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978-1-108-01351-2 - The Voyage of Francois Leguat of Bresse, Volume 1

Edited by Samuel Pasfield Oliver

Excerpt

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THE
VOYAGE AND ADVENTURES
OF
FRANCIS LEGUAT,

A GENTLEMAN OF BRESSE.¹

THE State of the Affairs of Religion in *France*, obliging me to seek after some means to leave the Kingdom, I made use of that which Providence furnish'd me with, to pass into *Holland*, where I arriv'd the 6th of *August* 1689.

I had scarce begun to taste the Sweetness of that precious Liberty, which I found in my abode there, and which I had been depriv'd of four whole years, ever since the Revocation of the Edict of *Nants*² in 1685, when I understood that the

¹ François Leguat, of the Province of Bourgogne, brought up in the Province of Bresse, a small district now represented by the department of Ain.

² The Edict of Nantes, which put a temporary end to the religious struggles in France, and assured liberty of belief and safety in worship to the Calvinists, was decreed in 1598.

Louis XIV, under the influence of Madame de Maintenon, having determined for political reasons to re-establish the unity of the Catholic religion throughout his dominions, proceeded by all the means in his power, moral and physical, by cruel persecution, and especially by what were known as *dragonnades*, to enforce his arbitrary acts of despotism ; and finally revoked the Edict of Nantes, eighty-seven years after its original promulgation.

In spite of rigorous prohibitions against emigration, numerous Protestants followed their pastors into exile, and sought in other countries that freedom of conscience denied to them at home. It has been calculated that at least some three hundred thousand Huguenots passed across the frontiers and left France, so that some provinces were deprived of nearly a third of their inhabitants, and many French industries were seriously injured.

Holland, England, and Prussia were the countries which were most benefited by this wholesale emigration, and in fact, at Londou, a whole suburb (Spitalfields) was peopled by the foreign weavers; whilst at

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Marquis *du Quesne*¹ was by the good Pleasure, and under the Protection of my Lords the *States General*, and Messieurs the Directors of the *East India Company*, making Preparations for a Settlement in the Island of *Mascaregne*. To this Purpose two great Ships were equipp'd at *Amsterdam*, aboard which all the French Protestants, who were willing to be of this Colony, were receiv'd *gratis*. The Description of this Island,² which was made publick at that time, and the name

Berlin several industries were first established by the Protestant fugitives. More than twelve thousand soldiers and six hundred officers carried to foreign flags an implacable resentment and sentiments of vengeance against their mother-country.

¹ "Henry and Abraham, the two sons of the great Duquesne, both Protestants like their father, the most remarkable of naval commanders in France during the seventeenth century; and, having already distinguished themselves under his command, they were, like him, excepted from the rigours of the law pronounced against their co-religionists at the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. On the death of their father, in 1688, being given to understand that they would be subjected to persecution, they quitted France. Anticipating the persecutions to which the Calvinists would be subjected, and uneasy as regards the future of his children, he resolved to prepare a safe refuge for them by purchasing the property of Aubonne, near Berne, of which municipality the burgesses granted him the freedom. On hearing of this, Louis XIV asked him his reason for so doing. "Sire," said he, "I have been desirous of securing a property of which I cannot be deprived by the will of a master." It was to this estate of Aubonne that his sons retired; but, previous to his death, he made them swear that, whatever happened, they should never take up arms against France: an oath which they scrupulously kept. Henri Duquesne, the elder of the two brothers, promoter of the expedition which Leguat here mentions, and which was rendered abortive, never more went to sea, but gave himself up entirely to theological studies, and, in 1718, he published a volume, entitled *Réflexions sur l'Eucharistie*. The nephew Duquesne Guiton, with a Dutch squadron, made an expedition to the East Indies, of which the journal was published in 1721." (*Eugène Muller*.)

² *Recueil de Quelques Mémoires servans d'Instruction pour l'Etablissement de l'Isle d'Eden*. A *Amsterdam*. M.DC.LXXXIX. (See Introduction, and Appendix at end of volume.) M. Muller believed all trace of this rare document had been lost; he has since found a copy in the Library of the Arsenal, and another copy has lately been reprinted by M. Sauzier.

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THE ISLE OF EDEN.

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of *Eden*¹ that was given it on account of its Excellency, made me conceive so good an Opinion of it that I was tempted to give it a Visit, resolving to end my Days there in Peace, and out of the Care and Confusion of the World, if I found 'twas but in some measure so Pleasant and Commodious as 'twas describ'd to be.

'Twas so easie for a Man to enter himself in this Colony; and the Idea I had of the Quiet and Pleasure I hop'd to enjoy in this lovely Island was such, that I got over all the Obstacles which lay in my way. I offer'd myself to the Gentlemen who were concerned in the Enterprize. They receiv'd me very favourably, and honour'd me with the Post,

¹ The island in the Indian Ocean, now known as *Reunion*, the largest of the Mascarene Islands, was first named *St. Appollonia* as early as 1527. It was subsequently called *England's Forest* by the British, and *Mascaregne* by the French in 1613. In 1630 we find it written of as *Ile de la Perle*. M. de Flacourt gave it the name of *Bourbon* in 1649, since which date various names have at different times been applied to it, such as *Eden*, as in the narrative of M. du Quesne; *Ile Bonaparte*, under the first Republic and Empire; and finally the present name, *Réunion*.

On the return of M. de la Haye, the viceroy of the Indies, to France, in 1674-75, he advised the French king to send out an expedition with proper officials to take possession of the Island of Bourbon, as it was then called. Accordingly, M. de Vauboulon was despatched there by the Government with a suitable escort, and appointed Governor for the King and the Company (*French East Indian Company*), and Chief Justice of the Island of Bourbon.

M. de Vauboulon took with him a certain Capuchin monk of Quimper, as chaplain, and appointed him Cure of St. Paul. Whether Governor de Vauboulon abused the powers confided in him or not does not clearly appear from the records, but, judging from the conduct of the Dutch Governor of the neighbouring island, the probabilities are that he did; for, anyhow, a revolution took place on the 20th December 1690, when the rebels, headed by Pere Hyacinthe, the Capuchin, deposed M. de Vauboulon, and kept him in prison until he died in confinement at St. Denis, in August 1692, the Sieur Firelin being installed as Commissioner for the Company by the Cure, who, having accomplished his *coup d'état*, retired to his parish at St. Paul.

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or rather Name, of Major of the biggest of the two Ships, which was call'd *La Droite*.

All Things necessary being aboard, and the Masters ready to set sail, waiting only for a fair Wind, we understood that the French King, who had formerly taken Possession of this Isle, had sent a Squadron of seven Men of War that way. The Uncertainty we were in of the Design of that little Fleet, and a just Fear grounded on some advices lately come from *France*, were such powerful Motives with Mr. *du Quesne*,¹ that he disarm'd the two Ships, and disembark'd the Goods and Necessaries, being afraid to expose so many poor Wretches, who were already miserable enough, to Danger; the greatest part of them being Women, and other Persons who cou'd not defend themselves. But that he might fully inform himself of the Design of that Squadron, if there was such a one, he resolv'd to set out a little Frigat, and send her away upon Discovery. Some Persons were chosen to go aboard her, and they had Orders given them concerning the design of the *Voyage*: The substance of which was:

1. To visit the Islands that lie in the Way to the *Cape of good Hope*; particularly, those of *Martin Vas*, and *Tristan*.
2. Afterwards to pass the *Cape of good Hope*, to learn, if it was possible, more certain News of the Isle of *Eden*, and the Design of the French Squadron, which was said to be at Sea.
3. To take Possession of the Isle of *Mascaregne*, in the Name of the said Marquis, who was authoriz'd to enter upon it, in case there were no *French* there.
4. If it cou'd be done without running any considerable Risk, to proceed as far as the Island of *Diego Ruys*, which the French call *Rodrigue*.

¹ The great Duquesne had made his children swear not to take up arms against France, and, therefore, his son wished to prevent the possibility of any aggressive action on the part of the Dutch vessels.

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DESIGN OF THE VOYAGE.

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5. If that Island was found to be sufficiently provided with Things necessary for Settlement, and the Subsistence of those that would live there, then to take Possession of it, in the Name of the said Marquis.
6. To send the Ship back, after unloading the Things that were for the use of the Colony, that intended to settle in this new World.
7. And lastly, to take an exact Account of the Isle, where those that were left behind staid in expectation of the rest of the Colony, who were to come after, in two Years Time at Farthest, and then to possess themselves of the Isle of *Eden*, under the Protection, and by the Assistance of *Messieurs* of the Company.

This Project¹ being thus form'd, all Hands were set to work to forward the Execution of it; and 'twas done with so much Warmth and Expedition, that the Ship was soon ready to put to Sea. Care was taken to provide every Thing necessary for such an Enterprise; and the Vessel was so little, and so good a Sailer, that she was nam'd the *Swallow*. Her Flag had Mons. *du Quesne's* Arms in it, with this Device, "*Libertas sine Licentia*"; which was us'd by that wise Pope Adrian VI.² Our little Frigate was mounted with six Guns, and had ten Seamen, commanded by *Anthony Vallean*, of the Isle of *Rhe*. When 'twas ready to sail, several of the Passengers, whose Names had been enroll'd for this Service, shrunk back and chang'd their Opinion; which was the occasion of the small Number that embark'd; for the first Complement that design'd to go in her were five

¹ This project is fully described in despatches in the Cape archives.

² "They never fail at *Utrecht*, to shew Strangers the House of Pope Adrian VI, Son of one nam'd *Florent Boyen*, a Brewer in that City; and I think, the best Man that ever bore the Name of Pope. . . . However, though *Adrian* oppos'd *Luther*, several Bigots of that *Catholic* Religion believ'd they had found out that he favour'd him."—(Maximilian Misson, *New Voyage to Italy*, vol. i, pp. 66-67). Hadrianus VI, died 1523.

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and twenty. The Ten who continu'd in their Resolution to the last were :

Paul Be—le,¹ twenty Years old, a Merchant's son of *Metz*.

Jacques de la Case, thirty Years old, a Merchant's Son of *Nerac*, who had been an Officer in the Elector of *Brandenburgh's* Army.

Jean Testard, a Druggist, twenty-six Years old, a Merchant's Son of *St. Quintin* in *Picardy*.

Isaac Boyer, a Merchant, about twenty-seven Years old, Son of an Apothecary near *Nerac*.

Jean de la Haye, a Silversmith of *Roan*, twenty-three Years old.

Jacques Guiguer, twenty Years old, a Merchant's Son of *Lyons*.

Jean Pagni,² thirty Years old, a Convert and Patrician of *Roan*.

Robert Anselin, eighteen Years old, a Miller's Son of *Picardy*.

Pierrot, twelve Years old, of *Roan*.

And *Francis Leguat*, Esq., above fifty Years of Age, of the Province of Burgundy, who was put over the rest.

Tho' it cou'd not but be a very great Trouble to us to see our selves depriv'd of fifteen of our Companions, when we least expected it, and look'd on them as Persons destin'd to the same Fortune as we were, who perhaps might be a Comfort and Help to us: Yet we cheerfully resign'd our selves into the Hands of Providence, and parted from *Amsterdam* the 10th of *July* 1690. The 13th we arriv'd in *Txel* Road, where we lay till the fourth of *September* following. We then set Sail, in company of 24 Ships, *English* and *Dutch*. We bent our Course Northward, by favour of an East South-

¹ *Paul Bénelle* (or *Bennelle*, according to M. Muller).

² Jean Pagni died in April, 1691, on board, off *Diego Ruys I*.

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THE FAMOUS THULE.

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East Wind, which fill'd our Sails to our Hearts content; but the next Night it chopp'd about, and became contrary: there rose also a Tempest, which, however, did us no more hurt than to make us pay the usual Tribute to the Sea. The 14th the Wind shifting to the South-west, our Admiral fir'd a Gun, to make us keep our Way Northward. The next Day we spy'd the Isles of *Schetland*, in the height of 29 deg. 42 min. The 18th we made those Isles, and our Ship doubled the Cape, but with much difficulty; the Man that was at the Helm, and had not perceiv'd that our Vessel was carry'd away by a rapid Current, was surpriz'd when he saw a flat Rock, which was not above a Foot under Water, and but seven or eight Fathom distant from us; he cry'd out so terribly, that we were all frightened, and every Man began to strip, in hopes of swimming to the Island; but the Water was deep enough at the side of the Rock for our poor little Frigat to pass, and we had the good Fortune to escape being Ship-wreck'd.

Such as have been as far as this End of the World, says an ancient Author, as far as the famous *Thule*, have a Right to Lye with Impunity, and to make themselves be believ'd without fear of being reprehended; and certainly the Number of those that make use of this Privilege is very great, conformable to an old Proverb of ours, *A Beau mentir qui vient de Loin*;—A good Lyer ought to come a great way.—As for us, we shall say nothing but exact Truth, no more than if we had never been as far as *Thule*.

This Island makes us still afraid as often as we think of it, and as we were all of us busie endeavouring to preserve our selves from this new Danger, one of our Seamen spy'd a *French Privateer*¹ bearing down upon us with all the Sail she could make. We went to Prayers, and prepar'd to defend our selves; but we were so happy as to escape this Enemy also; for after we had doubled the Cape, we found

¹ In original “un *copre*”, a Dutch term for a corsair.

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she cou'd not gain upon us; however, she pursu'd us six Hours, till Night coming on we lost sight of her, and ran back the false Course we had kept to escape him. We were all of us convinc'd by this double Deliverance the same Day, that we had been under the singular Protection of the Almighty, and we render'd the Thanks that were due to his Divine Favour.

The 22d we took a sort of Curlew by hand, for it came and perch'd upon our Sails: abundance of Purs [*Allouettes de Mer*"] follow'd us, flying about our Ship.

The 28th an innumerable Army of Porpuses past by us; at which Sight we were very well pleas'd; they seem'd to us to march really along in order of Battel, and they leap'd up and down by turns, still keeping their Ranks; they approach'd so near to us that we struck one; we darted at him with a Trident, fasten'd at the End of a Rope: when they are wounded they grow weak, through loss of Blood, and then may be easily taken up: The blood of these Animals is hot; they bear their Young in their Bellies like Whales, Laman-tines, and some other Fish; the inside of their Body is very like that of a Hog, but the Flesh is Oily and has an ill taste.

The 6th of *October* we spy'd a Squadron of 13 great Dutch Men of War, of which one gave us chase; for, not knowing what she was, we made the best of our way from her; when she came up to us, she hung out her Colours; we did the same, and then we both continu'd our several Courses.

The 22d we discover'd the *Canary Islands*¹ by Moonlight, and fell in with the Trade-Winds, which never left us; or, rather, which we never left till we came in the 9th Degree. By our Account we were 50 Leagues to the Wind-ward of *Palma*, between *Forteventura* and the *Grand Canaries*.

¹ The archipelago of the Canaries is situated near the polar limit of the north-east trade winds, the prevailing breeze setting from the north-east to north.

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FLYING FISH.

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We coasted along the Island *Forteventura*, with a Larboard Tack, a whole Day, and in the Evening, about Sun-set we perceiv'd the *Grand Canaries*; we past by it in the Night without meeting with any Ship, tho' commonly they are to be met with thereabouts, especially *Turks*; they post themselves there to lie in wait for the Ships that come out loaden with Wines, in hopes of picking up some of them.

The 28th we were in the height of 24 deg. 29 min. and saw a vast Number of flying Fish about us. I observ'd one of them very exactly; 'twas about 10 Inches long; there are few larger, and abundance shorter: Its Back was of a Russet-brown Colour, speckled with blue Spots, inclining to a greenish, with a little black amongst it. Its naked Belly was black, and blue, and its Sides cover'd with little Scales of dark red. Its long Wings or Fins were brown, with Sea-green Spots upon them. The young Ones are of a light grey, and their Tail the same. Its Eye is great and rais'd; the Sight of it large and blue, the rest black. The Prickles upon the Head of it are of a greyish Colour, and like a sort of very rough Chagreen.

Our Books represent this Fish¹ after another manner; and I doubt not but there are some of them of different sorts of Figures; for Nature varies in every thing. The *Irish* Horses are not of a like make with those of *Friseland*, nor *Kentish* Cows like *Middlesex*, tho' those two Counties are contiguous; much less are they like those of *Iseland*, which have no Horns. And, without going out of our own Species,

¹ "When, for instance, he (Leguat) obtained the first flying-fish, he examined, described, represented, and compared them with the representations of other authors, discovering at once that there exists among these animals two forms, those now called *Dactylopterus* and *Exocoetus*. He appends, for this reason, to his drawing the copies of three figures of these fish taken from other works, and on that of Olearius makes the true observation that it had probably been drawn from a dried specimen, and was therefore inaccurate; for he says, '*quand ces animaux-là viennent à se secher, il est difficile d'en observer la véritable forme.*'" (Professor Schlegel, *Ibis*, 1866, p. 151.)

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one Man is a *Negro*, another a *Dutch* Man, and another a *Chinese*.

To return to our Fish. A certain Naturalist calls that which is mark'd A, a Sea-Swallow, and attributes a great many Properties to it, which I shall not repeat. That which I have mark'd B, is called a Mullet, in *Sanson Mathurin's*¹ Journal; he was a famous Pilot in the *Mediterranean*, and us'd to see them in the *Gulph of Lyons* and elsewhere. The 3rd, mark'd C, was taken from the K. of *Denmark's* Cabinet, where I have some reason to believe 'tis not exactly design'd: For when these Animals grow dry, 'tis a hard matter to observe their true Form. There are some of them that have four Wings. Those we eat tasted something like a Herring.

These poor little Creatures, that may be taken for an Emblem of perpetual Fear, are continually flying and rising to save themselves; they are very often caught in the Ship's Sails: they fly as long as there remains any Moisture in their Wings; which, as soon as they are dry, turn to Fins again; and they are forc'd to take again to the water, or else, their Fright is always so great, they would fly to the End of the World.

The Efforts they make to become rather Inhabitants of the Air than of the Water, is to avoid the Persecution of the Goldfish and the Bonita's, who are at eternal War with them. But these wretched Animals fly from one Peril, and are immediately overtaken by another; for the cruel Birds are their irreconcilable Enemies, and always on the watch in great Flocks to devour them, as soon as they enter the new Element, where they thought they shou'd find an Asylum from their Foes of the Sea. The Porpoises make the same War upon the Goldfish, as the latter do on the Flying Fish: and all this gives us a true Image of human Life; which is

¹ Sanson Mathurin, after whom, probably, Port Mathurin, in Rodriguez, was named.