

CHAPTER XIII

Chiloe—General Aspect—Boat Excursion—Native Indians—Castro—Tame Fox—Ascend San Pedro—Chonos Archipelago—Peninsula of Tres Montes—Granitic Range—Boat-wrecked Sailors—Low's Harbor—Wild Potato—Formation of Peat—Myopotamus, Otter and Mice—Cheucan and Barking-bird—Opetiorhynchus—Singular Character of Ornithology—Petrels

CHILOE AND CHONOS ISLANDS

NOVEMBER 10TH.—The "Beagle" sailed from Valparaiso to the south, for the purpose of surveying the southern part of Chile, the island of Chiloe, and the broken land called the Chonos Archipelago, as far south as the Peninsula of Tres Montes. On the 21st we anchored in the bay of S. Carlos, the capital of Chiloe.

This island is about ninety miles long, with a breadth of rather less than thirty. The land is hilly, but not mountainous, and is covered by one great forest, except where a few green patches have been cleared round the thatched cottages. From a distance the view somewhat resembles that of Tierra del Fuego; but the woods, when seen nearer, are incomparably more beautiful. Many kinds of fine evergreen trees, and plants with a tropical character, here take the place of the gloomy beech of the southern shores. In winter the climate is detestable, and in summer it is only a little better. I should think there are few parts of the world, within the temperate regions, where so much rain falls. The winds are very boisterous, and the sky almost always clouded: to have a week of fine weather is something wonderful. It is even difficult to get a single glimpse of the Cordillera: during our first visit, once only the volcano of Osorno stood out in bold relief, and that was before sunrise; it was curious to