

V. *An Account of Falkland Islands.* By William Clayton, *Esq. of his Majesty's Navy.*

R. Nov. 9, 1775. **F**ALKLAND's Islands, or, as the Spaniards and French call them, the Maloine Islands, are situated between the latitude of $52^{\circ} 26'$ and $51^{\circ} 6' S.$ and longitude from London 56° to $60^{\circ} 30' W.$ They are numberless, forming a mass of broken high lands, or very low fedy keys and funken rocks. The largest is the Easternmost island, and on the Eastern side the Spaniards had a settlement, which the crown of Spain purchased of M. BOUGAINVILLE, who, on his private account, had formed a settlement in the year 1764, at the time that Commodore BYRON had first discovered Port Egmont. The next large island is of a very considerable extent, and hath many excellent harbours on it. Between these two runs Falkland's Sound, which is navigable through; but the South entrance is pretty full of low sandy keys. Adjoining to the second large island, to the Westward, lies Saunders's Island, on which the English settlement was made, a blockhouse erected, several spots inclosed for gardens and three storehouses, and five dwelling-houses or huts, built at different times by the ships crews who were stationed there. The harbour of Port Egmont was formed by these islands, and

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another high, barren, rocky island, named Kepple's Island, and some other lesser islands to the N.E. and Eastward, and was intirely land-locked, or inclosed by the land, on every point: it was very spacious; the bottom was muddy and good holding ground. From the hills through the bogs drained several runs of water, and as the landing-places were good, and a natural small cove for boats to lye in safety on the North-side of Saunders' Island sheltered from the S.W. winds, it induced Captain MACBRIDE to begin the settlement on it.

The larger islands are overspread with a short, tufty, round grass; a shrub with a smell like rosemary; a shrub of the myrtle kind, which in March and April blossoms^(a); a white flower, of a faint violet smell; a small annual plant, of the wormwood kind. Near the shore, wherever there is a sandy soil, a species of grass grows, called Penguin grass, from the birds of that species making their nests, and burrowing under ground like rabbits in holes. This grass grows four or five feet high; the blades are broad and coarse like rushes; the roots, when roasted, eat like almonds. Ground-forrel every where abounds in the greatest plenty; is extremely tart, and a most excellent antiscorbutic; the flower it produces is exactly like the wild rose which grows in the hedges in England. Celery, pepper-grass, and scurvy-grass, also abounds upon every island. Maidenhair (improperly so called) is plenty; the berries are ripe in February and March, and very plea-

(a) Lieutenant CLAYTON hath two or three of these shrubs in his garden at Pettkham.

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fant. A small species of cranberry abounds, and is the food of the wild geese all the autumn, when the geese are best. In the spring season, and part of the summer, there springs up an extreme pretty humble flower, which nearest resembles in leaf the auricula, but in flower the primrose; only they blow quite white. In very barren craggy spots, and even out of the cliffs of the rocks near the sea-shore, grows in the summer season, a small shrub which produces an uncommon but pretty flower, shaped like a lady's pocket; the colour is a rich yellow, I termed it queen's pocket: the seeds are very small. These are all the natural vegetable productions, and nothing rises to any size, nor doth any tree grow, on any of these islands^(b).

The prevailing winds are from the S. to the W. for two-thirds of the year, and in general boisterous and stormy. The N. and N.W. winds are mild and warm; but seldom of long continuance. The winds from the N.E. are moist, foggy, and unwholesome. From E. to S. are most pernicious, blighting, and tempestuous; they affect man, bird, beast, and vegetation: nothing can stand it which is exposed. Happily its duration is short; it seldom continues above 24 hours. It cuts the herbage down as if fires had been made under them; the leaves are parched up, and crumble to dust. The fowls are seized with cramps, so as to become lame, and never

(b) Wood strawberries grow on these islands, and are ripe in March; are of an earthy insipid taste, and grow to the size of the common small strawberry in England.

recover;

recover; but continue to decline till the whole side is decayed which was first affected. Hogs and pigs are suddenly taken with the staggers, turn round and drop, never to recover. Men are oppressed with a stopped perspiration, heaviness at the breast, sore throats; but they soon get over it, by due care.

The sea abounds with mullets, and some of a very large size up to ten pounds weight. Smelts in abundance, and as large as fourteen and fifteen inches in length; I have taken such with an angling line and rod. Transparent fish, shaped like a pike about the head, but not larger than a herring: these transparent fish are so clear when caught, that you may see through them; they have no red blood, but when cut a slimy water issues out, which I suppose is their blood. There are three or four species of the common loggerhead, or *sculpa* fish, common on the English coasts. A small sand-crab, small cray-fish, are to be got. Muscles are plenty, with limpets, and a few small clams. The muscles are very large and fine, and no way dangerous. In the river on the large island, are small fish like trout, very delicious; and no other sort whatever.

The amphibious animals are of four kinds, though seemingly of the same *genus*: the sea-lyon and the seal are distinct; the clapmatch seal and the fur seal are also distinct animals. The sea-lyon and lyoneses are bull-faced, with long shaggy hair; the common seal is smooth; the clapmatch is best pictured in Lord ANSON's voyage, under the name of sea-lyon, in the drawings; the furr
seal

seal has its name from its coat, which is a fine soft furr, and is thinner skinned than any of the others. They all come on shore in December, to whelp their young; and remain mostly on land till they engender again. During this season it is rather dangerous coming near them, for the males are then vicious, and will endeavour to hurt any one who approaches their females; but at all other times they endeavour to make to the water, where they are safe. In mild warm days, during the summer, they come on shore, and lye basking in the Sun.

I consider the penguins as amphibious animals, partaking of the nature of birds, beasts, and fishes. There are four kinds; the yellow, or king penguin; the red; the black or holey, from their burrowing under ground; and the jumping jacks, from their motion. These creatures generally live in the sea, have very short wings which serve for fins, are covered with short thick feathers, and swim at an amazing rate. On shore they walk quite erect with a waddling motion, like a rickety child; and their breasts and bodies before being quite white, at a distance have, at first sight, the look of a child waddling along with a bib and apron on. They come on shore to lay and hatch their eggs in October: the yolks of the yellow, the holey, and jumping penguins, are yellow; but of the red penguins, it is red. All their eggs are good nourishing food, and a great refreshment to the seamen; but the flesh of these animals is coarse, fishy, and wholly unfit to eat.

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The only beast on these islands is a fox, very nearly resembling the English fox; it is now very shy and scarce to be got.

Of birds. There are three sorts of wild geese: the mountain goose is somewhat larger than a Mulcoy duck, feed always on the mountains, is pleasant tasted, and preferable to the other sorts, but is scarce. Its plumage on the back is speckled with brown and black, of a greenish hue, and towards the neck turns of a glossy beautiful golden colour; the breast is coloured like a pheasant. The other goose feeds in the vallies on the wild cranberries and grass, and is as large as a tame goose; the gander is black and white speckled; the goose is almost like the mountain goose, but darker and not so beautiful. These are good food in general; but best and fattest in February, March, and April. Of the sea-goose; the gander is white, the goose mottled, black and white; they feed always on the sea-shore, and are scarcely eatable. Wild ducks, widgeon, teal, and the shelldrakes, are the same as in Europe. But here is a species of ducks, called the loggerhead, from its large head. They have short wings, are unable to fly, and only swim and flap along on the water at an extraordinary rate. When driven ashore with boats they run fast, but soon squat down and are easily caught; they are eatable, but are but indifferent food: they are of a dark brown dirty colour. Snipes are plenty, and so exceedingly tame that we could shy at them with sticks, and get a dish whenever we wanted. Of small birds there are several sorts; the red breast, speckled

on the back like a partridge; the yellow breast; the white throat; the quaker, from its plumage being of the colour those people wear; the sparrow; tom-tit; linnets, and a bird like a goldfinch. Hawks are numerous; the eagle, the goshawk, the sparrow and the common hawk. Of every kind our crew ate, and found them very good and nourishing; owls there are not numerous.

Over the several islands is a surprising species of vegetation, which I know not what to call. It resembles, at first view, our molehills in the marshy grounds in England. It is circular; sometimes six feet round, sometimes less. From the surface oozes out a gum in round blebs, of the smell and taste of balsam *capavia*. The body of these hills is formed within by a number of small substances, like the cones of pines. The outside is crusted over with dark green small leaves, running into each other, and cemented as if with glue. I opened several, and found that no vermin formed them; but there actually was a kind of vegetation; and yet the wild cranberries vegetate on them when the seed is lodged on them. The balsam I brought to England, and it is now on trial by an eminent surgeon.

Fern abounds, but is of a weaker sort than ours in Europe. We tried the furze-seed, and it came up; but so weak and poor that it would never increase or thrive. We found the season for sowing all kinds of garden seeds was about three weeks later than directed in the spring or fall by MILLER, remembering to reverse his months, calling September, March, &c.; but all kind of culinary

herbs and roots came to as great perfection as in England, and in great plenty, only we were forced to shelter every bed in the garden, by a good sod wall, from the S.W. and S.E. winds as much as possible, otherwise our labour would have been in vain.

The latter end of September or beginning of October, the sea birds begin to come on shore to build nests and lay. The first which appear are the albatrosses, which are about the size of a large goose, quite white, except their wings, which are a dark brown; the bills are of a dirty yellow, about three inches long; very strong and the edges sharp as a knife, hooked at the point; they breathe hard through two small holes in the bill close to the head, and frequently make a sound like a trumpet which children buy at fairs. Their wings are very long and narrow, with four joints in each wing; and extend ten or twelve feet from tip to tip. Their feet are webbed, very thin, have three claws; on the outer claw are four joints, the middle three, and the inner one. When they come to their towns, as we called their nesting-places, it is by hundreds. They set very tame, and continue one or other continually founding their bills. They never move off their nests let what will approach, and we shoved them off whenever we wanted their eggs. The egg is much larger than a goose's. The yolk is yellow; the white never boils hard, and always continues as clear as ifing-glass; our crew found them a good refreshment, though I thought them very strong. The nests of these birds are made on the ground with earth; are round, about

one foot high, and dented at top. While the hen sits, the male keeps constantly on the wing, and morning and evening returns with food to her. As soon as these birds have hatched, and the young ones are able to leave their nests, the jumping penguins repair to the nests and occupy them. The young albatrosses remain among them while the old ones go and seek food, with which they regularly return morning and evening. The season for every species of birds, wild and tame, laying and hatching is from September to December or January, and as all the eggs are very eatable, navigators touching at these islands in those months will meet great refreshment. In those three months we never meddled with the land geese, as they were breeding and could not be good.

The soil is in general boggy, barren, and rocky; but affords good pasturage in the vallies, and level spots for sheep and goats, and would for cattle, which might be out all winter; for that season is more remarkable for its mildness than in the same degree of Northern latitude. The summer is as remarkably cold, and both proceeds from the prevailing winds; in the winter the N. and N.E. winds are frequent, which brings warm, mild, moist weather. In the summer, the S. and S.W. and S.E. prevails, which are cold, sharp, and blighting; but in general, throughout the year, there is very little difference in the weather, but mostly cold. The thermometer scarce ever exceeds 64° in the warmest days, and very seldom in winter is below the freezing point, though I have seen it 20° below freezing; but that did not continue long,

nor does the snow continue in the plains or vallies a week together, or frost last so long; but the weather in winter is perpetually changing, the snow lies on the hills for nine months.

There is a great plenty, and some variety of moss on all the islands, and most of it when wet with water dyes of a brick-dust red. I tried it with other liquids, but found it still the same; so I believe it can be of no use.

The coasts of these islands abounds with whales of the spermaceti kind; the islands with innumerable seals and sea-lions, from whence a valuable fishery might, if thought proper, be carried on^(c). The passage out is twelve weeks; the same home. Ships might be loaded with oil ready made in six and eight weeks, and the price of that article greatly reduced.

These are all the remarks I made while I commanded on that barren, dreary, desolate, boggy, rocky spot, in 1773 and 1774.

(c) The year on which Lieutenant CLAYTON left the Falkland Islands, there were ten vessels from North America employed in whale fishing; and it is supposed, that the voyages answered very well, though in going out they commonly proceed as far to the Eastward as the Cape de Verde Islands.