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978-1-108-06098-1 - Narrative of a Voyage to Patagonia and Terra del Fuego: Through the Straits of Magellan, in H.M.S. Adventure and Beagle, in 1826 and 1827

John Macdouall

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Narrative of a Voyage to Patagonia and Terra del Fuego

On 22 May 1826, H.M.S. *Beagle* left Plymouth Sound on her maiden voyage, accompanying H.M.S. *Adventure* to Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego to survey the Strait of Magellan. Years later, Royal Naval officer John Macdouall (fl. 1820–30) proclaimed himself ‘one whose visit to Port Famine, and some-time residence on that inhospitable coast, have left no wish of re-visiting it, really or metaphorically’. Nevertheless, his first-hand account of the first nineteen months of the *Beagle*’s voyage, originally published in 1833, is a highly entertaining read. With an amusing combination of self-deprecation and caustic observation, and in preference to ‘the trouble of detailing the monotonous course of a long sea voyage’, Macdouall relates anecdotes about life aboard ship and the peoples and places encountered. While unforgiving of ‘absurd’ Spanish customs and ‘national indolence’, and Rio de Janeiro’s ‘bowing hypocritical Portuguese’, he offers a generally kinder portrait of Fuegian and Patagonian ‘savages’.

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Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108060981

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2013

This edition first published 1833

This digitally printed version 2013

ISBN 978-1-108-06098-1 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

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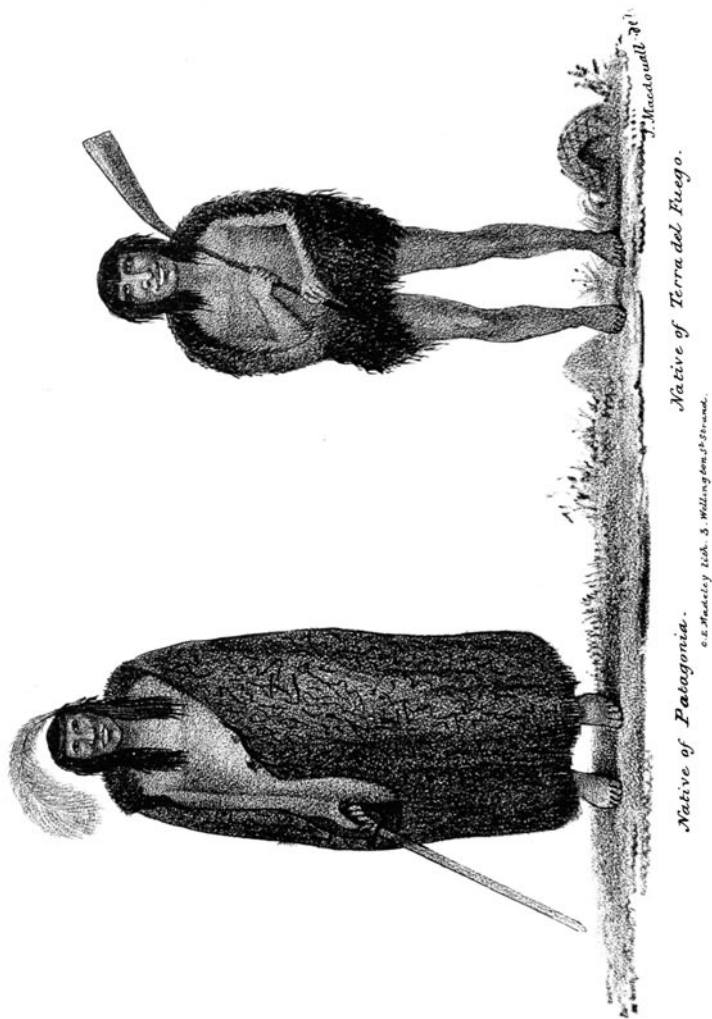
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BY JOHN MACDOUALL, R.N.

“_____ Zounds, I'll print it!
Your int'rest Sir._____”

POPE.

LONDON:
RENSHAW AND RUSH, 356, STRAND.

MDCCCXXXIII.

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P R E F A C E.

I DO not find much difficulty in explaining the motives which induced me to offer this Narrative for publication. Whether it will be well or ill-received, I cannot possibly determine. I hope for the best. I have written it not only with the view of gain (always pleasant, though sometimes fallacious, as the mirage of the desert to the thirst-parched pilgrim), but also, I am justified in adding, with that of ridding myself of the remarks of certain kind-hearted people, yclept friends, *toujours prêt* at pointing out what ought to be done on all possible occasions. These benevolent personages were continually worrying me in my joyous ruminations with the reiteration of their kind wishes and wonderings, usually rounded off with a “ why don’t you

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publish?" followed by the good-natured remarks of "no resolution—want of energy—vague aspirations—*et id genus omne*." Should I not attempt, I shall be upbraided and vilified, or failing in the attempt I shall be laughed at: a pleasant alternative. The latter, however, in common with my superiors and my more practised brethren in the art of writing, I must be content to endure. Criticism claims it as a right to find or make her victims.

A fine opportunity is now offered for any affluent and high-minded individuals to exercise the influence with which a happier fortune, and it may be more *sterling* deserts, have invested them in favour of one whose visit to *Port Famine*, and some time residence on that inhospitable coast, have left no wish of *re-visiting* it, really or metaphorically—"I lack advancement."