

STRANGE SOUTH AMERICAN ISLANDS

They Lie Off the West Coast and Will Be Opened to Travel by the Panama Canal.

The Galapagos Archipelago as a Coaling Station for the United States in Its Wild Cattle and Mules and Its Enormous Turtles. Robinson Crusoe's Island, Where Chile Is Now Building a Model Convict Settlement. How Daniel Defoe Got His Wonderful Story—Peruvian Islands Which Have Produced a Billion Dollars' Worth of Fertilizer—The Guano Deposits and How the Peruvian Government Will Renovate Them. (Copyrighted, 1914, by Frank G. Carpenter.)

Valparaiso, Chile, Dec. 6.—I dined the other night on lobsters caught on the shores of the island where Alexander Selkirk, the real Robinson Crusoe, was cast away. They were large, tender and juicy, and I doubt if better can be found in the world. Robinson Crusoe's island is becoming a great fishing ground. It has cod in its waters and it is noted for its lobsters and other shellfish. It has also a large Chilean fishing colony, and the Japanese, who are organizing a fishing industry in the straits of Chile, are considering the exploitation of that territory.

Robinson Crusoe's island is known on the maps as Juan Fernandez. It belongs to Chile, and lies 140 miles west of this port of Valparaiso and 2,600 miles south of the Panama Canal. It is reached by government steamers, which go there to supply the colony at certain times of the year, and it is ruled by officers of the Chilean government. During my stay here I have met men who know the island well.

They describe it as a paradise. It has plenty of rain and is covered with a luxuriant vegetation. It is affected by the antarctic current, which keeps it perpetually cool, and the southern half on which the rains fall is covered with green.

The island is only twelve miles long by seven miles wide. It consists of a great mass of rocks rising out of the sea to a height of more than four thousand feet. It is made up of hills and mountains, with many ravines and short valleys. The most of the shores are inaccessible, but at Cumberland Bay there is an excellent landing place, where this is a settlement of cottages, and huts made of cane wattled with straw. The houses have gardens about them, and at one time there was an attempt to start a silk-raising industry. One settler is said to have had as many as 30,000 silkworms and an equal number of sheep. In time, however, his business fell off and the cattle ran wild. The island now has wild sheep, wild goats, wild mules, and the animals thrive without human care. The grass is excellent and covers every open spot on the northern side of the island. There are wild fruits, and the hills and also wild vegetables. There are wild fruits which have reproduced themselves from the trees planted by Alexander Selkirk and from the same source there are wild grapes, and delicious berries, which Robinson Crusoe dried for raisins.

Alexander Selkirk was the hero of Defoe's story, and the real Robinson Crusoe. He was cast away on this island more than 200 years ago, and there is a monument to him, consisting of marble tablet set in the rocks on one of the higher peaks of the island. The idea of a settlement on Robinson Crusoe's island and it is where he is supposed to have kept watch-fires burning to attract the attention of any ship that might pass. The monument was erected at Valparaiso by some English naval officers. I have a photograph of it. The inscription reads as follows:

IN MEMORY OF ALEXANDER SELKIRK, MARINER A native of Largo in the County of Fife, Scotland, who lived on this island in complete solitude, four years and four months. He was landed from the "Douglas" by the "Onion" on Feb. 18, 1704, and was taken off in the "Duke" privateer 12th of February, 1709. He died December 4, 1722, aged 47 years. This tablet is erected near Selkirk's Lookout by Commodore Powell and the officers of H. M. S. "Porpoise" V. B. 1868.

Alexander Selkirk died in 1793, but a little more than 200 years ago. He went to London and there met Defoe, who had many talks with him and therefrom got the idea for his story. The first edition of "Robinson Crusoe" was published ten years later. It ran through four editions in six months and was the best seller of its time. It is one of the best-selling books of all time, and it ranks with the Bible and John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" as the greatest sellers of history. "Robinson Crusoe" has been translated into nearly every language. It has been printed in Spanish, German, Russian, Italian, Greek and Arabic. It is one of the boys' books of Japan, and a Chinese edition has been recently issued, which is having an enormous sale.

Now that the Panama canal is completed there will probably be some special steamship excursions to Robinson Crusoe's island. The round trip from Valparaiso can be made in three or four days, and it might include a look at the cave in which Alexander Selkirk lived, at the Lookout where his watch-fires were kept, and at vestiges of Crusoe's hut Friday and perhaps a petrified footprint of that which the savage made upon the sand. Selkirk was found by a ship that had seen the fire on the Lookout. According to the narrative of the captain who took him to England, he was clad in monkey skin and was running about as though crazy. When he reached London his talk was the wonder of the coffee houses and his adventures were discussed by every one. Sir Richard Steele took of them in one of his papers, and Selkirk published a little pamphlet of twelve pages describing his wanderings.

The Robinson Crusoe cave, where Selkirk lived, lies in a rift of a conic rock. It is easily identified. It is about 30 feet deep, and its roof is from ten to fifteen feet from the floor. The entrance is about fifteen feet high, and is almost hidden in ferns. The cave shows signs of having been lived in, and it is like the description of that in "Robinson Crusoe." There are holes and pockets scooped out of the walls and here and there is a rusty nail that had been driven in between the stones. The cave is said to have been the resort of the buccanniers, who once ravaged the west coast of South America. There are other caves upon the island, and there are also cave dungeons which were occupied when the island was used for criminals. Some of the cells were far underground, and the prisoners could not stand upright within them. History records that the convicts once mutinied and murdered their guards. They captured

the boats in the harbor, and 800 of them made their way to Chile and landed there.

Within the past year or so the Chilean government has decided to make Juan Fernandez again a convict settlement. The officials have visited it, and they find it well fitted for the purpose. They have sent a number of convicts there, and are now erecting a model prison upon it.

Another group of islands that will be important, now that the canal is completed, is the Archipelago de Colon. The name on the maps is the Galapagos Islands. These islands belong to Ecuador. They are situated about as far from Panama as New York is distant from Chicago, and in such a location that they might form an important coaling station for the ships on their way north and south between the two continents. They are about 500 miles from Ecuador and 2,000 miles north of Valparaiso.

These islands were for a long time uninhabited, and not long ago they had a sort of a Robinson Crusoe, who lived there for years upon fruits and roots, and upon the wild cattle and pig which he was able to kill. He caught the animals in traps and killed them with a spear made of a wooden knife tied to a stick. He had a hut with a roof of cowskins and pigskins. When found he was naked, and was carrying a pig on his back. He had been on the islands for years, having been left there by some ship. He had almost lost the power of speech, and it took some time for him to grow accustomed to civilized ways.

At several times during our history the United States has considered the getting possession of the Galapagos Islands. In 1851 preliminaries of transfer were arranged with Ecuador, and that time a \$2,000,000 was offered for the right of collecting the guano on the islands. The sale fell through, however, and so far none of the subsequent negotiations has succeeded. Now that we have the canal, the sale may again come up in connection with our Pacific coast trade.

It is claimed that the islands are fertile. Some parts of them are now being settled by Ecuadorians, who have established several plantations, and say that they have enough grazing grounds to feed thousands of cattle. The islands have excellent cod fisheries along the shore, and are also famous for turtles of enormous size, which are found nowhere else. These turtles when full grown measure about three feet thick and weigh as much as 400 pounds. They are now being used as a source of oil, which is in place of lard. An ordinary turtle will yield about six gallons of oil, and this will sell for 75 cents a gallon. The islands have also seals and wild dogs, as well as wild cats, all of which are the descendants of those brought by a colony from Ecuador, which once attempted to settle the island, but failed.

There are other islands lying off the west coast of South America that have yielded more money than any other group of islands of similar size. They are called the Peruvian Islands, which have produced more than one billion dollars' worth of fertilizer, and which if the present movement for their renovation succeeds, will produce millions of dollars more. This movement is backed by the Peruvian government, and is based upon scientific investigations. I will describe it further on in this paper.

The guano deposits begin at the northern part of Peru, and they run here and there through the sea off the west coast into Chile. They are situated in a line, and they are absolutely barren except for the vast flocks of birds which use them for their breeding places.

I saw many of these islands on my way southwest through the Pacific. At first they seem to be rocks of white chalk. The white, however, was made by the droppings of birds, which come there by the tens of millions every year to nest and raise their young. CARPENTER.

The great value comes from the droppings or manure of these birds. At the time they were discovered the deposits were so rich that the Peruvians were two generations in developing them. They shipped the guano to the United States and Europe, and a fleet of vessels was engaged in carrying it. The Peruvian government took part of the expenses of the government, and they kept the country rich.

Then Peru had its war with Chile, and was conquered. The result was an enormous foreign debt in the settlement of which the best of the guano islands were given over to the foreign bondholders, and came under what is known as the Peruvian corporation, which corporation is shipping from them thirty or more thousand tons every year.

The guano deposits are now almost exhausted. The amount of the product had been consumed before the war with Chile, and a continual export has gone on since then. The output now amounts to only a few thousand tons a year, but through the plan now making by the Peruvian government the islands may be renovated, and a continual supply received from them for all time to come. These plans are based upon the work of Dr. H. C. Forbes, a celebrated ornithologist, who has been sent by the President of Peru to report upon the islands and advise the government as to their future. Dr. Forbes has visited the whole island, sea, and has been studying the islands and their possibilities. He has caught some of the birds and kept them with a view to see how much guano each will produce. He finds that the amount of guano consumed by them is enormous. A single pelican will eat from eight to ten pounds a day and it deposits an enormous amount of guano in the course of a nesting season. A sea gull will drop from four to six ounces per day, or something like twenty-six pounds during the time it is breeding. Other birds produce more and the total amount is very great.

main there until they have digested sufficient of their catch to lighten the weight. They always hunt in flocks, and when they settle on some place where the fish are abundant they form islands on the sea a mile or so in diameter. Dr. Forbes says that they sit so close together that those on the outside have to rise first before the birds in the interior are able to get enough air under their wings to enable them to rise from the sea.

Dr. Forbes has found that the most of the guano comes from eight species of birds. The chief of these is Bonaparte's cormorant, whose chief nesting place is the Chincha Islands. Last February Dr. Forbes found ten millions of these birds nesting in the middle of one of these islands. The nests were close together, and the whole formed one of the most wonderful bird sights of the world. He watched them, and found that each nest had its male and female, and that one bird sat on the nest while the other was feeding, and that it, in turn, was relieved by its mate. The cormorants started for their fishing grounds at 5 or 6 in the morning, and flew in a broad stream perhaps 150 feet wide. This stream continued for hours.

The next bird in importance is the pelican. This also nests in great flocks, and in the same neighborhood as the cormorants. When the pelicans are feeding five or six thousand of them may be seen diving together. They fill the great pouches under their bills, and carry the fish away to eat them at their leisure.

Another bird is the gannet, whose young are beautiful little creatures. The gannets fly in flocks of from ten to twenty thousand, and they go down, like so many rockets, into the sea.

The guano of the Lohos islands is found in pockets covered with layers of sand from two to fifteen feet deep. These are old deposits. The sand is shoveled off, and the guano is dug out. The stuff looks like fine sand. As it is dug up a strong smell of ammonia rises and the workmen wear iron masks over their faces to keep the ammonia dust out of their lungs. The guano is loaded upon trucks and carried on a tramway to the shore, where it is transferred to the ships for Europe or the United States. Such loading is now being done on the Chincha Islands as well, and upon the smaller islands still in the hands of the Peruvian government.

When these islands were first discovered they had guano deposits six feet deep, and Alexander Humboldt, who visited them 110 years ago, said that they then contained enough manure to enrich all of the worn-out lands of the old world. They were not thought to be of value, however, until about fifty years later, when a Frenchman called attention to certain of the deposits, and claimed one-third of the product by right of discovery. The Peruvian Congress voted him 500 tons, but it is said that he never got it, and died in a poorhouse in Paris.

Other deposits were discovered by an American named Landrau, and he was treated in the same way, although our State Department took up his case and President Hayes referred to it in one of his messages to Congress. The deposits Landrau discovered were worth \$400,000,000, and according to the Peruvian law he should have had \$12,000,000 from them. He received nothing.

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