THE DESERET WEEKLY.

Truth and Liberty.

No. 2[illegible]. SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, OCTOBER 30, 1898. Vol. LVII.

TAIL END OF OUR HEMISPHERE.

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Cape Froward, Strait of Magellan, Latitude 55 min. 55 deg. south, Oct. 23, 1898.—At the tail end of our hemisphere. At the lowest continental point of the world. Three thousand miles nearer the south pole than the foot of the Siamese peninsula at the end of Asia. More than a thousand miles below the Cape of Good Hope at the bottom of Africa, with a distance almost equal to the thickness of the earth between myself and the northern parts of the United States, I write for my American readers. I am on the steamer Itauri in the Strait of Magellan. Just opposite me the black, rocky walls of Cape Froward, the southernmost point of South America, rise almost straight upward to a height of 1,200 feet, and behind them, glistening in the moonlight, are the glacial snows of Mount Victoria, 2,000 feet higher. I am at the bottom of the great Andean chain. Those hills are the end of the mighty ridge which ties the continents together. Loaded with copper, silver and gold, they crawl from here on their sinuous way toward the north pole. They span the equator, they drop their heads at the Isthmus of Panama and end only at the Arctic ocean, beyond the gold mines of Alaska and the Klondike. The hills to the southward are a part of Tierra del Fuego, above Capt Horn, and that great white frozen pyramidal cone which rises among them is Mount Sarmiento, which pierces the southern sky more than 1,000 feet above the altitude of Mount Washington. Behind and in front of my ship, here as black as ink under the shadows of the hills, there turned to silver by the full moon's rays, flows the Strait of Magellan, that salt water river, in which, moved by the tides, the great oceans, the Atlantic and the Pacific, rush together and clasp their hands to bear up the commerce of the world.

The Strait of Magellan makes the passage between the oceans shorter by almost 1,000 miles. Cape Horn is less than a couple of hundred miles south of it, but its waters are always tossed about by terrible storms. Tonight the Magellans are almost as quiet as a mill pond, and the Itauri is steaming as smoothly through them as the boat which carries away the hero in the Sawn song of Lohengrin. We are now almost midway between the Atlantic and the Pacific. We entered the strait by what is known as Smyth's channel, opposite Desolation Island, about thirty miles from Cape Pilar, which marks its western end. We could see the two massive rocks of the cape as we turned to the eastward. They rise almost precipitously for a distance of 1,500 feet, and when the air is clear they are in sight for many miles. Beginning here the straight runs southeast to Cape Froward. It then turns to the northeast, widening here and there as it goes, until it ends at the Atlantic between Cape Virgin and Cape Holy Ghost. The channel is 365 miles long, and its width varies from two to twenty-four miles. At times our vessel has been within a stone's throw of the shore, and again in the misty air, where the channel widened, the waters seemed to almost bound the horizon. This is so only in the eastern parts of the channel, on both sides of which the lands of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego are low. In the west there is little else than mountains, which are now snow-dusted and in many cases loaded with vast glaciers slowly sliding down them to the sea. Below the Strait of Magellan there is a vast archipelago of islands, the smaller of which are mountain peaks rising above the waves and the largest the Island of Tierra dle Fuego. The last is bigger than many of our American states and it has mountains and valleys, vast forests and extensive plains which have lately been transformed into some of the biggest sheep farms of the world. North of the strait lies the end of southern Patagonia on the east, and on the west a continuation of the archipelago of Tierra del Fuego. These islands, as well as the strait and almost all of Tierra del Fuego, belong to Chile. She has an area of land here, which she calls the territory of the Magellan, of 75,000 square miles, half again as large as the state of New York and almost twice the area of Ohio. Some of the Chilean naval vessels are now here engaged in surveying the channels and harbors, but the greater part of this region is almost as unknown as it was when Hernando Magellan, a Spanish navigator, discovered the strait in 1520. The land and the people have been misrepresented by passers-by from Darwin down to within recent years, and it is only lately that opportunities have been offered for careful investigation. Even now the savages I see here are less known than the tribes of central Africa, and only the coasts of a few of the islands have been explored. The sheep farmer, the gold digger and the government vessels are, however, making headway, and within a few years this great archipelago will be a terra incognito no longer.

The generally accepted belief regarding southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego is that they are something like the coasts of Greenland or those of the Arctic seas. The geographies represent them as wastes of ice and snow, desolate, forbidding and terrible to the traveler. For the past four days I have been winding in and out of the channels along the west coast of lower Patagonia. My sail has been through a series of scenic panoramas that cannot be surpassed in the world. We entered the archipelago by what is known as the Smyths channel route, about 400 miles above here, and coasted slowly along through one channel after another until we came into the strait proper at Desolation Island. Darwin compared the glaciers Sarmiento in Tierra del Fuego to 100 frozen Niagaras. The waters along the lower end of western Patagonia present combinations which make you think of a hundred Lake Comos, Lake Genevas and Lake Lucernes tied together in one ever-widening, ever-changing river. Here are the beauties of the Thousand Islands of the St. Lawrence, added to by snow-capped mountains kissed by the sun, and mighty glaciers sliding down into masses of dark green vegetation. Here are giant rocks, cathedral shaped, covered with moss, rising straight upward from the water for 1,000 feet; mountains, their heads lost in the clouds, dropping almost precipitously into the sea; narrow gorges, in which the steamer must tack this way and that as it winds through islands of green and islands of rock. Here are fields of floating ice, through which the boat crashes; narrow fjords, in which the black water is 3,000 feet deep, and, in short, such a variety of scenic wonders of clouds, mountain and sea that I doubt whether their like can be found in the world. If you could take the most picturesque parts of the Andes, the Himalayas and the Alps, could sink them up to their necks in dark blue water and pull cloud masses down with them into the sea and wrap their rugged sides far up from the water's edge with a wonderful mantle of green, which is now brilliant in the sunlight now frosted snow and now so loaded with ice that it lies in terraces up their sides, you might have a faint idea of some of nature's wonders in the Magellans.

But I despair of giving a vivid picture of our ride through this archipelago. It lasted three days, and it was such a series of wonders that only a biograph of the gods worked by their own hands could paint them on the retina of your imagination. All I shall attempt is to take you with me through some few places by a transcript of my notes made upon the ground. We start in the bay of Coronel. Our steamer, the Itauri of the Kosmos line, bound for Hamburg via the strait, lies in the harbor. She is a German ship of 6,200 tons, lighted and heated by steam. Captain Behrmann, her commander, is German, and so are all the passengers, officers and crew. We speak German at the table, and are, in fact, a small slice of Germany in one of the quietest harbors of the coast of Chile. I go to my cabin. It is No. 12, and is as good a room as that of an Atlantic liner. The cooking is German. The meats are fresh. As I go down to dinner I hear the squawk of a chicken. Our meats are carried alive on board, so that later on we shall listen to the baa-ing of sheep, the grunting of pigs and the cackling of geese mixed with the crunching of the ice fields as the steamer makes its way through them. Before I pay the $70 which is my fare to Punta Arenas on the Strait of Magellan, I ask if the ship will go via Smyths channel. The reply is yes. The Kosmos is the only line that takes this route, the other ships going through the strait preferring to stand the storms which sweep up along the west coast from Cape Horn to the narrow, dangerous, slow, but more quiet, land-locked waters of the Patagonian coast. We shall have to travel