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François Froger

Excerpt

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THE JOURNAL
OF THE FIRST
FRENCH EMBASSY TO CHINA,
IN 1698, 1699, AND 1700.

ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST VOYAGE OF THE FRENCH TO CHINA IN 1698, 1699, AND 1700, IN THE AMPHITRITE, ARMED WITH THIRTY GUNS, OF FIVE HUNDRED TONS BURTHEN; AND WITH A CREW OF ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY MEN, COMMANDED BY CHEVALIER DE LA ROQUE—REMARKS BEING ADDED UPON TRADE, UPON THE PROPER SEASONS FOR SUCH EXPEDITIONS, AND UPON OTHER INTERESTING MATTERS.

(The following journal was kept on board the ship.)

I.

FROM LA ROCHELLE TO THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE.

6TH OF MARCH TO THE 7TH OF JUNE, 1698.

MARCH, 1698. The 6th March, 1698, at about nine A.M., we set sail from the road of

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La Rochelle. But the wind shifting from north-east to east-south-east, and at noon it falling dead calm, we were compelled to anchor again till next day.

Our second captains were MM. Geraldin, Salioz, and La Rigaudiere;—the lieutenants were M.M. de Boissy and Barilly; and the midshipmen, MM. Sabrevois, La Grange, Beaulieu, Geraldin the younger, and Filye.

The company's chief director on board was M. Benac, with M. Poullesel under him as a director and cashier; M. Boisar as a director and superintendent; M. Francia as supercargo; La Garde as secretary; two clerks, and eight artisans.

We had also two clerks of the East India Company on board, whose duty it was to be privy to all our transactions, and to prevent our trading anywhere in the East. This was a condition made by the two companies with each other.

The Reverend Father Bouvet took out with him in the ship seven missionary Jesuits, a Brother, and an Italian painter, named Ghirardini.

We got under way at seven A.M., and passed

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through the Channel of Antioche, with a moderate breeze from east-south-east. Towards four P.M. we lost sight of land.

On the 9th, in latitude 45 deg. 30 min., and longitude 15 deg. 6 min., when we had made ninety leagues, M. de Benac produced his sealed instructions, which had been ordered to be opened in that latitude, and which he had brought with him from Paris.

But M. de la Roque, on commencing the consultation, claimed to be entitled, as the commander, to have possession of those sealed instructions. On the other hand, M. de Benac urged, that as representative of the company, and its chief director, he ought to keep them. When they could not agree, a new council was held, which decided unanimously in favour of the claim of the captain. The missionary Jesuits were allowed two votes at this council.

This incident proves the utility of such consultations; as it often happens that, in long sea voyages, serious misunderstandings arise from unforeseen difficulties, apparently of little importance, and which would be easily settled if the calm opinions of experienced sea-officers were taken.

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The intention of the company, as declared in its first orders, was, that we should sail direct to within one hundred leagues of the Cape of Good Hope, and there open our *second* orders.

On the 10th and 11th March, the wind veered round to the south, the sea rose, and the ship laboured greatly. Early on the eleventh we saw a small ship with her foretop-mast gone. The wind then changed to a gale from west-north-west, so that we lay to all night.

The 13th and 14th the gale abated, and the wind shifted to north-east and east-south-east; during this we saw a sloop standing north.

Towards 6 A.M. of the 15th, when we were in about the parallel of Cape Finisterre, we saw two vessels coming down upon us with a free wind. They made us out only within gun shot and half distance, when they hauled up, and made sail close to the wind. This led us to suppose that they were Saltee rovers, or people not aware of the peace.*

* Signor Ghirardini's account of this alarm is in his usual witty strain. "The 15th of March," says he, "I

From the 15th to the 18th the wind kept made the discovery that more is to be dreaded at sea than to be eaten by the fish. We approached the coast of a piratical people called Saltins, a barbarous race—the corsairs of Sallee, subject to the King of Morocco;—

Di cui l'antica legge ogn'un ch' arriva
In perpetuo tien servo ò che l'occidi;—

who, of old, make slaves of all they meet, or put them to death.

“To be taken by such wretches would assuredly be a greater evil than to perish in the sea.

Voglio che inanzi il mar m'affoghi,
Chio senta mai di servitute i gioghi.

“I would rather be ingulphed in the ocean than be for ever in bondage.

“As I was in the midst of these melancholy speculations, two ships were seen right astern, coming down upon us hand over hand. These must be our formidable Sallee rovers. ‘*Beat to quarters,*’ shouted our Commander. ‘*We must fight for our liberty, we must conquer or die. To become slaves will be worse than death.*’ Hereupon every soul on board was assigned his post.

“For my part, I could not comprehend the nature—the ill-breeding of these Africans, who were ready to make so unreasonable an attack upon a harmless ship that had not offered them the slightest offence. My mind was, however, made up to fight it out, when the intelligence that the supposed Corsairs had hoisted a white ensign, and were standing off on their own course, as we pursued ours, permitted us to breathe again freely. Heaven be praised for this escape with the penalty of the fright.”

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shifting from south-south-west to north-east, but fresh; and the weather was fine. Father Bouvet now began his lessons in the Chinese and Tartar languages.

The whole morning of the 21st we saw porpoises, and numerous birds; and a little after twelve we sighted Madeira, above fifteen leagues to the south-south-west. According to the reckoning of our pilot, we ought to have passed that island at a distance of forty leagues, if the current setting in to the Mediterranean had not carried us out of our course to the eastward. At four P.M. we saw five ships in shore, standing north. The wind, at east-north-east, was fair and fresh.

At sunrise, the 22d, we sighted the Ferro islands, thirteen leagues to the east-south-east; and we began to bear due south, in order to leave Cape de Verd to starboard.

Until the 31st, the wind continued east-north-east; and then north and north-west. All the while the fog was so thick that the sea looked quite altered and muddy. In latitude 17 deg. 30 min. we saw cuttle fish and sea-weed, notwithstanding we were sixty leagues' distance from the nearest of the Cape de Verd islands.

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The 1st of April we saw turtle, dolphin, and shoals of flying fish. We were now in latitude 10 deg. 32 min. north, and longitude 35 deg. 31 min. by reckoning. We therefore changed the course to $8\frac{1}{4}$ south east, in order to cross the line between 35 deg. and 36 long.

The 2d we observed vast breadths of current, setting due south as far as we could judge.

It became exceedingly hot on the 5th and 6th, with much thunder and lightning, the wind still blowing from the north-west and the sun vertical.

From the 6th to the 12th the weather was foggy, with rains and thunder; and the wind variable from north-west to the south-west, and from south-west to south-east.

On the 11th, shortly after twelve, we saw, at three leagues to the westward, four ships in the same course with ourselves. We immediately stood towards them to make them out; and about five P.M. we showed our flag. Following their lights all night, we perceived at daybreak it was the squadron commanded by M. des Augers, namely, the ships *Le Bon*, *Zealand*, the *Indian*, and the *Castricon*; Captains des

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Augers, Modene, Pradine, and La Roche Hercule. We first neared the Zealand, which was astern, and then the Commodore, whom we saluted with eleven guns. He returned the salute. They had sailed from Port Louis on the 21st of February, and remained eight days at Cape de Verd. Our latitude this day was 3 deg. 34 min. north.

All night of the 12th we had squalls from the north-west to south-west, much rain, and light winds, but a heavy sea from south-east.

On the evening of the 14th, M. de la Roque went on board the Zealand to take leave of M. de Augers; and we immediately made all sail seaward with very light winds from south-south-east.

By day-break on the 15th we had made two leagues; and in the evening, towards five o'clock, we lost sight of the squadron.

At noon the 18th we were north of the line, which we crossed at about longitude 35 deg. 50 min., when the usual ceremonies took place.*

* "They shaved each other, then baptized each other, that is to say, they drowned each with sea-water, but all in good humour. Some were plunged headlong

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The wind freshening from the south towards evening, we took in a reef in our top-sails.

On the 21st we caught more than one hundred bonitoes. The sea was quite black with them; and the crew had as many cooked as they pleased.

From the 22d to the 28th a light wind blew from the south-east; the weather was fine and the sea smooth. We bore south-west and south-south-west close to the wind.

On the 29th the wind veered round to east-south-east, and the 30th to east and east-north-east. We were now in latitude 17 deg. 17 min. south, and, as we reckoned, twenty-nine leagues north of Trinity Islands. Towards night we saw some booby birds, and a water-spout.

The 1st of May, when in the latitude of the Trinity Islands, 18 deg. 37 min., our pilots expected to make them. They are lofty, and the day was clear. But we did not see them, so that the distance must have been more than into a tub, and one hundred buckets of brine were showered upon the heads of others. This must be borne by all, or a fine paid."—*Ghirardini's Voyage*, p. 23.

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fifteen leagues. It was generally thought we had left them far at a distance.

From the 1st to the 11th of May the wind remained steady and strong, at east-north-east to north-north-east. It was also rainy and foggy.

On the 11th the wind shifted to north-west, in latitude 31 deg. 10 min., longitude 17 deg. 49 min.

Towards evening we caught a little bird which seemed to have been blown by the westerly gale off the Island of Tristan da Cunha. The current also came from that direction.

The 12th and 13th we had the wind from west-north-west to west-south-west, but very light. It was, indeed, almost always a calm.

From the 14th to the 19th the wind again veered to the north-east and some time to north-north-west, but always very light, and, for the most part, a dead calm.

The 20th, at about 150 leagues from land, M. de la Roque called his council together, to open the company's second secret orders, instructing us to put into an island, if possible, about twenty leagues from the Cape of Good