

THE CROZETS.

INTRODUCTORY NOTES.

The natural history of this group of islands is still imperfectly known, but the few plants that have been collected are common to them and Marion, Kerguelen, and Heard Islands. Like Sir James Ross's Antarctic Expedition, the Challenger Expedition failed to make a landing, in consequence of the high sea and rough weather; and the little information obtained by the former was from some sealers, who boarded the "Terror" from Possession Island, while the Challenger was unable to approach the islands near enough to get more than an idea of their general aspect and configuration. The group consists of several contiguous islands, of which the principal are Possession, Hog, and East Islands, to which may be added Penguin, otherwise called Inaccessible. Possession Island is the largest; it is fifteen to twenty miles long, and about half as broad, and is situated in 47° S. latitude, and 77° 30' E. longitude. The greatest altitude is estimated at 5000 feet.

Mr Moseley states¹ that the slopes on the eastern side of Possession Island appeared as if clothed with a vegetation similar to that of Marion Island, which, however, did not extend so high up in the mountains.

Eight plants only are known from these islands, six of which were collected by the officers of the United States ship "Monangahela" in Possession Island, and two by Captain J. N. East, of H.M.S. "Comus," who examined the Crozets in 1880 in order to ascertain if any shipwrecked people were there. He reported to the Secretary of the Admiralty, that the Kerguelen Cabbage (*Pringlea*) was abundant on Possession Island, and a plant called "red root," on which the pilot, who had spent some years in the islands, assured him human beings could not only exist but get fat. The plants he collected were fragments of two ferns: *Lomaria alpina*, and *Asplenium obtusatum*, which are in the Herbarium at Kew. There are also specimens of *Pringlea antiscorbutica* and *Azorella selago* in Kew Herbarium from the Crozets. They were sent alive by Mr J. M'Gibbon, superintendent of the Botanic Garden, Cape Town, who obtained them through the master of one of the vessels trading to the islands; but as they died on the passage to Kew, they were dried and preserved.

In addition to these eight plants, the Americans saw "a small vine, with blue flowers, growing among scorïæ," of which, however, they preserved no specimen. The sealers informed the officers of the Challenger Expedition that rabbits and hogs abounded in the islands, but the latter were not wholesome, because of their food.

For an analysis of the composition and affinities of the vegetation of this group, the introductory notes to the flora of Heard Island should be consulted (p. 244).

¹ Notes by a Naturalist on the Challenger, p. 182.]