

The Flowery Islands.

By SIR GEORGE NEWNES, BART.



From a Photo. by]

TEMPESTUOUS WEATHER—SCILLY ISLES.

[Frith & Co.



EVERYONE from school-days onwards has heard from time to time of the Scilly Isles, but comparatively few people ever have the opportunity of seeing them. They are on the way to nowhere, and unless you live in Cornwall, and are enticed by summer excursion steamers, there is no chance, as a rule, to visit them, and yet they are most interesting and, so far as this country, at any rate, is concerned, unique.

Right out on the broad Atlantic a cluster of rocky islands; five of them inhabited, and producing beautiful and



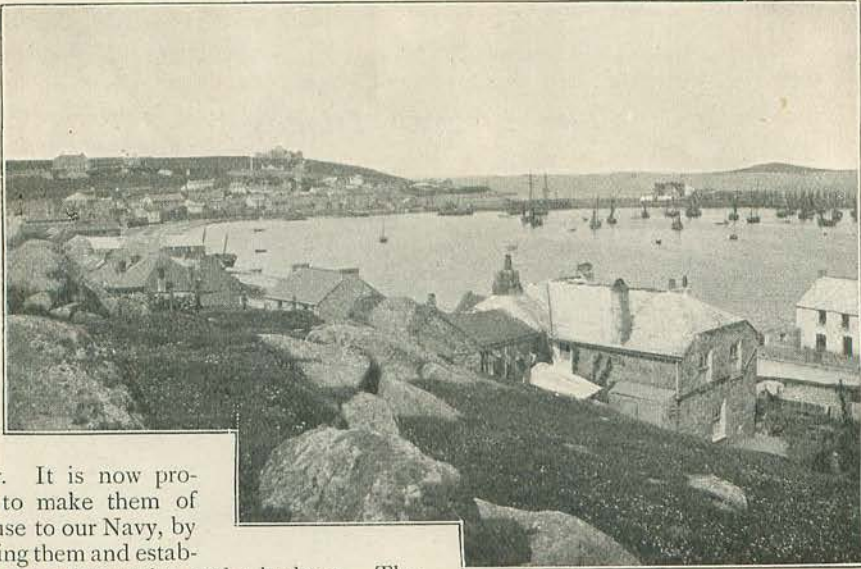
BISHOP LIGHTHOUSE.

From a Photo. by R. H. Preston, Penzance.

at the same time profitable growth, the others of little value.

The two features of the Scilly Isles present a striking contrast: flowers and storms; beauty and shipwreck. In tempestuous, and more especially in foggy, weather they have proved a death-trap to many an unhappy mariner, though the great utility of the lighthouses around our coast is shown by the fact that since they have been made efficient on Scilly the shipwrecks have been comparatively few.

As a set-off to the havoc that the islands have worked at times is the fact that they have also proved a place of



HUGHTOWN, ST. MARY'S.
From a Photo. by J. Valentine & Sons.

shelter. It is now proposed to make them of great use to our Navy, by fortifying them and establishing a coaling-station and a harbour. The islands form a sort of lake in the ocean, and when a breakwater has been made to the westward, where the largest area of the Atlantic is seen, there will be almost a perfect protection from every wind that blows.

There is no coaling-station for our Fleet between Ushant and Ireland, and it is conceivable that under certain circumstances the Scilly Islands might prove most valuable.

It is supposed, though no one knows, that Scilly was joined to the mainland, and there is a tradition amongst the people that at one time a horse's head could have stopped all the water that flowed between Scilly and what is called Land's End; but there is now nearly thirty miles of rolling sea between them.

If, however, the Scilly Islands have suffered through the angry storms of the Atlantic, they have enjoyed the soft embraces of the warm Gulf Stream, which comes across it. This flows all round the islands and keeps an equable temperature. For this reason it is possible to grow certain flowers about two months earlier than anywhere else in

Britain, and in consequence of that fact a very large industry has been developed.

Mr. Augustus Dorian Smith was for nearly forty years Lord Proprietor of the Island, and he commenced and encouraged the cultivation of early flowers on a large scale. He was called, like his successor, Mr. Algernon Dorian Smith, "Lord Proprietor of the Island," although the Scillies are leased from the Duchy of Cornwall. Still, no one grudges the Dorian Smiths their title, as they have done so much for the island and have been practically kings of the place.

Upon the Island of Treseo is situated



From a Photo. by]

TRESEO ABBEY.

[J. Valentine & Sons.

their residence — a large one, with all the comforts of a modern English mansion. Surrounding it are many acres of gardens containing flowers and tropical plants, many of which are not to be met anywhere north of the Mediterranean shores. One part of the grounds is called North and the other South Australia. The



TRESCO ABBEY—ROCKERIES, SHOWING A GREATER VARIETY OF PLANTS THAN IN ANY OTHER PHOTO.



TRESCO ABBEY GARDENS — BIGGEST TREE FERNS IN SCILLY.

Long Walk separates the two, and here are found many trees, etc., which are indigenous to the soil of those distant colonies. Among the more striking of the plants are gigantic cactus, gum-trees, and fuchsias, more like forest trees than garden plants. There is also a variety of palms from China, India, and Japan; and aloes which are reputed to flower only once in a hundred years, and then to die, as if the display of their fragrance and beauty were fatal to them. As a matter of fact, very few of them do take as long as that before they



From Photos. by

TRESCO ABBEY—EUCALYPTUS, ETC.

[Frith & Co.

as here, is a wealth and profusion of luxuriant growth, of rare and beautiful plants. On the hill above the gardens is a statue of Mr. Augustus Dorien Smith, on which is an

inscription stating that for thirty-nine years he was Lord Proprietor of these Islands.

Descending from this statue one comes to a lawn-tennis court, which is of itself a very commonplace object compared with the wonderful beauties that the visitor has just witnessed, but even that has a special and indeed a weird and ghastly interest of its own. At one end of the court

deed a depressing sight, knowing that these twenty or more figure-heads are, perhaps, all that are left of so many ships carrying human freight, and the disasters to which hurled hundreds of souls into eternity.

We believe this curious and uncanny collection was made by Mr. Augustus, the uncle of the present Mr. Algernon Dorien Smith. This latter gentleman is a handsome man, in the prime of life, full of vigour and strong

personal individuality. He is often called "King Smith," and his manner shows that he is not one who would like to be denied his own way. After all, kings are mortal, and it would be surprising if the King of the Scilly Islands did not, like all other Imperialists, show that he meant his royal will to be respected. But though he is controller of all the land in the island, and everyone has to go to him for permission to do anything upon it, still his is not an absolute monarchy. He has, like the Queen of the adjacent islands of



BUILDING IN THE TENNIS COURT.
From a Photo. by C. J. King, Scilly.



ARUM LILIES.

From Photo. by R. H. Preston,
Penzance.

is a building for spectators, and this is embellished, if one can use the word in such a connection, by the figure-heads of ships which have been wrecked on the islands.

To sensitive spirits this is in-



GRAND MONARQUE—THE LARGEST POLYANTHUS NARCISSUS. ONLY FIELD IN BRITAIN HEDGED WITH PALMS AND BAMBOOS.
From a Photo. by [Frith & Co.]

Great Britain and Ireland, to put up with a county council, of which, however, as might be expected, he is chairman. The people

will astonish most people to learn that no less than 500 tons of narcissus were sent from Scilly to the mainland, mostly bound for Covent Garden Market. It is not that they grow in Scilly more beautifully or larger, but because they are some two months earlier.

It is rather prosy to introduce into a description of lovely flowers sordid questions of monopoly and competition. But still these islanders have the chance of putting upon the market at a time when no one else can the results of their labours, and no one can blame them for



A FIELD OF PRINCEPS. TAKEN 10TH FEBRUARY.
From a Photo. by R. H. Preston, Penzance.

on the islands are represented in Parliament by the member for the Penzance Division of Cornwall.

But perhaps the most interesting feature in regard to these beautiful islands is the enormous increase of the trade in early flowers, particularly



PICKING ORNATUS.
From a Photo. by C. J. King, Scilly.



A FIELD OF NARCISUS. TAKEN 10TH FEBRUARY.
From a Photo. by R. H. Preston, Penzance.

narcissus and daffodils; of the former some 150 varieties are grown.

From very small beginnings this industry has progressed, and last year it

treating in a business-like and commercial manner the fortunate condition in which they find themselves. As we have said, the equable climate, in consequence of the Gulf Stream,



PACKING DOUBLE WHITES, ETC.
From a Photo. by Frith & Co.

is the main reason for the early and successful growth of the flowers, but they must be protected from certain winds, and large hedges are grown, so that the gardens look like

are right out on the Western Ocean, not upon an Atlantic liner, but upon solid mother earth. Little frost or snow visits the isles, whilst in summer, intense heat is prevented by the cool Atlantic breezes.

There is some talk of establishing a large sanatorium upon the islands. The history and traditions of the place are largely connected with shipwreck and drowning. The people do not call themselves Englishmen or Cornishmen,



Photo. by] ST. MARY'S—PULPIT ROCK. [Preston.

patches or allotments. It is a very important question this study of the protection of the flowers, and the inhabitants of the isles seem to have well mastered it. The quantity of flowers



ST. AGNES—NAG'S HEAD ROCK.
From a Photo. by J. Valentine & Sons.

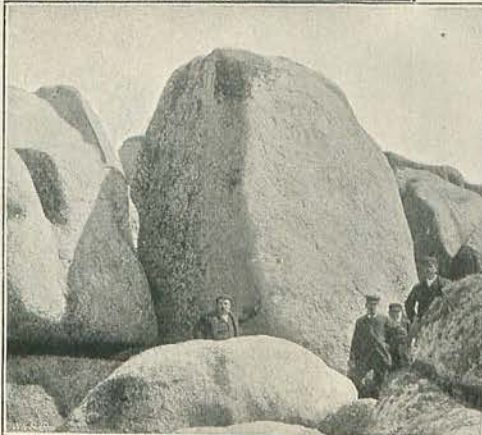


ST. MARY'S—LOADED CAMEL ROCK, AND SPOT WHERE SIR CLOUDESLEY SHOVEL'S BODY WAS FOUND AND FLEET WRECKED, 1707.
From a Photo. by Frith & Co.

but Scillonians, and they are proud and fond of their birth-place. The rock scenery of some of the coast is imposing, and here is perhaps the largest of the Logan, or rocking-stones, a huge piece of rock so poised that it is possible for one person to move some hundred tons.

Sir Walter Besant spent six weeks here writing his famous novel, "Armored of Lyonesse," which gives a good insight into the legends and folk-lore of the place; and certainly Scilly would be just the spot to inspire the novelist or the poet with ideas of romance, of rescue, and of tragedy; rugged and bleak in some parts, cultured and sheltered in others.

grown is steadily increasing, and in a few years' time the huge figure we have quoted will probably be far exceeded. Early potatoes and tomatoes are also cultivated in large quantities. Altogether Scilly is well worth a visit. At first there is a curious sensation in feeling that you



From a Photo. lent by] LOGAN STONE. [C. J. King.