Longevity of the Carp

Last autumn, being at Fontainebleau, I was told by the servant of the Palace that the German soldiers while in occupation of the place during the last war caught many of the carp in the pond of the Palace garden called "Jardin Anglais," and that some of these carp carried, attached by silver wire to their gills, little silver plates bearing inscriptions purporting that if it should turn out that they were, then, although the well-managed proof desired by Mr. Suffield (NATURE, vol. x. p. 147) would not of course be given, yet the fact would be evidence worth noting.

F. G.

THE "CHALLENGER" EXPEDITION *

INACCESSIBLE AND NIGHTINGALE ISLANDS

The first of these islands, the area of which is about one square mile, is situated about two thousand yards W. by S. of Tristan d'Acunha. The cliffs rise to the height of about 1,000 feet in a perpendicular range on the north-east side. The tract beneath the cliffs is covered with debris of fallen rocks. On the cliffs themselves the plants are similar to those found in the same situation in Tristan d'Acunha, together with a species of Sparitine arundinacea Carm., a tall, reed-like grass, which forms an extensive penguin rookery; patches of Phyllica arborescens Th. also grow on the summits of slight elevations; and under the shelter of the cliffs the trees attain a height of twenty feet, or even more. The trunks are seldom or never straight, but mostly lean over, or become partly procumbent, starting upright again towards the top. The largest trunk seen by Mr. Moseley measured a foot in diameter, but the trees on the upper plateau are said to measure 18 inches across, they do not, however, grow so high, being stunted by the force of the gales. The wood of the Phyllica, though brittle, is said to be useful when properly dried, but in exposed situations it rapidly decays. Underneath the trees are ferns, mosses, and sedges, also Acena sanguisurba Vahl., the leaves of which are used in New Zealand both as a tea and as a medicine. Chenopodium tomentosum, the tea-plant of Tristan, also grows in abundance, forming bushes with woody stems. A species of Sphenium, Carex insularis Carm., and Hydrocotyle capsitata Th. grew in a swamp near the penguin rookery. From the two Germans who were discovered on the island a gooldeal of information was obtained about the vegetation, many of the species of the geological survey were found, but the Dioscorea was found impracticable to ascend from the side of the mountain where the ship anchored. The plants found there were similar to those which grew below, but in addition grew the species of Empetrum, found on the other islands, Lomaria boryana Wild., which in some instances attained a height of four feet, Lycopodiuminsularis Carm., and Lagenophora commersonii Cass., a small Composite plant with a daisy-like flower. The Tussock grass, which appears closely similar to Dorylis caspita Forst., of the Falklands, grows in patches of considerable size on the upper plateau, and straggles up the cliffs to the summit. Nertera deye, Banks, grows on the plateau, and its berries form a favourite food of the Nesocnura eremita, the native thrush of the Tristan group; while the Bunting (Emberiza brasilensiis) feeds on the fruits of the Phyllica.

The two Germans had cultivated the ground in the neighbourhood of their dwelling, growing potatoes, cabbages, and the like. A species of clover, also introduced by them was spreading rapidly, and a convolvulus was growing in quantity on the cultivated ground.

The other island of the Tristan group is named Nightingale Island, and is distant 20 miles from Tristan d'Acunha, and 12 miles from Inaccessible Island. It is, comparatively speaking, a mere speck about one square mile in extent, and to the west are two small outlying islands covered with turf; the island itself is a rocky peak 1,100 ft. high rises on the north side of Nightingale Island, and is continued into a ridge stretching across the island, a valley separating this from a lower ridge which runs nearly at right angles. On the lower tract Phyllica arborescens occurs in patches, and on the high ground was seen Lycopodium insularis and a species of Cotula different from that found in Tristan and not seen at all in Inaccessible Island. Sonchus oleraceus L., which grows abundantly on the other islands, is, together with several other plants, absent from this. The Tussock grass forms a dense growth over nearly the whole island, growing in thick tufts or clumps to a height of five or six feet, and so matted together near the base of the clumps as to be almost impenetrable. The abundant growth of this grass causes the island to become an enormous penguin rookery, and the thick deposit of the excrement of the birds imparts a greater vigour to the plants, so that the lower parts or bases of the clumps become of a peaty character, and beds several feet in thickness, of a black peaty richly-manured soil, being thus formed. It was with the greatest difficulty that a way was made through this thicket, the grass being too high to allow the planting of any definite track, and the screaming and biting of the penguins and the stench from the dung, being anything but agreeable. Indeed Mr. Moseley says that the specimens of Tussock grass which he gathered on Inaccessible and Nightingale Islands were lost in the continued fight with the penguins and the long grass. In one place a quantity of the trees of Phyllica grew on the summit of the island, and under the shelter of the cliffs the trees attain a height of twenty feet, or even more. The trunks are seldom or never straight, but mostly lean over, or become partly procumbent, starting upright again towards the top. The largest trunk seen by Mr. Moseley measured a foot in diameter, but the trees on the upper plateau are said to measure 18 inches across, they do not, however, grow so high, being stunted by the force of the gales. The wood of the Phyllica, though brittle, is said to be useful when properly dried, but in exposed situations it rapidly decays. Underneath the trees are ferns, mosses, and sedges, also Acena sanguisurba Vahl., the leaves of which are used in New Zealand both as a tea and as a medicine. Chenopodium tomentosum, the tea-plant of Tristan, also grows in abundance, forming bushes with woody stems. A species of Sphenium, Carex insularis Carm., and Hydrocotyle capsitata Th. grew in a swamp near the penguin rookery. From the two Germans who were discovered on the island a gooldeal of information was obtained about the vegetation, many of the species of the geological survey were found, but the Dioscorea was found impracticable to ascend from the side of the mountain where the ship anchored. The plants found there were similar to those which grew below, but in addition grew the species of Empetrum, found on the other islands, Lomaria boryana Wild., which in some instances attained a height of four feet, Lycopodiuminsularis Carm., and Lagenophora commersonii Cass., a small Composite plant with a daisy-like flower. The Tussock grass, which appears closely similar to Dorylis caspita Forst., of the Falklands, grows in patches of considerable size on the upper plateau, and straggles up the cliffs to the summit. Nertera deye, Banks, grows on the plateau, and its berries form a favourite food of the Nesocnura eremita, the native thrush of the Tristan group; while the Bunting (Emberiza brasilensiis) feeds on the fruits of the Phyllica.

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