

The island which the Spaniards call TIERRA DEL FUEGO derived its name from the volcanoes observed upon it. It is separated from the main-land of South-America by that strait which was explored by Magalhaens, a Portuguese adventurer in the service of Spain, who sailed through it in 1520, and thus discovered a passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific ocean. He has been since considered as the first navigator that sailed round the world: but, as he lost his life in a skirmish with some savages before the ships returned to Europe, the honor of being the first circumnavigator is more properly assigned to Sir Francis Drake, who, in 1574, passed the same strait in his way to India, whence he returned to Europe by the Cape of Good Hope. In 1616, Le Maire, a Dutchman, keeping to the southward of that strait, discovered, between the isle called Staten-land and Tierra del Fuego, another passage, since known by his name; and this route, which has been generally preferred by succeeding navigators, is called the doubling of Cape-Horn. Some mariners were induced to avoid these straits and islands, by running down to 61 or 62 degrees of southern latitude, before they set their faces westward, to the South-Sea; but both passages seem now to have lost their terrors.

Of the people of this dreary and inclement spot, the latest account is given by captain Weddell, who, in quest of new fisheries and a new continent or an extensive island, proceeded, in 1823, 214 geographical miles farther to the southward than any preceding adventurer. When he had reached the latitude of 74 degrees, he was stopped in his course by the prevalence of a south wind, and was therefore induced to return, entertaining, however, a confident opinion that the South Pole is more attainable than the North. The latter, he says, has a great deal of land about it, which generates field ice, while the former, though in a hemisphere proportionally colder than the northern, exhibits a sea perfectly free from field ice in a latitude equal to 84 degrees in the north. The only animals which he observed in this part of his voyage were birds of the blue petrel kind and whales. Having given to this part of the ocean the denomination of George the Fourth's Sea, he sailed to Tierra del Fuego, and anchored in St. Martin's Cove. The natives were filled with amazement at the sight of the vessels, and fear at first prevented them from approaching; but some of them at last ventured on board. These islanders, he says, "are of low stature, rarely exceeding five feet five inches. They have small eyes, flat noses, small arms, full and well-formed chests; their legs are ill-shaped, in consequence perhaps of the custom of sitting on their calves, in which position their appearance is truly awkward. The women are better-featured than the men; many of their faces are interesting; and, in my opinion, they have a more lively sense of what passes. The only clothing which the males wear is a skin over their shoulders, reaching little more than half-way down the back; some have not even this sorry garment. The females have generally larger skins over their shoulders, and are in other respects clothed as decency requires."

The women seem to do almost all the work that is deemed requisite. They construct the huts; they paddle the canoes, while the men sit at their ease; collect shell-fish for the sustenance of the family; and make baskets of plaited grass. With regard to their mode of living, they appear to have every thing in common; no system of government prevails among them; and their families live in mutual friendship, in a state of patriarchal simplicity.

Beyond Cape Horn, as we proceed northward in the Great South-Sea, we arrive at CHILOE, which has some harbours well fortified. It is si-