ca-adon/* of this river formed at one time part of Lake Argentino, and that the hills in the valley were merely small islands in the same. One of the most interesting facts in connection with Lake Argentino is the large volume of water that is precipitated into it by a number of rivers and mountain torrents. Besides the Rivers Leona and Katarina, there are two or three streams of considerable size and countless snow-fed cascades falling from the cliffs. On the other hand, the only large outlet is the River Santa Cruz, and though that river carries off an important amount of water to the Atlantic, the quantity is not sufficient to account for the fact that the great lake is surely if slowly shrinking in size. The North and South Fjords with their adjoining reaches of water at one time formed part of a wide-spreading lake, whose waters washed completely round the bases of the mountains -such as Mount Buenos Aires - and of hills that now stand upon out-jutting points of land or actually upon the present lines of the shores. The reason for this shrinkage of the lake, when

appearances would seem to point rather to increase of size, is difficult to discover.

The features of the /ca-adon/ of the Katarina changed but little as I walked on deeper into it. I saw two huemul bucks, one accompanied by two, the other by three does ; I also saw some guanacos. The Giant's Glacier, which crosses the head of Lake Argentino as far as the peninsula on which we camped, ran parallel behind the cliffs of the western shore, glimmering out palely in the north-west ahead of me. Presently I passed over a stream, and later topping a low bluff I found myself on the shores of a lake, the distant gleam of whose waters Cattle and I had seen on the previous day. I was, of course, very eager to take a photograph of it, but everything around was shrouded in mist, and I had with me only a binocular camera, the mechanism of which did not permit of long exposures.

I must admit that I was disappointed with the lake when I arrived at it, as I had expected a much larger piece of water. The nearer shores were somewhat low and covered with boulders, while upon the farther sides rose a semicircle of hills whose escarpments fell in places abruptly to the water. About the inferior spurs of a somewhat higher mountain to the north a dense black forest clung. The morning was grey and the water lay dark and ruffled under a chilling wind, while about the distant cliffs of the northern shore wreaths of cloud hung sullenly, only lifting at intervals here and there sufficient to give a glimpse of the bare crags behind them.

Towards the afternoon luck befriended me, for the sky cleared and the sun broke out for a short time, giving me the opportunity I had been hoping for. I made haste to use the camera with such results as will be seen [here].

This lake I named Lake Pearson.

On my return to the camp I found the sick man improving, which was a relief, as under the circumstances we had very little to give him in the way of comfort. Bernardo was a cheery fellow, who met the disagreeables of his lot good-temperedly, and I have no doubt this helped towards his recovery. Eventually he became quite well.

During the night a comet was visible, hanging in the clear sky like a white sword, hilt downwards. It was very brilliant and very beautiful, seen as we saw it above the dark forest.

There were many reasons why I hoped to be able to push deeper into this region, but it was growing very late in the season, winter with its accompaniment of furious storms was almost upon us, and this fact, joined with the strained and weakened condition of the engine of the launch, compelled us to give up the thought of further exploration. We therefore took advantage of a spell of rather better weather to make our way back down the Fjord. The wind was blowing sulkily out of the north, but this gave us the benefit of a following sea. Once or twice during our passage squalls overtook us, but always blowing mercifully in the

direction of our course. Thus we had a following sea right up to the cliffs of Hellgate. In one place a big iceberg had stranded beneath the cliffs.

We landed under the bluffs of Hellgate and lit a fire of /Le-a dura/, which roared and crackled in the dusk, lighting up the gloom of Hellgate with red light. Later we ran across safely to our anchorage off the Burmeister Peninsula.

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