

Life at Tristan is by no means without its advantages, since it does not necessitate any considerable amount of labour. Vegetables, such as potatoes, cabbages, carrots, and parsnips, can be raised in considerable quantities, but the fields in which they are planted must be small and walled all round to protect them from the wind; fish can readily be caught in almost any quantity; fur seals, though scarce, are occasionally captured; the cattle provide meat, milk, butter, and cheese. There were between 500 and 600 head of cattle, and about as many sheep, on the island when it was visited by the Expedition; but the cattle are often lost in the very cold weather from exposure. The sea birds provide large numbers of eggs; passing vessels exchange flour, coffee, sugar, and other articles of luxury, for the surplus produce of the island, mainly potatoes and meat; and, in short, the settlers on this remote spot are not badly off. The wild goats and pigs have been entirely killed off, and the wild rabbits, formerly numerous, appear to be now quite extinct.

The character of the inhabitants stands deservedly high; they have invariably assisted, to the best of their ability, all shipwrecked persons, and they also fed, and provided for the wants of, forty prisoners landed by the "Shenandoah" during the American Civil War, although they naturally enough remonstrated against such a sudden influx of visitors. This high character appears to be in a great measure due to the judicious example of the late Corporal Glass, who was much respected by the Rev. Mr. Taylor and by all the captains of vessels touching at the island. The Rev. Mr. Taylor also always spoke in the highest terms of the moral character of the community, and said he failed to trace a vice amongst them. Since his departure, and probably owing to the want of such a man as Glass to set them an example, the inhabitants appear to have deteriorated slightly from this high standard. Captain Pullen of H.M.S. "Cyclops" states that when he visited the island in 1862, some of them were decidedly excited by liquor towards evening.

The houses forming the village, fifteen in number, are built very solidly of huge rectangular blocks, cut out of a soft red tufa, fitted together without mortar (see Pl. IX.), the walls being about 8 feet high and 3 feet thick; the roofs are raftered with wood obtained from American vessels, and then thatched with Tussock Grass, a most excellent material which outlasts the rafters. Small gardens surround the cottages, walled in to shelter them from the violent southwest winds, and roses and other flowers are successfully cultivated.

There can be no doubt that the habitation of Tristan Island is of immense advantage to the sailor, and it would be a great pity were the island ever to be abandoned. Many shipwrecked crews have been hospitably received by the settlers, and their wants supplied without any recompense being required. Should this group be made a dependency of the British crown, a resident clergyman or schoolmaster might be appointed to act as Governor.