The Island of Stone Statues.[1]

By SIR EVERARD IM THURN, K.C.M.G., K.B.E.

MRS. ROUTLEDGE'S account deals with her most adventurous yachting cruise, with her husband, to Easter Island, the easternmost—*i.e.* the nearest to the American coast—of that great archipelago of innumerable islands which begins off the Australian coast and ends at this islet of stone images. A considerable number of the pages of the book are occupied by a vivid and rather unusually interesting travellers' story of places visited on the outward and homeward voyages, Patagonia and the islands of Juan Fernandez and Pitcairn among others; but it is to the much fuller account of Easter Island itself, occupying one hundred and seventy-six pages of the middle of the book, that we turn most eagerly.

The mystery which surrounds the history of Easter Island, with its great statues and its unique, and perhaps for ever indecipherable, script, unparalleled elsewhere, has from time to time long attracted the attention, though very rarely the visits, of ethnologists; but in the absence of exact data the mystery has hitherto never been even approximately solved.

Mr. and Mrs. Routledge, in search of new adventure, sailed in their own small yacht, the *Mana*, to the island, spent some fifteen months there (Mr. Routledge was away from the island during a considerable part of the time), and have now given us a somewhat full account of their experiences there. The story, if far from completely satisfying, at least supplies a very great deal of material for home-staying ethnologists to study. Moreover, Mrs. Routledge holds out hopes of "another volume in prospect, with descriptions and dimensions of some two hundred and sixty burial places in the island, and thousands of measurements of statues, and other really absorbing matter." It is greatly to be hoped that this further instalment of exact data

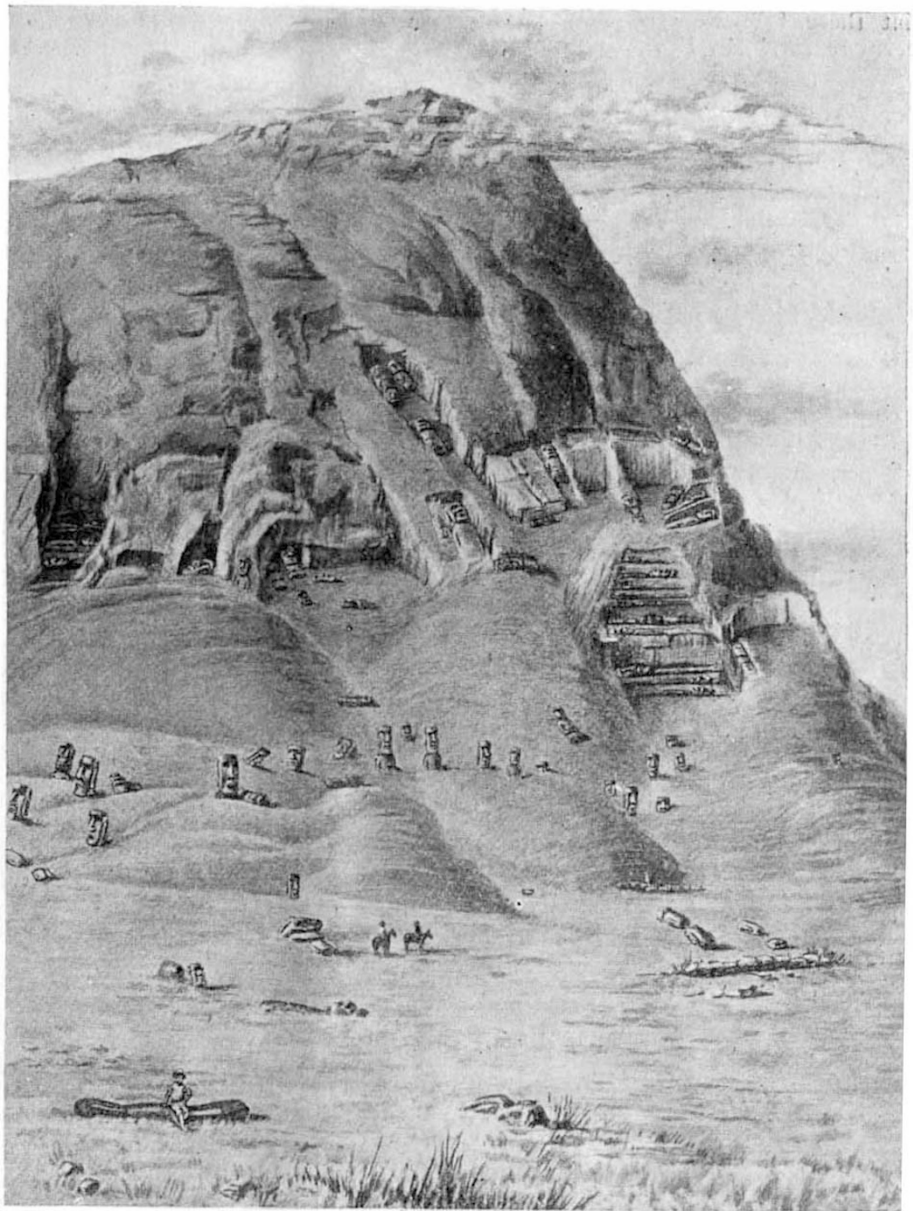

FIG. 1.—Exterior of Rano Raraku Eastern portion of southern aspect. Diagrammatic sketch showing position of statues. From "The Mystery of Easter Island."

[1] "The Mystery of Easter Island.: The Story of an Expedition." By Mrs. Scoresby Routledge. Pp. xxi+404. (London: Sifton, Praed, and Co., Ltd., n.d.) Price 31s. 6d. net.

will be published before the great interest which has been aroused by the present foretaste has evaporated.

The most interesting points brought out in the present book are those which serve to throw partial light on the great stone statues which are so abundant in the island, and, in connection with these, on the origin of the Easter Island folk. It has hitherto generally been assumed that these folk were of Polynesian race. But recent research, by Prof. Keith and others, seems to show that, in Easter Island, as in so many of the South Sea Islands, several races with other than Polynesian culture have from time to time invaded this remote and isolated islet. Mr. Henry Balfour (in *Folklore* for December, 1917) has suggested (modestly he disclaims to have done more) some of the main results to which Mr. and Mrs. Routledge's experiences seem to point, and chiefly to the probability that at some long-distant time a strong wave of Melanesian influence reached Easter Island. Certain points of curiously strong resemblance between Easter Island arts and customs and those found in certain of the Solomon Islands serve to illustrate this.

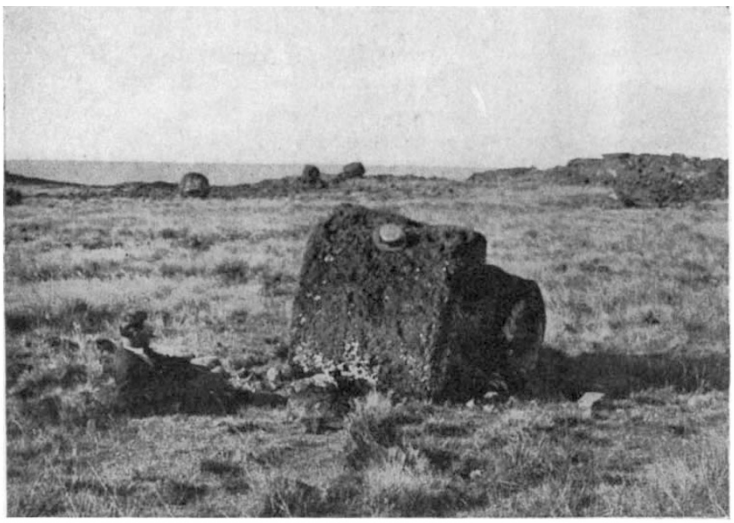

FIG. 2.—A finished Hat at Ahu Hanga O Ornu; others in the distance. From "The Mystery of Easter Island."

Without throwing any doubt on this suggestion, tentatively put forward by Mr. and Mrs. Routledge, with the strong support of Mr. Balfour and others, I again venture to put forward the view that, while Easter Island culture is doubtless of very mixed origin, Polynesian and Melanesian elements being most strongly represented, there were probably also other elements—*e.g.* some influence, possibly slight, and only very occasional, from the not far distant American shore lying to the eastward. For instance, the script (on wooden plaques), the rock-carvings, the featherwork, and the very peculiar form of tapa (bark cloth) which was used in Easter Island, all seem to me to suggest an Eastern, rather than a Western, origin.

One other suggestion may here be put forward as a contribution to the consideration of the Easter Island mystery. Mrs. Routledge writes of the well-known "top-pieces" which are, or were, superimposed on the statues as "hats"; and Mr. Balfour suggests that these were very probably meant to represent not hats, but hair, and in the number of *Folklore* above quoted he works this out in very ingenious detail. I venture to suggest a slight amendment to Mr. Balfour's proposition—*i.e.* that the stone cap-pieces in question were meant to represent not actual growing human hair, but wigs, such as those which were, and still to some extent are, commonly used by Fijians—though whether by those of Polynesian or Melanesian origin I cannot now say. It would be interesting to know how far such wigs were used in other parts of the Pacific.

It is satisfactory to know that a second edition of Mrs. Routledge's book is already in course of preparation, and all ethnologists must hope that the full scientific data will also soon be published.

The Blue Sky and the Optical Properties of Air.[1]

By the RIGHT HON. LORD RAYLEIGH, F.R.S.

Scattering by Small Particles. Polarisation.

THE subject chosen for this evening is one which specially interested my father throughout his career. I shall try to put before you some of his conclusions, and then pass on to more recent developments, in which I have myself had a share.

Let us begin with one of his experiments which illustrates the accepted theory of the blue sky. We have here a glass tank containing a dilute solution of sodium thiosulphate. A condensed beam from the electric arc traverses it and then falls on a white screen, where it shows the usual white colour. I now add a small quantity of acid, which decomposes the solution with slow precipitation of very finely divided particles of sulphur. As soon as this precipitation begins you see that light is scattered—that is to say, it is diverted to every side out of the original direction of propagation. Moreover, you will observe that the

1 Discourse delivered at the Royal Institution on Friday, May 7, 1920.