

# AMSTERDAM AND ST PAUL ISLANDS.

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTES.

### POSITION AND PHYSICAL CONDITIONS.

AMSTERDAM ISLAND lies in about 37° 50' S. latitude and 77° 30' E. longitude, or nearly 5000 miles distant from the Tristan da Cunha group, and St Paul Island is about fifty miles south of it. They are of volcanic origin, and the former is much the larger, though barely six miles across. It is oblong in shape, and rises to a height of 2760 feet. St Paul Island is only about a quarter the size of Amsterdam, and of irregular, quadrangular form, with a circular submerged crater on the north-east side. The highest point of this island is about 840 feet. Formerly, as we are informed by Sir Joseph Hooker, the names of these two islands were reversed in the best charts; and the plants recorded in the Flora Antarctica from Amsterdam Island were really from St Paul Island, as well as those mentioned by Reichardt<sup>1</sup> as having been collected by Sir George Staunton.

### BOTANICAL HISTORY.

Labillardière,<sup>2</sup> who followed Cook in reversing the names of the two islands, recorded the existence, in 1792, of forests in Amsterdam Island, and the fact that at the very time they were passing these forests were in flames in various parts. No landing was effected; and it was not until 1873 that it was ascertained that the forests were composed of *Phyllica nitida* (*Phyllica arborea*), the same species which forms the sole arboreous vegetation in the Tristan da Cunha group, and which also inhabits Bourbon and Mauritius. The late Captain Goodenough, then Commodore on the Pacific station, landed from H.M.S. "Pearl" and brought away a specimen of what he affirmed, and what has since proved to be, the only kind of tree growing on the island, as well as a fragment of a fern. This specimen was sent to Sir Joseph Hooker, who thereupon drew up a brief account<sup>3</sup> of the

<sup>1</sup> *Verhandl. d. k. k. zool.-bot. Gesellsch. Wien*, xxi.

<sup>2</sup> *Relation du Voyage à la Recherche de la Perouse*, i. p. 111.

<sup>3</sup> See *Journ. Linn. Soc. Lond.*, xiv. p. 474.