

which occurs among parcels of land in the east field of Barnston. It was close by Granby and the names must be connected, suggesting that the *hou* is the burial mound of the man who lived at the place of which the name ends in *by*.

Of the care which has been expended in the edit-

ing of this volume it is unnecessary to speak. In its method and arrangement, it follows the plan of the recent volumes of the survey, except that in this instance the editors have been able to rely in greater degree than usual upon expert local knowledge.

TRISTAN DA CUNHA AND ITS BIRDS

Tristan da Cunha: the Lonely Isle

By Erling Christophersen. With Contributions by P. A. Munch, Yngvar Hagen, S. Dick Henriksen, Reider Sognnaes, Erling Sivertsen, J. C. Dunne, Egil Baardseth, Allan Crawford. Translated from the Norwegian by R. L. Benham. Pp. xii + 244 + 15 plates. (London, New York, Toronto and Melbourne: Cassell and Co., Ltd., 1940.) 12s. 6d. net.

ON Tristan da Cunha 188 men, women and children live healthy, happy lives on what has sometimes been called the Lonely Isle—for Tristan is 1,400 miles from the African coast and 1,700 miles from the nearest point of South America. This very remote island received its name from the Portuguese mariner Tristão da Cunha, who was the first man to look upon its 6,000 ft. volcanic mountain which rises, sheer and frowning, from the tumultuous ocean.

The history of the colonization of the island is interesting. When Napoleon was exiled to St. Helena, the British Government sent a detachment of Hottentot soldiers to guard the island against Napoleon's friends, who, it was rumoured, were to use it as a base from which to rescue him. The Hottentots left Tristan da Cunha after a year, but their Scottish corporal, William Glass, remained behind and was the founder of the present colony. To Tristan, in 1938, a Norse expedition, not without considerable difficulties, made its way, and the book under review, a translation from the Norwegian, gives an account of the scientific work carried through by the members of the expedition. The book is on the whole well translated, but here and there, in the naming of birds, difficulties occur. For example (p. 77) it is mentioned that "the small isles of the Tristan group are the only known breeding grounds of the petrel in the world". It is obvious that the translator has fallen into error here. It would seem probable that for "petrel" the translator should have written "great shearwater" (*Puffinus gravis*). This shearwater has a remarkable history. It has been shown in Murphy's "Oceanic Birds of South America", on the authority of Wynne-Edwards, that in the

northern hemisphere spring the great shearwater leaves the South Atlantic, crosses the tropical oceanic zone with great swiftness, reaches Davis Strait by early June, and in August arrives at its most northerly limit, in Greenland waters. This is a vast flight to carry through each year, but there is reason to suppose that the great shearwater may nest at a longer interval of time than a single year, and that each bird may not return to its nesting islands in the Tristan group with each recurring season.

Although we are left in doubt as to the exact identity of the birds, there is a graphic account of the petrel's song (p. 72 *et seq.*):

"An immense flight was coming in from the sea that evening, first a few thousand which began the song accompanied by the birds which had remained at home and which now greeted the newcomers. But the song rose until tens of thousands were curvetting above our heads before the sun went down. In the twilight hundreds of thousands reached the island and their song rose to a roar.

"The concert reached its highest pitch before darkness set in. We had to admit that there really was a beautiful musical effect in these voices, which first seemed near when a solitary petrel flew low over the tent, delivering the whole verse so that we heard each word, and then far away, when the murmur of the hundreds of thousands blended into one song beneath the stars."

On p. 112 is an account of the small flightless bird known as *Atlantisia* which, we are told, lives only on Inaccessible Island of the Tristan group and has not before been described in a book. The small bird is nocturnal, and in its home in dense vegetation is most difficult to see, let alone capture. One could wish that the account of the first meeting with *Atlantisia* were more full.

"First of all only two fiery, deeply-set eyes were visible, then the light of my torch suddenly shone on so tiny and frail a creature that I felt I must be dreaming. Had I dared I would have pinched my arm. . . . I was reminded of a little photograph of a kiwi."

SETON GORDON.