

only by the melting of the snow above in dry weather, were small at the time of our visit ; their water soaks into the banks of sand at the foot of the cliffs and on the shores, and is mostly lost, but in some places reappears in the shape of shallow freshwater ponds close to the sea beach.

The water of the streams had a temperature of 50° F., whilst the ponds were warmer, 54° F. The temperature of the lower regions of the island is no doubt constantly reduced by the descent of the cold water from the snow far above ; in the gully above the settlement, shrubs of *Phyllica arborea* commence at about 400 feet elevation.

The trees have in this locality all been cut down for fire-wood, but there is still plenty of wood on the island : *Phyllica arborea* is the only tree occurring in the islands ; it is a species found only in the Tristan da Cunha group, in Gough Island, and in the far-off island of Amsterdam, 3,000 miles distant. Other species of the genus occur at the Cape of Good Hope, but they are low and shrubby. It belongs to the natural order of the Buckthorns (*Rhamnaceæ*).

The foliage of the tree is of a dark glossy green, with the under sides of the narrow, almost needle-like leaves white and downy. Hence the tree, which in habit is very like a yew, presents as a whole a mixture of glaucous grey and dark olive-green shades ; it bears berries of about the size of sweet-peas, which are eaten by the finch which lives in the islands.

The constant heavy gales do not permit the tree to grow erect ; the trunk is usually procumbent at its origin for several feet, and then rises again often at a right-angle. It is always more or less twisted or gnarled. In sheltered places, as under the cliffs on the north-east of Inaccessible Island, the tree is as high as 25 feet, but it is not nearly so high on the summit of the island, though the trunks are said there to reach a length of 30 feet or more.

The largest trunk I saw was about one foot in diameter, but they are said to grow to eighteen inches. The wood of the tree is brittle, and when exposed, rapidly decays, but is serviceable when dried carefully with the bark on. The German settlers in Inaccessible Island used it even for handles to their axes and other tools.

The Tristan da Cunha group has a terrible climate. For nine months in the year there is constant storm and rain, with snow. It is only in the three summer months that the weather is at all fine. In October the "bad season," as the islanders called it, was just beginning to pass away, but the weather was so uncertain that the ship might have had to leave her anchorage at a moment's notice, and only a steamer dared