Charles Baudin, ***Memories of My Youth by Admiral Charles Baudin, 1784-1815***

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Period covered : 14 October 1799 (death of Baudin's father, Baudin des Ardennes) – 25 March 1804 (the arrival of the *Géographe* at Lorient)

Notes on the text:

The text presented in this document is an extract from the manuscript of Charles Baudin's autobiography held in the Archives centrales de la Marine, Vincennes. This extract contains only that part of the narrative that deals with the expedition to the Southern Lands 1800-1804, including the circumstances that led to the young man's participation in the voyage. The time frame it covers is from the death of his father, Baudin des Ardennes, in 1799 to the return of Charles Baudin to France in 1804. As this text was dictated to a copyist many years after the voyage took place, it is clearly not contemporaneous with the events it describes; it is a personal narrative that differs therefore from the type of document represented by the journals and sealogs of the expedition. The page numbers correspond to the pagination in the manuscript.

This document exists in a published form which is identical to the contents of the manuscript. See:

> *Souvenirs de jeunesse de l'amiral Baudin. Révolution, Empire (1784-1815)*, in *Les Trois Ages de la Marine à voile, de Louis XVI à Louis-Philippe*, sans lieu ni date [Paris, Association des Amis des musées de la Marine, 1957 ?], volume in-4 (29 x 23 cm) de 269-(1) pages, pp. 101-158.

Extensive summaries and extracts from the document have appeared in:

> Edmond Jurien de la Gravière, *L'Amiral Baudin*, in *Les Gloires maritimes de la France*, Paris, Plon, 1888. An online version of this work can be found at this address :
>
> **https://archive.org/details/lamiralbaudinwit00juri**
>
> Part of this work was also published under the title : « La marine de 1812 d'après les souvenirs inédits de l'amiral Charles Baudin », *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, 56^{e} A^{n}, t. 73, 1 février 1886, pp. 592-625.

Translation
Malcolm Leader

Validation
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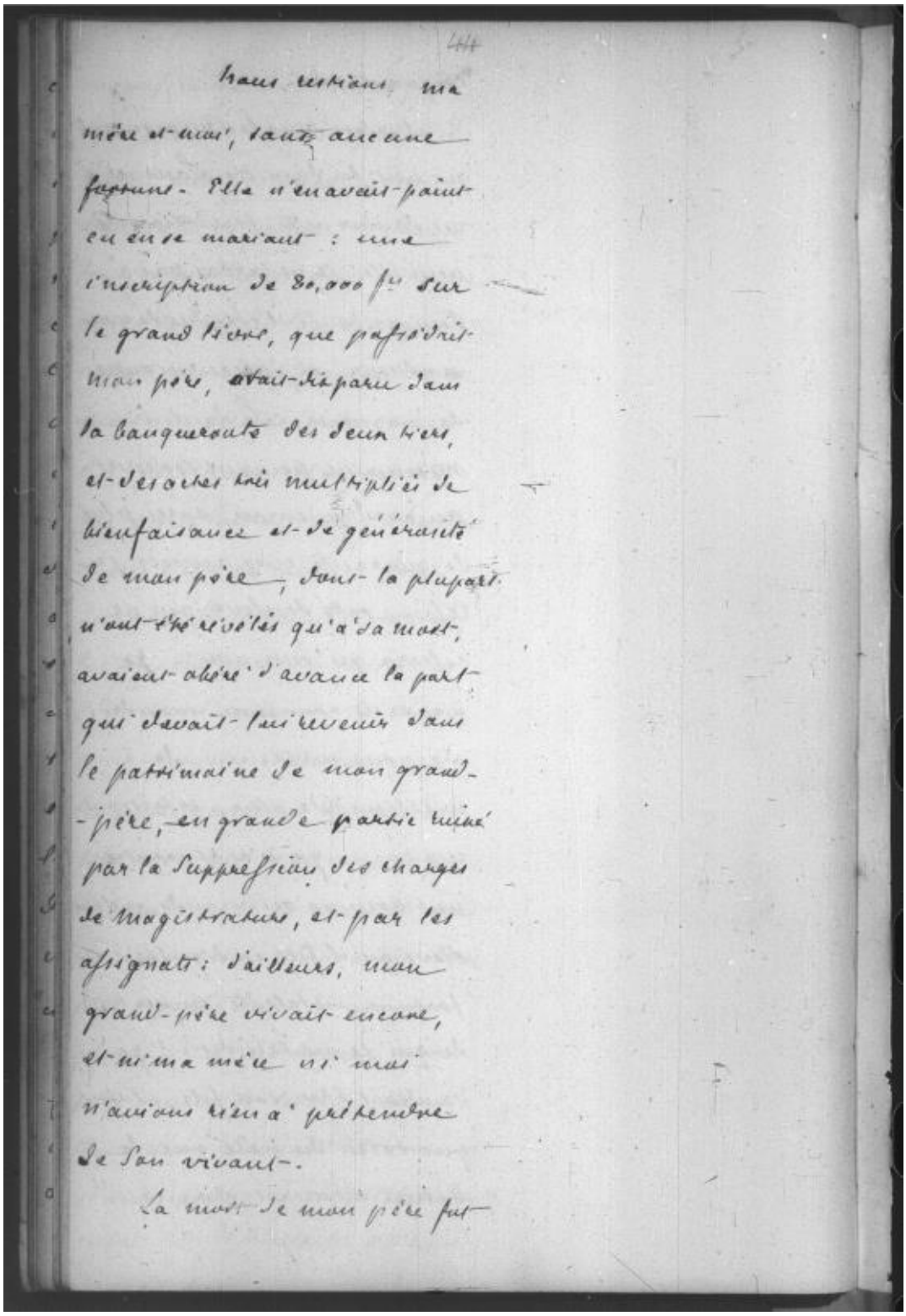
Portrait of Charles Baudin which features in the manuscript

Sample page from the manuscript (p. 44)



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Nous restions ma
mère et moi, sans aucune
fortune. Elle n'en avait point
eu en se mariant : une
inscription de 80,000 fr. sur
le grand livre, que possédait
mon père, avait disparu dans
la banqueroute des deux tiers,
et des actes très multipliés de
bienfaisance et de générosité
de mon père, dont la plupart
n'ont été révélés qu'après sa mort,
avaient absorbé d'avance la part
qui devait lui revenir dans
le patrimoine de mon grand-
père, en grande partie ruiné
par la suppression des charges
de magistrature, et par les
assignats : d'ailleurs, mon
grand-père vivait encore,
et ni ma mère ni moi
n'avions rien à prétendre
de son vivant.

La mort de mon père fut

Memories of My Youth
by Admiral Charles Baudin
1784-1815

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My mother and I were left penniless. She had had brought no personal fortune to her marriage : a sum of 80 000 francs recorded in the general ledger in my father's name had disappeared in the Two Thirds Bankruptcy, and the great number of my father's acts of charity and generosity, most of which only came to light upon his death, had, in advance, disposed of the share he would have received from the estate of my grandfather, himself largely ruined by the suppression of the privileges of the magistracy and by promissory notes: besides, my grandfather was still alive, and neither my mother nor myself had any claims to make during his lifetime.

The death of my father was

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keenly felt by the great majority of his colleagues in the Councils, and there were nearly unanimous public outpourings of grief in honour of his memory. Despite his extreme modesty, he had inspired a general esteem and affection. A ruling that he had begun to write, on the very eve of his death, was read out by the member of the Assembly, Saussat, to the Council of Elders and unanimously adopted. A similar honour had been paid, eight years earlier, to Mirabeau ; a funeral service was held for him at St Germain l'Auxerrois ; it was the first to be held in France since the abolition of the Catholic religion in 1793 ; and it was a distinction that my father particularly deserved, he who in the most fatal

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days of the Terror, had always had the courage to call for the freedom to practice the Christian religion, and to hold religious funeral ceremonies, which were not permitted at that time. My mother and I received sincere expressions of friendship and condolences from the majority of the distinguished men who had known my father. The friends who showed the greatest affection and devotion were M[r] Camus, a colleague of my father's at the Archives, M[r] Ternaux, M[r] de Jonquières and Madame Rousseau.

No decision had yet been made about my future, when the **18 Brumaire [Year 8, 9 November 1799]** brought General Bonaparte to power. He had barely been named First Consul when he sent my mother his aide-de-camp,

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General Victor, - who has since become a Marshal and Duke of Bellune -, so that he could tell her how greatly he shared her sorrow, and inform her of his desire that I should join the Navy. My mother, who was still in her first throes of grief, a time when a woman has little in the way of willpower, said that she would make me be whatever the First Consul wanted. Our friend Camus, who had strict moral standards, and who feared the effect on one so young of spending time in Paris, passionately seized upon this means of taking me out of it. M[r] Bourdon de Vatry, the then Navy Minister, showed me extreme kindness, with the result that within a very short time, my fate was sealed. I did not have the slightest idea about what the sea-faring profession entailed, but

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I had an appetite for travel and a curiosity that came so naturally to youths aged fifteen, and could think of nothing better than to embrace a career which offered me the prospect of satisfying them. The Minister affected me for a time to the Department of

Maps and Plans of the Navy, where I received instruction from the worthy Mr Buache and his collaborator, Mr Parenneau, on the basics of hydrography.

I only had the good fortune to spend a few short weeks with these two excellent men ; towards the end of **Frimaire [Year 8, December 1799],** since the Principal Commissioner of the Navy at Le Havre, Mr Levacher, was returning to his post, the Minister placed me in his care. He was a kindly man

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who was not without merit as an administrator but who was not serious enough to be in charge of supervising young men. La Tour du Pin (René) who had been in the Navy for several years, and who was older than me, accompanied Mr Levacher and myself to Le Havre. We quickly became friends and shared lodgings. The first warship on which we both embarked was called the *Foudroyant*. It was a

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pram with twelve 24-pound guns, under the command of a worthy lieutenant-commander named Tuvache, whose kind welcome I shall always remember with pleasure, along with that of his second-in-command, Lieutenant Lebail. It required a great deal of of sincere goodwill on their part to give a warm welcome, as they did, to a young novice arriving with all the inexperience and, consequently, all the ridiculous ways of a Parisian fresh from school – I was not under their orders for long. A month later, the *Foudroyant* was decommissioned, and I transferred to a gunboat in the flottilla intended for the defence of the coast, a rather inferior boat, which had no name, but which bore the number 46, and the pennant of the commandant of the flottilla, Captain

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Helloin de Vaudreuil. During the six months that I remained on this ship, our navigation was restricted to a few excursions from the roads of Le Havre. I had, moreover, a great deal of free time, which I spent, on shore, working on my mathematics and drawing : this period marked the beginning of my connection with my good friend de Mélay, who went by the name of Peureux at that time ; it was only later, and to avoid the sorry situations and the ridicule caused by this unfortunate name, that he finally took the name of de Mélay, an agnomen that was once used by his father. He served at the same time as I did on the flottilla, where he was already a first-class midshipman, having commenced his career several years earlier. I

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met him in the homes of people we both frequented, and I did not take long to feel that friendship for him that lasted until his death.

In June 1800, I undertook my examination for second-class midshipman. I had the younger Monge, brother of the famous mathematician, as examiner and I passed it on my first attempt. At that time in Le Havre, preparations were being made for the expedition of discovery to the Southern Lands and I could not bear to hear of such an expedition without wanting to be part of it. I wrote to my mother and my father's friends in Paris to let them know my wishes. They set to work enthusiastically to satisfy this desire, especially Camus and Madame Rousseau, who had to call on all of their personal influence and that of their

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friends. They were even required to approach the First Consul because positions, in this expedition, were eagerly sought after.

Finally, I was accepted and I started my service as midshipman on board the *Géographe*, a fine large new corvette of 32 guns, which was to carry the commander of the expedition. I was extremely happy. The joy of donning the uniform, exercising my small degree of authority, and the prospect of a distant voyage which was likely to bring a wealth of adventures, all of this made me deliriously happy.

The major part of the expedition had gathered in Le Havre in the early days of September. There were many staff, too many even, and generally they were very young. Among the scientists, there were hardly more than two or

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three mature and experienced men, such as the naturalist Michaux. The two first lieutenants of the *Géographe* and the store-ship *Naturaliste*, which was to sail in company with it, were distinguished and capable officers, but the sub-lieutenants were also very young and fairly scatterbrained. The midshipmen, numbering eight on board each ship, were, for the most part young men distinguished by their wit and their breeding, especially those on the *Géographe*. The greatest goodwill developed, in the first instance, between all the members of the expedition, without distinction of rank or age, and we were treated like spoiled children. This was to encourage a familiarity to which we were only too inclined, for few of us had any

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notion of discipline or the proprieties of naval service. Everything was going along wonderfully, and in the most enjoyable and free and easy manner, until the arrival of the commandant, who was a real killjoy. At first everyone wanted to slap him on the back and to eat out of his hand, but Captain Nicolas Baudin did not tolerate these niceties and sought to establish discipline and rank on a proper footing. He immediately became the bane of our existence and, as we were the youngest, we were not the last to take a dislike to him. Soon he began to cordially hate the scientists, the officers and the midshipmen. The midshipmen, the officers and the scientists reciprocated with all their heart.

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One would also have to say that, if we were all rather unreasonable, he, for his part, totally lacked that benevolence of character and manners that commanders need to have if they are to inspire a love of authority. He had, however, several friends among us. They were people who had accompanied him on his previous voyage to America in the *Belle-Angélique* and who, having spent two or three years under his orders, had not found themselves so badly off that they were unwilling to join him again.

We left Le Havre on the **27 vendémiaire, year IX [19 October 1800]**.[1] We called in at Tenerife, after a crossing of 14 days, whose beginning was rather unpleasant.

[1] The Republican date was erroneously given in the original as 25 vendémiaire, instead of the 27th, which is the correct date for the expedition's departure.

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Seasickness took its toll, but I did not take long to make a complete recovery. Santa Cruz, where we landed on the island of Tenerife, was the first foreign country that I

saw, so my curiosity was strongly aroused when I went onshore. Asit happened, this feeling was not really satisfied. An arid coast, devoid of vegetation, dilapidated houses, people in tatters who were awful to look at, was all that I saw in Tenerife, and that confirmed me in my youthful opinion that France was the finest country in the world, and the French were the foremost people in the universe.

We left Tenerife after 11 days in port, with an abundant supply of fresh provisions that

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quickly spoiled in the heat and rains of the Tropics, and then, I think somewhat as the result of the general disorder on board which continued to increase. Dissension also continued to grow between the commandant and his staff, and contributed to making the crossing unpleasant. This crossing was long, we hugged the coast of Africa too closely, fearful of being drawn by the currents to the coast of Brazil, and we were caught in the Gulf of Guinea by calms and storms that greatly slowed us down. I made little progress in my education during this long crossing, which could have been put to much better use. My inexperience called out for assistance: I should have had

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someone to unlock the secrets of Science for me. Now, those of my comrades who were sufficiently educated and serious of mind to be useful guides for me were precisely those to whom I was the least attached. My good friend de Mélay combined the most affectionate nature with the friendliest soul and the most gracious manners but, he was at that time, rather irresponsible and not at all a sailor. Bougainville and Montgéry were no better in that respect: I was charmed by their kindness; it was a very amusing quality, no doubt, but not very good for my education and my moral improvement.

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We reached Mauritius in the early days of March 1801, after a crossing that took 150 days. The welcome that we received from the entire population was very cordial. This colony, while remaining attached to France, had however maintained its independence on the question of slavery. It had managed to resist the decrees of the Convention which related to the emancipation of the blacks. It had thus retained its domestic order and prosperity, while also ensuring that the French flag was respected in the Indian Ocean. People were, moreover, very patriotic in Mauritius; feelings of affection for the mother country

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held sway in all hearts and, as there had been no news of France for some time, our arrival excited general interest. People were scrambling to invite anyone of us to chat about France and the events which, by bringing General Bonaparte to power, had changed the state of affairs. I was the bearer of letters of recommendation to people in the island, and I was deeply touched by the welcome they gave me. This welcome inspired feelings in me that have never since been erased from my heart.

Commandant Baudin was very well known in Mauritius and had many enemies there; and so,

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partly out of animosity for him and partly out of their interest in us, a sort of general conspiracy was immediately hatched to retain on the island all the people belonging to

the staff of the expedition, the scientists, officers and even midshipmen. There was not a single one of us to whom these most attractive offers were not made and many could not resist. We were put off by the commandant's hardheartedness. We were frightened by the prospect of fatigue and hardship on the voyage. In short, almost everyone deserted. On board the *Géographe*, we lost the two first lieutenants, Gicquel and François Baudin, who were two most capable and educated men and who, for my part, were sorely missed during the rest of the campaign.

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Capmartin, then sub-lieutenant, left us also; and, of my friends, I lost Morin, Montgéry and de Mélay. It required great resolve on my part not to stay with de Mélay, overcome as I was then by the great depth of my affection for him. I was held back by a sense of duty, which was starting to develop in me. I thought of the disappointment that my mother would experience, as would those friends of my father who had taken an interest in securing me a place in the expedition. Moreover, I said to myself that, whatever were the strains and annoyances of this expedition, the advantages they would have for my education should prevail over all other considerations.

I thus remained and it was the right thing to do; but it was not

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without intense sorrow that I parted from my best friend. Apart from the death of my father, no event in my life up till then had caused me any distress that could compare with this separation.

The ships' companies had also had their share of the charms of Mauritius and people had sought to employ a great many of their number. They were the cream of the sailors who, for the most part, were young and vigorous. They had to be replaced, when we sailed, by a bunch of rogues, mainly foreigners, who came from a clean out of the colony's prisons. Finally, after 40 days in port, we set sail for New Holland, about the middle of April **(25 April).**

We were rather poorly

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provisioned; the food supplies that we had taken on board at Mauritius, to replace what had been consumed during the first six months of the voyage, were of the poorest quality. There was no wine; save for a small quantity set aside for those on the sick-list. And, with an inadequate number of unhappy staff and weak and insufficient crews, this was an inauspicious start to the campaign.

On the **27 May 1801**, we sighted for the first time the coast of New Holland. It was the land discovered in [blank] by Leeuwin.[1] We came in closer to explore it and, a few days later, we dropped anchor in an as yet unknown bay, that we named

[1] 1662

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Geographe Bay. This bay provided no shelter from the on-shore winds, and we were caught in a rather violent squall that forced us to get under sail, not without having experienced great difficulty re-embarking the people who had been sent ashore. We escaped with the loss of our longboat and one man drowned. As soon as we had weighed anchor, each of the two ships crowded on sail to bear off from the shore onto which the storm was driving us. In the darkness, we became separated from the *Naturaliste* (**9 June**) and, as this ship did not have anywhere near the good sailing

qualities of the *Géographe*, we were very anxious at not seeing it when the bad weather lifted. Our first rendez-vous point, in case of separation,

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was *Rottnest* Island, so called by the Dutch who discovered it, because of the large number of rats they found there. Since we did not find the *Naturaliste*, we set our course for the vast *Shark Bay*, second rendez-vous point agreed upon with our companions, and we awaited them there in vain for over six weeks. We put this time to good use by exploring in our ship's boats the flat and desolate lands bordering this gulf where, in spite of all our searching, we could not find even a drop of fresh water. Fortunately, the fish were plentiful, for our provisions from Mauritius were exhausted and we were reduced to

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salt rations of the poorest quality. From our bleak anchorage, as far as the eye could see, there was nothing but a flat expanse of reddish earth, without the slightest hint of vegetation, and our sole source of entertainment was the sight of numerous whales surrounding our ship. They would play by leaping out of the water, in such a way that their whole body sometimes emerged and rose up vertically on the tip of their tail. They would then fall back on the full weight of their body, with a fearful din, making water spouts that extended far and wide around them. Often, in our ship's boats, we were forced to take great care to avoid being crushed.

On **12 July**, since the

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Naturaliste had still not appeared, we left *Shark Bay* to continue our explorations along the west and north-west coasts of New Holland. As we made our way north, we searched in vain for the mouth of the river named the *Willems River* by the ancient Dutch navigators, and, I believe, by Dampier, and, after having rounded the north-west tip of this great continent, we found lands that were increasingly low-lying and inaccessible. The absence of our consort ship made the commandant rather unadventurous; he was fearful of tackling these low coastlines on his own, where he could have run aground with no hope of rescue. Besides, the *Géographe* was a ship

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badly chosen for explorations of this kind; it drew too much water and its shape would have jeopardized it had it run aground. Our survey of all these coastlines was thus imperfect in the extreme. Having reached the meridian of the large island of Timor, the commandant made up his mind to put into port there. It was, moreover, the last rendez-vous point that he had set for the *Naturaliste* in case of separation and he was impatient to catch up with this ship. The sight of the lovely island of Timor filled us with great delight. The beautiful vegetation was pleasing to our eyes, which had been strained for three months by the dreary sight of the arid and desolate coastline of New Holland. We anchored (**21 August**)

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first in the *Semau Strait*, and then in the vast bay of *Kupang*. The Dutch had a settlement there protected by a miserable little fort armed with only a few faulty cannon and called *Fort Concordia*. The country is delightful, with plentiful provisions of all sorts. The governor, M. van Lofsteth, a fine dignified Dutchman, greeted us most

cordially and put all of his scant resources at our disposal. The commandant, the scientists and the sick were settled ashore, some in the fort, others in houses in the town, that is if one can call a group of bamboo huts, most of which were covered in palm leaves and inhabited by Malays, a town. There were scarcely

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a dozen Dutch people in the whole colony. However, several of these huts, built and decorated with care, surrounded by gardens containing lush vegetation, and furnished in Chinese style, were not lacking in comfort and charm. I remained on board, with the officers, to work on repairs to the corvette. But, when duty allowed, I went ashore frequently with my friends to take long walks in the magnificent plantations bordering on Kupang, and to swim as I pleased in the parts of the river where there were no crocodiles. Coconut trees are very plentiful on the shores of Kupang Bay and nowhere in the world have I seen them grow so fine and tall.

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However, our repairs were finished and the *Naturaliste* had not yet appeared. Our concerns about its fate were becoming more and more acute, and the commandant started talking of going to search for it on the coast of New Holland where we assumed it had been lost, when, at last, it appeared on **21 September**. We were extremely happy. This was the time of the beginnings of my friendship with Duvaldailly and Moreau, both midshipmen on board the *Naturaliste*. Until then, we had scarcely seen each other, even during our stopovers at Tenerife and Mauritius.

Captain Hamelin was a little at fault that the *Naturaliste* had remained such a long time without rejoining us.

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After the gale which had separated us in *Géographe Bay*, he had wasted several days waiting for us in the vicinity of Rottnest Island and the Swan River, while we ourselves were waiting for them in Shark Bay, and he only came to search for us in this bay when we had just left. Although he had found traces of our recent stay there, and he could have, in consequence, arrived at the conclusion that we had already left, he had wasted considerable time waiting for us there, and had only made up his mind to come and look for us in Timor when his water supplies had been almost completely exhausted. He had then set a direct course

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for Kupang, without attempting to explore any part of the coast of New Holland and, consequently, without working towards the aim of our common mission.

Repairs to the *Naturaliste* were quickly effected in *Timor* and the last of its supplies taken on board, and, on 13 November 1801, we set sail together for the *South of Van Diemen's Land*.

The crossing was long and arduous. Dysentery had affected some of the crew during our stay in Timor and soon scurvy set in, further weakening us. Finally, on 13 January 1802, we sighted the high mountain peaks of Van Diemen's Land, and we entered the channel, surveyed a short time earlier by our

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compatriot d'Entrecasteaux, who had given it his name. This channel affords, over a distance of nearly twenty leagues, a series of magnificent anchorages. We spent ten

weeks exploring it in our ships' boats, without discovering a convenient and adequate source of fresh water. We were at the end of summer in this country (February 1802) and almost all the springs had dried up. The only resources that this stopover had to offer were hunting and fishing. We had a few conversations with the natives; they were the most wretched people in the world and had nothing to exchange with us.

On the 17 February, we left the channel to go and anchor at *Maria Island*, on the east coast of Van Diemen's Land.

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I was sent in the longboat, with Henri de Freycinet, to explore the passage that was thought at that time to exist between the Frederick Hendrick Peninsula and Van Diemen's Land; the bad weather and hardships of all sorts made this crossing very difficult; but I revelled in the fatigue and the dangers. I was especially happy when I was off the ship and in a position to do something useful. We returned on board after eight days, without having discovered any passage, given that it does not exist: during our absence, dysentery and scurvy had made further ravages. Several men had died; among them, M. Maugé, naturalist,

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who had accompanied the commandant on his previous voyage to America. He was a tireless collector and taxidermist, who did not lack intelligence, and who had an amazing knowledge of the objects that the Museum had and those that it lacked. He had not, however, received any education and could not even read or write; furthermore, he was a man of very gentle manners and perfect affability.

Leaving Maria Island, we made our way north to complete the survey of Van Diemen's Land. The next day, having come abeam of the islands named the Schouten Islands by Tasman, the commandant sent Boullanger, the engineer-geographer, in the pinnace commanded by

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Midshipman Maurouard, to reconnoitre these islands. As the pinnace was supposed to back on board the same evening, it was given only two days' rations, and we remained under sail, tacking along the coast. Evening came and the pinnace had not reappeared: adverse winds had driven us away from the coast and, the next day, we moved in closer without seeing the pinnace. The *Naturaliste* had become separated from us the night before and was no longer in sight. Several days were spent in fruitless searches, without seeing either our pinnace or consort ship, and the commandant, sick with worry, made the decision to get under way to go and explore the south coast of New Holland.

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We ran into great dangers in Bass Strait, where we were caught in a terrible gale. For the rest of this expedition conditions were extremely tough. Separated from his consort ship, the commandant did not dare approach land to find shelter. We thus kept a certain distance from the shoreline that we were exploring despite having a large number of men on the sick-list. The crew was utterly exhausted, and we found ourselves short of many supplies, even water and wood. I, however, was in excellent form, and my health was strengthened by the fatigue and hardships to which the most able-bodied men around me succumbed each day.

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The crew was no longer equal to handling the ship; I set to work like the lowliest of sailors, and this was a useful lesson for me. It is difficult to imagine the pitiful condition and the general state of destitution to which we were reduced, and since then, in the course of all my voyages, I have never seen anything like it. The weather at that time of year was severe, and the entire crew was lacking clothing; those items that had been taken on board in France were too small, for the most part, and could only be suitable for children. As for the rations, we had nothing but biscuit filled with worms and reduced to a disgusting powder, some rotten salt meat, sprouted rice; and the only drink, a foul-smelling liquor

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called arrack. Finally, when the suffering and deprivations had reached a point that was quite intolerable, the commandant considered it opportune to abandon our explorations, and to go and put into Port Jackson, an English colony on the east coast of New Holland. We reached it on 20 June 1802, in a state of fatigue and exhaustion that is difficult to describe. The *Naturaliste* had come to look for us there; it had taken on fresh supplies and had left a few days earlier to search for us along the south coast. We were extremely happy to learn that it had found our pinnace, with its crew safe and sound.

We were given a most cordial reception at Port Jackson; the governor was Captain King, of the British Royal Navy,

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who had served as lieutenant under Captain Cook. The colony, founded at the beginning of 1788, had then been in existence for only 14 years; however, we found there all the resources needed for repairs and supplies. A few days after our arrival, we were agreeably surprised to see the *Naturaliste* enter port; it had found wild adverse winds at the entrance to Bass Strait and had judged it opportune to put into port. Our commandant, seeing that this ship, which had become separated from us, was almost useless for the expedition, made up his mind to get rid of it and to send it back to France. He bought a small schooner which was in the shipyards

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at Port Jackson and named it the *Casuarina*, from the name of the native timber with which it was built. He manned it with 15 of the best crewmembers from the *Naturaliste* and gave command of it to Lieutenant Louis de Freycinet. All the best equipment and men went on board the *Géographe*, those who were sick or in poor health were sent on board the *Naturaliste* to return to France. These arrangements and the repairs to the *Géographe* kept us in Port Jackson for several months, during which time the two ships remained at anchorage together in a part of the port a long way from the city. It was then that I became close friends with Duvaldailly and Moreau.

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Each day, we spent together all the free time that our duty allowed. It was a period of great happiness for the three of us. My admiration for the great qualities of Moreau amounted to real hero-worship. Duvaldailly's qualities were less striking; but he possessed such goodness and a natural sensitivity that was so kindly and affectionate,

beneath a very cold outward appearance, that it was impossible not to love him. Moreover, his gentle reasoning tempered the thoughtlessness of my youth, and he gave me wise advice on how to conduct my life. Finally, the moment came when we had to leave each other. On 18 November, we set sail with the *Naturaliste*, and the *Casuarina*,

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the former returning to France and the second to serve us as a consort vessel for the rest of our campaign. I remained the only midshipman on board the *Géographe*; all the others had left us at Mauritius or were returning to Europe on the *Naturaliste*. As for me, my good health allowed me to continue the voyage; the commandant wanted to keep me; he showed himself to be much more kindly disposed towards me than towards my other comrades who, it must be said, perhaps did not put all their heart and soul into their service.

After several days navigation, the *Naturaliste* left us and set course for France, and we resumed the exploration of the south coast of New Holland, in company with

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our small consort ship, the *Casuarina*. Thanks to her and thanks to the commander becoming more used to this type of exploration, we did much better work in this campaign than in the previous two. Having finished the survey of the south coast, we resumed surveying the west and north-west coasts, after which we went to the island of Timor to make another stopover. Having arrived on **7 May 1803**, we left on **3 June** to go and explore the north coast and particularly the Gulf of Carpentaria; but the season was adverse, the winds blew strongly from the east. After having struggled against them for a month, the commandant despaired of being able to gain to windward to the east

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and he announced publicly that he would continue to battle on for the duration of a full moon period; but that if, by then, the winds had not become less contrary, he would resolve to abandon his expedition and return to Mauritius. He was then ill and very tired; he was spitting blood and discouragement was beginning to take hold. He did not even wait for the period of time he had set to decide to discontinue the voyage. One evening, at 9 o'clock, he came on deck and ordered the officer of the watch to set course for Mauritius. It was **7 July**. In an instant, the news had spread through the whole ship; half the crew, who were asleep, got up, in ecstasy; we rejoiced, embraced each other, and everyone spent the night on

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deck, dancing and singing. Only two people on board were unhappy in the midst of the general euphoria: they were the hydrographic engineer Boullanger and myself. I had taken the success of the expedition to heart; and, whatever the fatigue and dangers were, it was with real regret that I saw it come to an end without our having fully completed the work we had undertaken. Since that time, I have often wanted to carry out further hydrographic explorations and, if it had not been for the war and the events that have altered the course of my career, I would have happily devoted myself to this sort of work a second time.

On the following **7 August**, we reached Mauritius. A few days later, the commander's state of health worsened and

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we lost him. His funeral was nothing less than dismal; he was universally hated. He had shown a great strength of character during his last days. He had collected, in a flask of alcohol, his lungs that he had spat up in incredible suffering, and he would show them to everyone who came to visit him.
“Are lungs necessary for life?” he would say. “You can see that I don’t have any left, and yet I am still alive”
After his death, a discussion took place to find out who would take command of the *Géographe*. Freycinet, who was her second-in-command, demanded this honour; but Captain Milius, who had been second-in-command of the *Naturaliste* and whose poor health had forced him to leave this ship at

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Port Jackson and to take passage on an American ship which had landed him in China, had preceded us to Mauritius where he had recovered his health, and he asserted his seniority in rank. He had been a promoted to Captain during the expedition, and Freycinet, who had left as a sub-lieutenant, was still only a lieutenant. My wish was for the success of Captain Milius. He was a great tactician. My friend Moreau, who had been trained under his guidance, had often mentioned him to me and I, in turn, wished to benefit from his teaching. I influenced in his favour old Admiral Balle, who was very well disposed towards me and treated me like his own child. Admiral Linois,

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who was then commander of our forces in the Indian Ocean, had served as an officer under Admiral Balle and had a great deal of respect and gratitude for him. Both spoke of Milius to General Decaen, governor of our colony, and it was decided, in council, that the command of the *Géographe* would be given to Captain Milius. The influence that I had had on this decision became known and set Freycinet and the whole of the staff of the *Géographe* against me. Whatever the talents of Captain Milius were, his personality was feared, and people liked Freycinet, who was so soft as to be weak, and under whose direction, everyone was quite sure of doing only what he

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wanted. As for me, I did not fear a chief who was stricter, if he was to be more capable. Our stay at Mauritius stretched out for four months in order to await the right season to round the Cape of Good Hope and to reach France at a time favourable for our collections of plants and live animals.

During our stay in Mauritius, war broke out with England following the breakdown of the Peace of Amiens. I was very tempted to give up returning to Europe and to embark on one of the ships in Admiral Linois’s division; but the desire to see my mother and

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friends in France again won the day. Of all the midshipmen who had left France on the *Géographe*, I was the only one who had, until then, remained faithful to the expedition. It seemed to me that I had to share its fate until the end.

On **16 December 1803**, we set sail to return to France. The staff had been brought up to strength by the officers returning from the *Casuarina*, which had been laid up and left in the colony. I have said earlier that the staff felt some hostility

towards me, because I had contributed to Captain Milius being given command. This hostility did not take long to break out; and, on the very day of our departure, the officers, under the pretext that they were sufficient in number to cover the service, asked the captain to remove me from the

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command of the watch at sea, which I had already carried out for some time under the orders of Baudin. Captain Milius was weak enough to consent to this request; he thought that by sacrificing me, he would have peace with his officers. He soon recognized that he had made a mistake. Their conduct was such that he was forced to suspend them, one after another, from duty. He gave me back my watch a fortnight after setting sail and soon the two Freycinets, Ransonnet and Monbazin, having ceased all service, I remained alone with Ronsard to cover the full watch.

Our crossing was successful. We called in at Reunion and the Cape of Good Hope and, on

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25 March 1804, after a campaign lasting three years and five months, we returned to Lorient. The enormous natural history collections and the live animals that we had on board were immediately sent to Paris, and I was granted leave to go and see my mother who was then living in Dunkirk where she had been appointed director of the Post Office after the death of my father.

The day after our arrival, I met Henri de Freycinet who, until then, had borne me a grudge because of the role I played in preventing him from taking command of the *Géographe*. He came up to me, took my hand most warmly, assured me that he bore me no ill-feeling, and embraced me. This commendable gesture of reconciliation gave me great pleasure. I respected Freycinet who had been led to

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show hostility towards me only by weakness. From that time onwards, we remained friends until his death, which came in 1842. Both his brother Louis, and Ransonnet, who deep down was the most decent of men, each came individually to make his peace with me: only Monbazin, who was of a character to hold a grudge, kept refusing to speak to me to for a while longer.

I was welcomed in Paris with extreme kindness by my father's friends, especially M^{r}. Ternaux, M^{me}. Rousseau and M^{r}. Camus. All I wanted to do was to pass through Paris to go to my mother's immediately, but they insisted that I leave only after I had received my commission as sub-lieutenant. My mother added her entreaties to theirs, and,

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in spite of my wish to see her, I had to give in and spend six weeks in Paris which seemed very long to me, despite all the affection that my friends lavished on me. Finally, my commission was signed by the Emperor, I left for Dunkirk, and found myself in my mother's arms after a four and a half year separation. Her situation in this town was pleasant: she was well-liked, respected and sought out in society. She was comfortably off with her Post Office stipend, lived in a beautiful house, and her life was pleasant in all respects.

After spending several weeks with my mother, I went to Boulogne to see my good friends de Mélay et Moreau, who were serving on the flottilla with

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most of our old comrades from the expedition : Bougainville, Morin, Breton, Deschatelets, Montgéry, and a few others. All of them made earnest entreaties for me to take up service in the flottilla ; I refused. It would have been a great joy for me to serve with my friends and good comrades, but it did not seem to me that this expedition had any chance of success ; I did not even think that Napoleon had the serious intention of ever attempting the crossing. I had no wish to join an operation which I deemed to be pointless, and in which it seemed to me that there was no education to be gained; and, after a week in Boulogne, I returned to Dunkerk,

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to spend the rest of my leave with my mother.

Upon my return to Paris, I was sent to Brest, where, at that time, there lay a squadron of twenty-one ships, under the command of Vice-admiral Ganteaume. It was the largest squadron that France possessed, and was thus the one which I most wished to join; for it is always in the large squadrons that there is the most training to be had. I was therefore very disappointed when, the very next day after my arrival in Brest, I was given the command of a gunboat. There were two at Brest that were intended for the flottilla; and the Maritime Prefect, General Caffarelli, thought he doing me a great favour by giving me one of them. It was a favour and a

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