

houses, gardens, and fields, placed near the summit of the central mountain. On the roadside there are milestones, and likewise cisterns, where each thirsty passer-by can drink some good water. Similar care is displayed in each part of the establishment, and especially in the management of the springs, so that a single drop of water may not be lost: indeed the whole island may be compared to a huge ship kept in first-rate order. I could not help, when admiring the active industry which had created such effects out of such means, at the same time regretting that it had been wasted on so poor and trifling an end. M. Lesson has remarked with justice that the English nation alone would have thought of making the island of Ascension a productive spot; any other people would have held it as a mere fortress in the ocean.

Near this coast nothing grows; further inland, an occasional green castor-oil plant, and a few grasshoppers, true friends of the desert, may be met with. Some grass is scattered over the surface of the central elevated region, and the whole much resembles the worse parts of the Welsh mountains. But scanty as the pasture appears, about six hundred sheep, many goats, a few cows and horses, all thrive well on it. Of native animals, land-crabs and rats swarm in numbers. Whether the rat is really indigenous may well be doubted: there are two varieties as described by Mr. Waterhouse; one is of a black color, with fine glossy fur, and lives on the grassy summit; the other is brown-colored and less glossy, with longer hairs, and lives near the settlement on the coast. Both these varieties are one-third smaller than the common black rat (*M. rattus*); and they differ from it both in the color and character of their fur, but in no other essential respect. I can hardly doubt that these rats (like the common mouse, which has also run wild) have been imported, and, as at the Galapagos, have varied from the effect of the new conditions to which they have been exposed: hence the variety on the summit of the island differs from that on the coast. Of native birds there are none; but the