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Review: Tristan da Cunha

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AUSTRALASIA AND OCEANIC ISLANDS.

THE EASTERN PACIFIC.

Eastern Pacific Lands: Tahiti and the Marquesas Islands.' By F. W. Christian.
London: R. Scott. 1910. 7s. 6d. net.

This book of "travel, adventure, and historical inquiry among the islands of the East Pacific," as the author describes it in his preface, deals chiefly with the most easterly group, the Marquesas, but describes fully six months spent in Tahiti, Papeete the "Paris of Polynesia," and the sunken Archipelago of the Paumotuian group.

The writer is an ardent student of Comparative Philology, and the journey was undertaken with the object of original research among the varied languages of the remoter islands and the compilation of a dictionary, and though he warns the reader that "the dry bones are stored in the Appendix," many allusions to the problem of Polynesian speech are scattered throughout the book. Preceding the author's account of his travels are extracts from Lord Ranfurly's diary describing the annexation of the Cook group, Rarotonga, Mangaia (geologically the most curious of all the islands), Aitutaki, Penrhyn, and Niué. The style throughout is somewhat flowery, a typical instance being the description of Tahiti (p. 55). Allusion is made to the settlement of Austral Islanders in the suburbs of Papeete, and regret expressed that we surrendered our protectorate over these islands in 1890, considering the need of Pacific coaling stations consequent on the opening of the Panama Canal.

The Marquesas, evidently of plutonic origin, furnish wilder scenery than the southern islands. A Marquesan island suggests to the author's imagination, "a land of towering precipices, a molten mass cast up by telluric force, cleft by profound valleys . . . a gloomy, savage-looking country." Mr. Christian was furnished with introductions from R. L. Stevenson to white and native inhabitants, and had exceptional opportunities of studying the people, the language, and customs. The population of the eleven islands is estimated at four thousand, scarcely one fifteenth of what it was at the time of the French occupation. This decimation is attributed to six causes (p. 96). If steps were immediately taken it might be checked, otherwise a people who, notwithstanding a past history of cannibalism, show signs of good nature and sound instinctive ideas of right and wrong will disappear altogether.

In the author's opinion, many of the rites and customs of the Marquesans suggest descent from the redskins of America; the tattooing designs show similarity with the Hydah carvings of British Columbia and Vancouver, and if the comparison were pursued it might "throw light on the buried cities of Yucatan." The book is commended to those interested in Stevensonianism. There are many illustrations and various maps, in which, however, the spelling of place-names does not always correspond with that in the letterpress.

M. G. B.

TRISTAN DA CUNHA.

'Three Years in Tristan da Cunha.' By K. M. Barrow. London: Skeffington. 1910.
17s. 6d. net.

This "island-mountain of volcanic origin" was discovered in 1506 by Tristan da Cunha. It has been a British possession since 1816. The population, never numbering more than 109, and during the time covered by the narrative varying from 71 to 99, is mixed, and comprises the descendants of Englishmen shipwrecked at various times and their coloured wives, settlers from America, and

two Italians. The language is English, with a limited vocabulary. In the autumn of 1904 a notice appeared in the London *Standard* pleading for some one to take up missionary work among these people, and the appeal was answered by the Rev. J. G. Barrow and his wife, the writer of this book. For three years they laboured devotedly, sharing the daily life of the islanders, trying to raise the tone of "a very small community cut off from the rest of the world," but as a missionary effort the sojourn does not seem to have been very successful. The trivial happenings of daily life in this narrow groove are recorded in the words of the authoress's letters home and of her journal. The difficulties of house-keeping under primitive conditions, the amateur efforts at bread-baking, the planting and digging, the care—or in too many instances gross neglect—of the islanders' too numerous cattle fill a large portion of the book. There is no harbour at Tristan, and no direct or regular communication with the outer world; the only excitement in the monotonous life is caused by the attempts—often unsuccessful—to attract the notice of passing vessels.

The Home and Cape Governments have made more than one offer to remove the population to the Cape, and grant special privileges there; but these offers were each time refused, with the result that the annual visits of a man-of-war are discontinued, and further help is not to be expected. An attempt was made about the time of the last offer, by a private individual, to create a regular trade in cattle and sheep with the mainland, but we are left in doubt as to the result. There are numerous illustrations from excellent photographs, a map, and appendices treating of the flora and fauna, some dialect words, and the weather.

M. G. B.

GENERAL.

EDUCATIONAL BOOKS.

'The Home of Man.' Part I. The British Isles. By W. C. Brown and P. H. Johnson. (London: Harrap. 1911. Pp. 343. *Maps, Diagrams, and Illustrations*. 2s. 6d.) This book is very well produced, and is more interesting to read than many; but it is questionable whether the method of breaking off an argument by a question, and leaving the pupil (or teacher) to answer it, is likely to be always productive of the best results. We know that geography claims a very wide scope; but is it so wide as to justify such questions as what handwork is necessary in the manufacture of countries or, how the Gothic arch was developed from the Norman? In passing, the photograph (Fig. 111) labelled Kenilworth Castle, Warwick, is not of that building.

'Commercial Geography of the British Isles.' By Prof. A. J. Herbertson. (London: Chambers. 3rd edit. *N.d.* Pp. 151. *Maps*, 1s.) This third edition bears evidence of ample revision. One observes the omission of the Fishguard-Rosslare route from its place on page 80, though it appears elsewhere; in this connection the Dublin and South-Eastern railway should appear on page 74, since it has changed its name in sympathy with its enhanced importance.

'Junior Scientific Geography.' Book I. Physical Geography. By Ellis W. Heaton. (London: Ralph, Holland. 1911. Pp. viii., 152. *Maps and Diagrams*. 1s. 3d.) This is (we should suppose) a book rather for teachers to expound than for pupils to read, for it is very highly compressed, and many pupils will probably find it "stiff." But it is copiously and well illustrated (though the reproductions of Ordnance maps are a pity), and the author makes judicious use of homely comparisons to explain atmospheric movements and the like.

'Europe and the Mediterranean Region.' By J. B. Reynolds. (London: Black. 1911. Pp. viii., 184. *Maps and Illustrations*. 1s. 4d.) A very simple

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