

the works which they found at Ascension Island as the remains of a stronghold of Spanish buccaneers. I quote the words of D'Urville, as nearly as I remember them:—"That the town which once stood upon this spot was not built by savages cannot be doubted, the style of the ruins giving strong proofs of civilization. Some of the stones measure eight or ten feet in length, are squared upon six sides, and have evidently been brought hither from some other country, there being no stone on the island similar to them. The whole place seems to have been a succession of fortified houses. It seems probable that at one time it was the stronghold of pirates, and it has been conjectured that it was built by the Spanish buccaneers two or three centuries ago." This is very erroneous. The stones are in many cases much larger than here described, in fact, as large again. They are basaltic prisms quarried on the land itself in the interior, as I have seen. It would have taken all the labour of the Spanish pirates from the days of Balboa till now, to build all the monstrous works of Strong Island, to say nothing of those that exist on Ascension and elsewhere in the neighbourhood.

Strong Island is very productive. Besides all the tropical vegetables of Polynesia and various kinds of palms, it is covered with valuable timber trees from the shore to the summits of the mountains. Some of this wood, of a species as yet little known to Europeans, is of the best quality for shipbuilding purposes, being perfectly straight and of the most convenient size, as well as being of great lengths; added to this, its durability is remarkable, and it cannot be attacked by the salt-water worm. For these reasons, the contractors for the building of a dry-dock and wharves in Shanghai and other ports of China have obtained hence, and from the neighbouring island of Ascension, cargoes of piles which have given great satisfaction to the engineers engaged on those works. Strong island is immensely valuable for its timber alone; but the land lies idle, for the natives do nothing more than is necessary to provide food, which, as it grows in a great measure spontaneously, is not a source of anxiety to them. They would, in fact, scarcely perform any work whatever, were it not from a desire to possess cotton print, ornaments, hardware, and tobacco. To obtain these articles they cure some *beche-de-mer*, gather fungus and tortoise-shell, occasionally go to sea in whaling and other ships for short cruises, and now make dried cocoa-nut in considerable quantity. They are tolerably well supplied with axes and the like implements. As concerns their weapons, they have long discarded the bow and spear, and most of the men possess muskets purchased from traders and whalers.

The Island of *Ascension* (or *Pouape*) is similar in all its conditions to Strong Island, excepting that it is much larger, and contains very considerable tracts of comparatively level or sloping lands, irrespective of the low valleys and flats along the sea coast. It is clothed from the beach to the mountain tops with every kind of the most glorious tropical vegetation, as likewise forests of magnificent timber trees. There are many great streams in all directions, with cascades for the turning of mills, and in the valleys below of sufficient volume for the floatage of rafts and navigation by large boats. The interior is altogether uninhabited, although covered with the ruins of a former civilization. The population of Ascension is somewhere about 7,000. The people do not go much to sea. They are kindly disposed and peaceable, though they have often been decimated and driven to desperation by hordes of lawless ruffians, who have established themselves upon the island from time to time, and produced much mischief. These have been generally beachcombers from Manilla, Guam, or the Sandwich Isles. Sometimes (as twenty years ago) there have been as many as a hundred on Ascension at one time; and it shows plainly enough that these Ascension islanders must have in themselves the germ of very much better things, when we find them, as they are, hospitable, generous, and industrious, after so many years of intimate contact with such irredeemable scoundrels as the majority of their European visitors undoubtedly were. There are three good harbours at Ascension—Metallanien, Rouan Kiti, and Jokoits; so there is good shelter at all times, according to the prevailing wind, each of these harbours being within a coral reef, which provides double security.

There are five chiefs who rule over the respective districts into which the island is divided. There are nine white men domesticated on the land: four Englishmen, two Americans (exclusive of a missionary), two Portuguese, one Manillaman. There are also several Lascars. All have large families of half-breed children, most of them very handsome and intelligent. The islanders, like those of Strong's, have long discarded their barbarian weapons, and are well supplied with muskets, purchased from traders for tortoise-shell and *beche-de-mer*. It is probable there are not less than 2,000 of them on the island; but the principal use to which they are devoted is the shooting of pigeons, which are in extraordinary numbers throughout the woods.

An American missionary (Mr. Doane) has been here for some thirteen years. The people are kind to him, and readily supply his limited wants, but they, like the Strong islanders, do not seem to comprehend the religion of the white men, or to care about making themselves acquainted with it. They unhappily have seen too much villany practised by Europeans, and have suffered too much at their hands, to readily accept them as teachers of good morals or duties toward God. With civilization and the protection of law, their prejudices would disappear.

There is no possibility of any one who has not seen the island of Ascension forming any adequate idea of its beauty and richness. The interior is altogether uninhabited; the natives have a superstitious dread of it, and cannot be readily persuaded to go any distance inland. As on Strong Island, so on Ascension, there are many ruins, the work of the same ancient people, only very much larger and more extensive. Hundreds of acres, in some localities, are covered by the remains of walls, canals, and earthworks, of the most stupendous character. One can easily imagine, from their appearance, what a dense population must once have inhabited this place.

The trade of Ascension has been in former years principally with whale ships, but since the raid of the "*Shenandoah*," their visits have been less frequent. Many small vessels resort here from the Sandwich Islands and Samoa. The island yields in abundance almost every valuable tropical product, but the principal articles of trade are pearl shell (which is of very fine quality, and of great size), tortoise-shell, *beche-de-mer*, dried cocoa-nuts, oil, and fungus. Some Europeans are now beginning to plant cotton; and large quantities of valuable timber have been exported to China. The resources of Ascension are enormous; as a European possession, it would be impossible to estimate its value.

Westward of Ascension is the great atoll of *Hogoleu*. This consists of a vast lagoon, somewhere about 300 miles in circuit. There are three main channels of entrance, safe at all times for the largest