

return to sea.

In August 1802 he joined the whaling ship *Diana* on a voyage to Trinidad, Brazil, the Island of Tristan de Cunha, and Cape Town. On reaching St Helena on the return voyage, December 1803, they received news of war between France and England. Shortly afterwards they were captured by a French privateer, *Le Blond*.

Here, as he says, 'was the Beginning of all My worst Troubles'. He and the other prisoners from his boat and from several others captured by the same French vessel were set ashore at St Jean de Luz, near Bordeaux. They were then marched under guard and on foot inland to Bayonne, Pau, Tarbes, and Mirande. Here Choyce organised his last major unsuccessful escape; he and two companions dropped out of line during the next day's march, and headed for the Spanish border, well over the Pyrenees. They struggled for several days over the mountains through the snow with no clothes but those left on their backs by the French sailors who had plundered their prisoners, and with no food but a three-pound loaf of bread luckily served out to each prisoner on the day of their escape. At the border, however, they were apprehended by the French customs officers and brought back to France. Choyce by this time, being bilingual, had adopted a Spanish name as being preferable to an English name in Napoleonic France. Still, he was kept a prisoner.

Now, however, he walked in chains: 'and the following morning They put a Chain round our Necks with a Padlock under our Chins being in this Manner Chain'd together They gave us a Pound of Brown Bread each, then March'd us off with two Gendarmes and in this Manner We arrived in Four Days at *Tarbs*'. And in this manner he was marched the entire length of France – through Auch, Toulouse, Grisolles, Montauban, Cahors, Souillac, St Quentin, Cambrai, Sedan, Damvillers, and at last Verdun. They did not remain there long, and were soon moved via Metz, and Boulay to Sarrelibre (now Saarlouis), in August 1804. This march of some 1,089 miles, as Choyce computes it, was accomplished entirely on foot, in chains, fed only on brown bread. They were bedded down at night in town jails, often with hardened French criminals, and were forced to drag, because of the chain, any companion who was too sick from fever and ague to walk. The conditions were indescribable. And Choyce has few kind words for the wealthy English detained in France at the commencement of war (mainly at Verdun) as hostages. They were interested only in money and fun, and did nothing to help these lower class countrymen of theirs. Often subscription money collected in England for the prisoners never reached them, but was pocketed by the *ad hoc* committees set up to distribute the money.

By 1808, Choyce was fed up with French prisons and annoyed with