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978-1-108-06433-0 - The History of a Voyage to the Malouine (or Falkland) Islands: Made in 1763 and 1764, under the Command of M. de Bougainville, in Order to Form a Settlement there

Antoine-Joseph Pernety

Excerpt

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A N

HISTORICAL JOURNAL

O F M Y

V O Y A G E

T O T H E

M A L O U I N E I S L A N D S,

W I T H T H E

Observations I made on the Inhabitants and on the  
Natural History of the Places I met with in my Way.

**I** LEFT Paris the 17th of August 1763, at two o'clock in the afternoon. We stopped at Pontchartrain, in expectation of M. d'Arboulin, at that time Administrator General of the posts in France, who was returning from his estate at Montigny to Paris. M. de Bougainville, his nephew, was desirous of consulting with him on the arrangements necessary to be taken relative to the expences attending the building the two frigates, and the voyage we were going to undertake: M. d'Arboulin had a large share in the undertaking. We waited for him till near seven o'clock; he came at last, and after a conference of about an hour set out for Paris, and we at the same time for St. Malo. We travelled the two following nights and days, stopping only at Rennes for a few hours in the middle of the

D 2 day

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day to let the heat go off, which was excessive, and to fatten one of our wheels, the spokes of which could not be kept in the nave. On Sunday, the 20th, about two in the morning, we arrived at Beaufejour. This is a very pretty country feat, situated at one end of St. Servant. M. Bougainville de Nerville, cousin-german to M. de Bougainville, had arrived there five days before us, and waited our coming. We drank but one glass of cyder and ran to bed, having more desire to sleep than eat.

M. Duclos Guyot, who had been pitched upon to command the *Eagle* frigate, under the orders of M. de Bougainville, came to meet us at Beaufejour, with some of the officers who were to embark with us. I passed my time in seeing the towns of St. Malo and St. Servant, and the environs, till the 25th, when we went to Port Solidor, for the ceremony of baptising our two frigates, which was performed with the usual solemnities. All the officers and sailors, who were to embark in them, were on board. M. N. chaplain and director of the hospital of St. Saviour, in the town of St. Malo, said mass on board the *Eagle*, and performed all the ceremonies customary upon such occasions. The two frigates, anchored close by each other, gave a general salute at the beginning of the mass, and another at the end during the prayer for the King.

The next day, Don Jamin, prior of the Benedictines of the convent of St. Benoit, with whom I had been much connected, while he was professor of divinity in the abbey of St. Germain des Pres at Paris, entertained M. de Bougainville, Mess. Duclos Guyot, Chênart de la Gyraudais, de Belcourt, Lieutenant of infantry, l' Huillier de la Serre, Engineer, and myself, at dinner.

We embarked our baggage, beds, and other necessaries for the voyage, and the 29th we lay on board. It was the first of September before every thing was embarked.

By five o'clock that morning we left Solidor, with a brisk wind to N. W. in the frigate *Eagle*, with a crew of 100 men, mounting 20 guns, pierced for 24, commanded by the Sieur Duclos Guyot of St. Malo, Captain of a fireship, in company with the  
floop

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floop Sphinx, crew 40 men, mounting 8 guns and 6 swivels, commanded by the Sieur Chénart de la Gyraudais of St. Malo, Lieutenant of a frigate, both under the command of M. de Bougainville, Knight of St. Louis, Colonel of infantry, and Captain of a ship : at ten in the morning we were in the road of Rance, or St. Malo.

We were only waiting for a favourable wind to set sail the next morning, the 2d of September, when three or four persons of St. Malo raised difficulties at the Admiralty upon our departure. M. de Bougainville, having received notice of it, went on shore to St. Malo, appeared at the Admiralty, and answered every objection so fully, that judgment was given in his favour. Thinking, however, that it was proper to inform the ministry of this transaction, he sent off a courier with dispatches at two in the morning, Sunday the 4th. The courier, who was his own servant, made so much haste, that he returned to St. Malo, with an answer, in fifty-nine hours from his setting off.

On the 8th at night, being the nativity of the Virgin, the wind appearing at S. S. W. orders were given to unmoor, which was accordingly done by one in the morning, and at half past six we set sail, the gale continuing fresh.

We kept under sail the 9th, and after having cleared the harbour, the wind being got about to S. W. and veering more and more to Westward, as we approached Cape Frehel, we came to anchor about noon. The floop Sphinx followed our example. Our two frigates were then in the same situation in which the English fleet was at the affair of St. Cas, where they were so roughly handled. This anchorage is by no means secure : many ships have been lost here.

While we remained here, I took the opportunity of putting into a small cask, which held about six gallons of water, a composition of M. Sequin's, to preserve water from spoiling in long voyages. A chymist had given another, for the same purpose, to M. de Bougainville. It was a paste of a greyish cast ; which seemed to be made of clay, and the powder of crude antimony.

Some

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Some said, there was a mixture of crude mercury in it. But, as M. de Bougainville did not shew it to me before we got on board, I did not analyse it; and he, under the uncertainty he was in with respect to the ingredients, was not very desirous of trying the effects of it. For myself, as I knew the composition of M. Sequin's drug, which is nothing but spirit of salt, and that, at the same time, it preserves the water from corruption, and renders it more wholesome and useful in preventing or curing the scurvy, I made no scruple of trying it. What were the effects of it will be seen in the sequel.

The 15th we got again under sail, and the wind being still contrary, got sight of the light-house of Frehel the 17th, at the distance of about four leagues: on the 18th we resolved to come to anchor. Accordingly we stood in to shore: the Sphinx did the same; and, after much difficulty in weathering the castle of la Latte, we anchored about two in the afternoon.

As the sea was become very calm, and the wind tolerably quiet, by nine this morning, M. Bougainville, Mess. de Belcourt, l'Huillier, Donat, de la Gyraudais Captain of the Sphinx and myself, had been to the island *Agôt* to shoot rabbits; but we saw only two in the course of three hours. As I had no other game in view than the finding of plants, or other curiosities, that might happen to lye in my way, I amused myself with picking up the seeds of radishes, or wild horse-radish, and some shells. Towards noon, we began to find ourselves hungry, we had killed nothing, and were at a loss for our dinner. Upon this we called a council, and it was resolved to go and beg a dinner of the prior of St. Jacut. We went immediately into our boat, and got to the abbey about two o'clock. The prior, and the other Benedictines, my brethren, received us in the most obliging manner, and treated us with the same hospitality, which we had met with the sixth of this month, when we dined five or six of us with the prior of Benedictines at St. Malo. The prior of St. Jacut had dined on board the Eagle the 13th, and M. de Bougainville had done the honours in the best manner.

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As soon as dinner was over at St. Jacut, I put the prior in mind of the offer he had made us of greens from their garden. He, with great civility, gave us leave to take what we pleased, and we loaded our boat with cabbages and leeks.

On the 20th, at one in the afternoon, we shipped our boats, wind at S. S. W. brisk gale, inclinable to squalls. By three we were under sail. After doubling the point of the castle of la Latte, we found the wind at N. W. so came to anchor again.

At nine in the evening we had a violent squall of wind, which lasted above half an hour. During this, an Acadian, one of our passengers, stood on the fore-castle with his arms folded, and, while the crew were all employed, kept looking on with the utmost composure. M. de Bougainville, to whom a complaint had been made of this very man a few days before for the same kind of behaviour, and who had spoke to him about it, could not now refrain for giving him a reprimand. The Acadian, without returning an answer, went below deck, and there exclaimed loudly against this treatment to his wife, his father, and two other Acadian families, which were likewise passengers, advising them to follow his example; for after all, says he, we were not hired, nor taken on board to work our passage, but as volunteers and passengers; and, for my part, I would much rather have staid in France, than have embarked on such conditions.

All this discourse was reported to M. de Bougainville, who was piqued at it, and with reason. These Acadian families had lived at St. Servant, and St. Malo, ever since the English took Acadia from us. The King allowed them so much a head, in the same manner as his regular troops; and these families had scarce any other resource than this sort of pay and their own labour. M. de Bougainville offered to take them on board with him, and to carry them to a country where he would give them a landed property, and many other advantages, which they could never expect in France. He had even furnished them with goods and money in advance. Upon the report that was made to him of the discourse of this Acadian, he said, there was nothing more to be done than

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to fet them on shore, and fend them back to St. Servant ; since they were fond of misery, they might go there and enjoy it. As soon as this was told to the other families, it made so great an impression on them, that the women burst into tears, and the men upbraided the Acadian, who had been the cause of it, and a disagreement among them ensued. Of this M. de Bougainville was soon informed. The next day, the 21<sup>st</sup>, after prayers, he called them all before him; there are, said he, some discontented persons among you, who repent of having embarked with me. I do not require you to do the duty of common failors : I did not take you on board with me upon that footing ; but, at the same time, I did not mean that you should consider yourselves as mere passengers, and not lend a hand upon occasion. You are at liberty to go back to St. Malo, St. Servant, or whatever place you think fit ; you have only to speak, and you will be fet on shore immediately.

The Acadian and his father declared, they chose to return to St. Servant. The two other families desired to go the voyage. Early in the afternoon the father, the son and his wife were landed near St. Cast, with their effects ; and M. de Bougainville, out of charity, left them the money he had obtained in advance for them from the King. The other two families were rejoiced at this separation and congratulated each other upon their departure. The wife was of a peevish temper, and her husband was so jealous of her, that he would scarce leave her an instant ; he watched even her slightest motions, and would infallibly have disturbed the good understanding they were desirous of preserving among themselves. A perfect union prevailed between the two families, that made the voyage with us, and were landed and settled by us on the Malouine Islands. One of them consisted of a man, his wife, two children, one a boy of three years old, the other a girl of one year, and two sisters of the wife, one twenty, and the other seventeen. The other family was composed of a man, his wife, a boy of four years old, and the wife's sister,

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## TO THE MALOUINE ISLANDS. 7

filter, about sixteen. The wife was ready to lie in, when we left the island on our return to France.

In the morning of the 23d of September, the wind got to E. N. E. an easy gale. As it seemed steady in that point, M. Duclos our Captain made a signal to bring in our long-boat, and yawl, which were on shore, the long boat to get water, and the yawl to fetch the failors, and the women that washed the linen. M. de Bougainville, M. de Belcourt, M. l'Huillier, and M. Donat were out in pursuit of game, near two leagues up the country, and proposed to dine at the Castle of la Latte, where M. Mauclair and myself expected them till half past two. M. Duclos seeing that none of them came on board fired a gun, which hastened the return of our sportsmen; but as the time pressed, and they had dined in the country, they would not make any stay at the castle of la Latte. We sent the dinner on board again, where M. Mauclair, and I contented ourselves with a single glass till supper.

At three, signal was given to the Sphinx to weigh anchor. At six, our boats being embarked, we set sail from Cape Frehel; and after several tacks to double the castle of la Latte, at nine we were North and South of the point of the Cape.

On Monday, the 25th, about four in the afternoon, we threw out a line with a double hook. The hook was scarcely in the water, before a fish, in shape and colour resembling a mackrel, bit at it, and was taken. It weighed about thirty pounds, and had not two handfuls of entrails, liver, &c. All the rest was solid flesh, like that of the thunny, of which it had the colour and flavour. An excellent soup was made of it the next day. Several slices of it were brought up with different sauces, and we found it very good: it is somewhat dry, but not so much as the bonito. It is called by the French, *Grand-Oreille*.

The hook, with which it was caught, was not baited with flesh, fish, or any insect. It is composed of two stems of iron, about the thickness of the quill of a pen, fastened together. They cover this double shank with tow, so as to give it the form of a

E spindle:

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spindle : the tow is covered with a piece of strong white cloth and a plate of lead ; to this they join two or four white feathers from the wing of a goose or fowl, placing them in such a manner as to resemble fins when extended. In this state, the hook has nearly the appearance of a flying fish. The end of the shank is turned in a ring, through which they put a brass wire of almost the same thickness, and about two feet and a half in length ; the whole of this is thrown into the water, being fastened to a cord about the thickness of one's little finger, and of the length of twelve fathom. One end of this cord is fastened to the stern of the ship ; the other, where the hook is, drags at a great distance in the track of the ship.

We continued our voyage for several days without any thing remarkable, wind varying, and weather generally stormy. We saw several ships at a distance, which we took to be on their return from the cod fishery on the banks of Newfoundland. One of them brought to, and spoke with us.

On the 2d of October, about nine in the morning, we descried a vessel without masts, and bore down upon her in order to give her what assistance we could. At ten we spoke with her. She proved to be a Dutch Merchantman of Amsterdam ; she was coming from Curasol, and meeting with a gust of wind at about a hundred leagues from Bermudas, they were obliged to cut away the mizzen and main mast. We inquired if they were in want of any thing ; they answered, that they had five French ladies on board whom they were carrying to France, but that they could not put their boat to sea. We acquainted them, that we were just come from France, and should not return thither for several months, for which reason we could not take charge of the ladies ; but if they were in want of any thing else, they might come and fetch it. They again told us, that they could not put their boat to sea. The sea indeed ran high, and we not caring to expose ours to it, wished them a better voyage and continued our course S. W.  $\frac{1}{4}$  W.



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## TO THE MALOUINE ISLANDS. 9

The 5th, at break of day we discovered a sail. We were in those latitudes, where the Sallee Rovers sometimes cruize; and we knew, they had a Frigate at sea, called the Bird, of 36 guns and 300 men, which the English had sold to the Salletines, and they had given the command of it to a renegade captain of Provence, a good seaman and of approved courage. They had also a sloop of 12 guns and a hundred men. In consequence of this, the commandant of our two frigates had issued out orders, that they might be able to act in concert, in case of an attack. The plan of the engagement was fixed up; the guns and small arms were prepared; every man repaired to the post allotted him, and we bore down. It was settled, that if this was the Salletine frigate, the Sphinx should hoist English colours, and seem to make all the sail she could to get under the fire of the frigate, to avoid falling into our hands. We in consequence were to hoist French colours, and make a shew of pursuing the Sphinx, firing at her at the same time as if to bring her to. As soon as the Salletine frigate should be got between the Sphinx and us, the Sphinx was to hoist French colours, and then make her a compliment of her whole broadside, so that she should find herself between two fires. It was hoped, that by this manœuvre, we might make up for our want of numbers, and shatter her so by a vigorous attack, that she should be obliged to strike.

Our men were brave fellows, and displayed at this time an air of gaiety and resolution. They had indeed a great confidence in the skill and courage of our captains, and other officers, with whom they had made cruizes in the last war, and under whose command they had taken many prizes, and had even made themselves masters of some English ships at close quarters.

As we neared the ship we had seen, we thought we could discover that she was English built. But as we knew, the English had sold several ships to the Salletines; and this, notwithstanding we bore down upon her, hoisted no colours, we took her for a Salletine scout. On this we fired a gun, and advanced upon her. Still she hoisted no colours. We now fired a

E 2

loaded

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loaded gun, and it is probable she felt the wind of the ball. She then lay to for a moment, and afterwards stood for us, without hoisting. When she was got pretty near, she hoisted English colours, and passed so close to us, that we discovered the captain to be the same Guernsey man, who served as pilot to the English in the last war, when they made their descents at Cancale and St. Cas. The usual questions were put to him in French, as, from what port, and whither he was bound, and what was the name of his ship. He made no answer. M. de Belcourt took the speaking trumpet, and put the same questions to him in English, with all the embellishments of the emphatic sea style, adding, that he deserved to have had his ship sunk for not hoisting, after having been twice fired at. To this he replied in English, and alledged, that his colours had been entangled among the goods. It proved to be a merchant ship with two masts, bound, as he told us, from Lisbon to St. Michael's, one of the Azores.

The 8th in the morning being calmed, we sent out our cutter for M. de la Gyraudais, captain of the Sphinx. He came on board us at seven. M. de Bougainville, and M. du Clos our captain, had a conference with him. He received orders for his rendezvous in case of separation, and exact drawings of the places we were to touch at, and of those we expected to find in our course. M. de la Gyraudais returned to his own ship about nine.

The 9th and 10th, the calms continued with fogs, and some storms of rain. The 11th the same. The currents here seem to run North; as may be conjectured from the difference we found between our reckonings and observation of yesterday and to-day, in which time we had made seven leagues and a half of way. The 13th in the morning, the sea being fallen after a storm which rose the evening before, we caught three fish called bonitos. There were not less than fifteen of them and two gold fish, playing about on the starboard of our stern. We saw at the same time some other fishes which go under the name of pilots. One of these was taken in a net; the bonitos were caught with a  
line,