

in order to bring in the Carib man, Friday. He thus gained the parrot, but he lost the sea-elephants and fur-seals of Juan Fernandez, one of the latter of which would have made a capital pet for Crusoe.

"The island is most beautiful in appearance. The dark basaltic cliffs contrast with the bright yellow-green of the abundant verdure; and the island terminates in fantastic peaks, which rise to a height of about 3000 feet. Especially conspicuous is a precipitous mass which backs the view from the anchorage at Cumberland Bay, and which is called from its form 'El Yunque' (the anvil).

"There are upwards of twenty-four species<sup>1</sup> of ferns growing in this small island, and in any general view the ferns form a large proportion of the main mass of vegetation. Amongst them are two tree-ferns, one of which I only saw amongst the rocks in the distance, but could not reach. The preponderant ferns, especially the tree-ferns, give a pleasant yellow tinge to the general foliage. Curiously enough, the almost cosmopolitan common brako-fern (*Pteris aquilina*) does not occur in the island. Four species of the ferns out of the twenty-four present are peculiar to the island, and one, *Thyrsopteris elegans*, is of a genus which occurs only here. The appearance of this fern is very remarkable, for the cup-shaped sori hang down from the fronds in masses, looking just like bunches of millet seed.

"Everywhere, for the first few hundred feet, trees are absent, the wood having been all felled. In 1830 a large quantity of dry old sandalwood still remained in the valleys; but even then there were no growing sandalwood trees remaining. No doubt the general appearance of the vegetation is very different now from what it was when the island was first visited.

"I landed and climbed with a guide a steep path leading directly up from the bay to Selkirk's Monument. The island is rented from the Chilian Government as a farm by a Chilian who employs a number of labourers and rears cattle, and grows vegetables, doing a very fair trade with passing vessels, the crews of which, like our own, after a voyage from such a port as Tahiti, long for a little wholesome fresh food. A considerable sum is also realised by the sale of the skins of the fur-seals. Close to the farmhouse at the bay still remain a row of old caves dug out in the hillside by the buccaneers.

"In ascending the path the first tree was met with at about 700 feet altitude, all below had been cut down. We passed through a hollow overgrown by a dense growth of the gigantic rhubarb-like *Gunnera peltata*. Darwin remarked on the large size of the leaves of this plant and height of its stalks as seen by him in Chili.<sup>2</sup> The stalks of the plants he saw were not much more than a yard in height. In this hollow the stalks must have been seven feet in height. We walked through a narrow passage cut in a thicket of them with the huge circular leaves above our heads. The leaves catch and hold a large quantity of rain-water. The size attained by the *Gunnera* varies with its situation. In many places the leaves are very conspicuous on the hill-slopes, crowding closely as an undergrowth, and not rising high above the ground.

"It was now spring in Juan Fernandez, as at Tahiti. Most excellent strawberries grow wild about the lower slopes of the island, and especially well on banks beneath the cliffs close to the sea-shore. The strawberries are large and fine, but white in colour, being, I believe, a Spanish cultivated variety. If so, they have not all reverted to the parent wild form, either in colour or size; a few only were just beginning to ripen.

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<sup>1</sup> Altogether forty-four species are recorded from the island, of which eight are apparently endemic.—W. B. H.

<sup>2</sup> Journal of Researches during the Voyage of H. M. S. "Beagle," p. 279. London, 1879.