

## MACDONALD GROUP.

### HEARD ISLAND.<sup>1</sup>

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#### INTRODUCTORY NOTES.

THIS being the last of a series of islands, comprising the Prince Edward Group, the Crozets, and Kerguelen Island, dealt with in this work and enjoying a similar climate and supporting the same kind of vegetation, it is convenient to examine their flora here jointly. But first of all a few words may be said respecting the climate of the islands named, for, although the most southerly of them is not in a higher latitude than the centre of England, the nature, rather than the rigour, of the climate is such as to be very unfavourable to vegetation, not only to flowering plants and ferns but also to the lower cryptogams. This is especially the case in Heard Island, which is still in its glacial epoch. In the extracts which follow from Mr Moseley's notes will be found practically all that is known on the climate of Heard, together with comparisons of the climates of the other islands under consideration. Kerguelen, which lies only some 300 miles north of Heard, has a much milder climate, yet by no means a pleasant one. The Rev. A. E. Eaton, who spent several months there in connection with the Transit of Venus Expedition in 1874-75, describes it in the following terms<sup>2</sup> :—

“The climate of Kerguelen is tempestuous, chilly, and wet . . . gales, or at least strong breezes, being almost constant. The wind is usually westerly and cold. . . . The range of temperature throughout the year does not appear excessive, the highest readings of the thermometer in summer being under 70° Fahr., and the lowest in winter seldom less than 32°. At Christmas Harbour it did not descend below 27° during the stay of the ‘Erebus.’ Before the English expedition arrived at the island, the Americans, early in September, found the temperature one night to be as low as 18°. In the warmer months the readings are not often much higher than 55° or 56°, or much lower than 42°, on the eastern side of the island. The western coast is, however, much more bleak.”

Considering the shortness of the stay of the expedition at Heard Island, Mr Moseley has furnished us with a graphic account of its physical conditions, its flora, and its fauna. True, both animal and vegetable life is little varied, but we learn from his description of the island the reason why it is so. All that bears directly or indirectly on the vegetation is contained in the following somewhat copious but intensely interesting extracts from Mr Moseley's work<sup>3</sup> :—

<sup>1</sup> Called Yong Island by Mr Moseley in *Journ. Linn. Soc. Lond.*, xiv. p. 388.

<sup>2</sup> *Phil. Trans. Roy. Soc. Lond.*, cxlviii. p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Notes by a Naturalist on the Challenger, p. 216.