

FERNANDO-NORONHA AND CONTIGUOUS ISLETS.

INTRODUCTORY NOTES.

PREVIOUSLY to the visit of the Challenger Expedition little was known of the botany of Fernando-Noronha, and from circumstances explained below Mr Moseley was only able to bring away specimens of a small number of plants.

In the Appendix to Webster's narrative of Captain Foster's voyage in the "Chanticleer"¹ are some general observations on the vegetation of the island, but nothing exact. It was also one of the places at which H.M.S. "Beagle" touched, and Mr Darwin mentions² one or two of the more striking trees, &c. He also dried specimens of about a dozen of the plants met with, which he gave to the late Professor Henslow. They are now in the Herbarium of Cambridge University, and through the kindness of Professor Babington we have been able to examine them. Two of them, *Oxalis noronhæ* and *Pisonia darwinii*, were undescribed, and are apparently endemic. The former was also collected by Mr Moseley. Altogether, Mr Moseley collected about fifty species of flowering plants, and had not the Governor withdrawn his permission to collect on the main island, the collection would have been much larger. It is large enough, however, to give a correct idea of the composition of the flora. With the exception of the two plants named above and *Cereus insularis*, *Gonolobus micranthus*, and *Ficus noronhæ*, which we have not been able to match with any continental forms, almost every one is exceedingly common in Tropical America, if it has no wider range of distribution. The four new species collected by Mr Moseley are all from an outlying islet, St Michael's Mount, and not from the main island; and one of them, as already mentioned, was collected by Mr Darwin, most likely in Fernando-Noronha itself. Judging, then, from the sample we have seen, the flora is wholly Tropical American, with no greater infusion of peculiar species than would be found in a similar area on the mainland. The new species exhibit no striking characteristics; and it is not probable that further exploration would lead to the discovery of a specially insular endemic element; for Mr Moseley believes that he nearly exhausted the flora of St Michael's Mount. A surprising and noteworthy feature in the flora is the apparently total absence of ferns and mosses.

¹ Voyage of the "Chanticleer," London, 1834.

² Journal of Researches, 2d ed., p. 11.