



EDINBURGH, THE SETTLEMENT OF TRISTAN DA CUNHA, FROM THE SEA

THE LONELY ISLAND

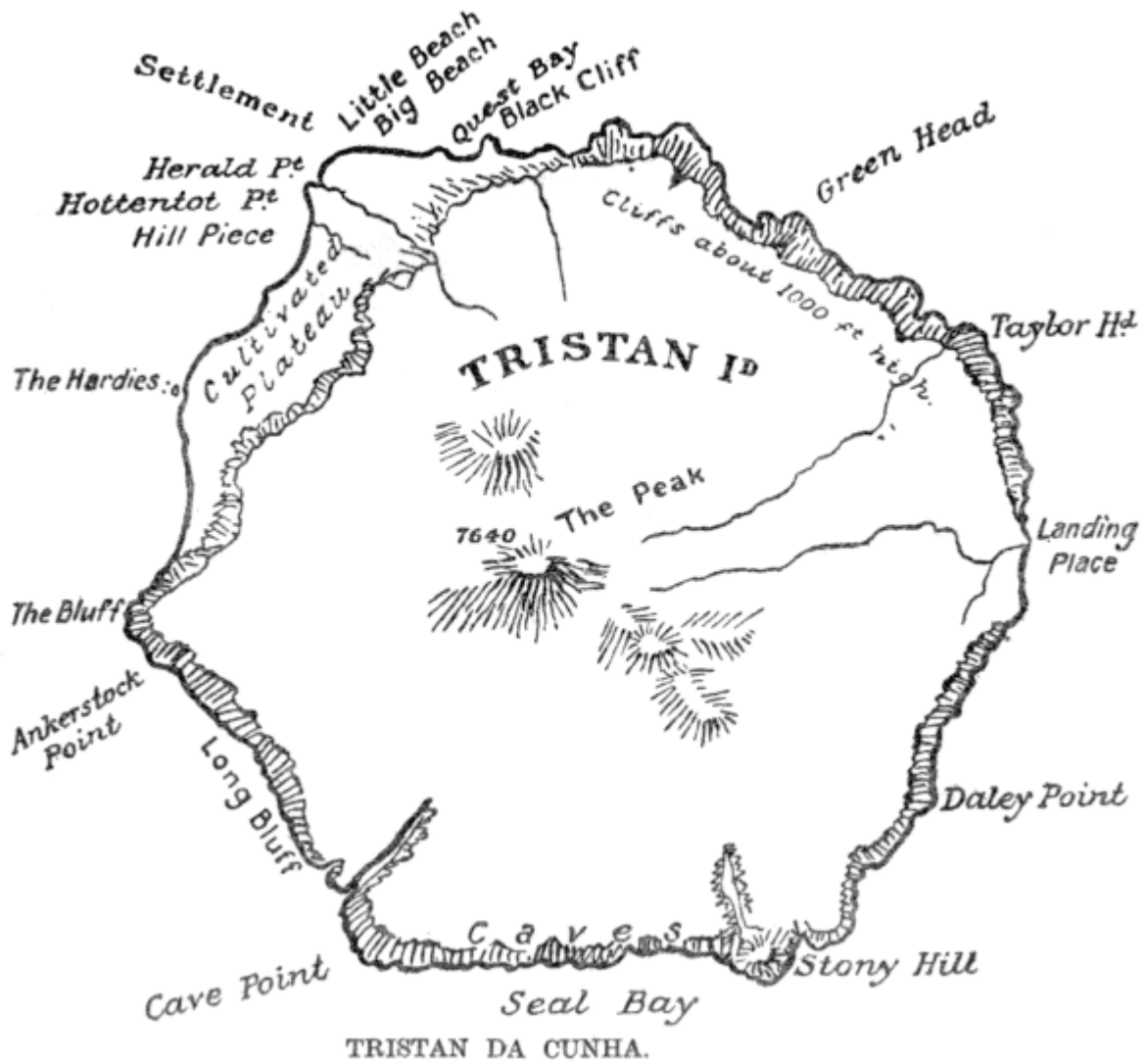
BY

ROSE ANNIE ROGERS

WIFE OF THE LATE HENRY MARTYN ROGERS
MISSIONARY PRIEST AT TRISTAN DA CUNHA
AND FELLOW-WORKER WITH HIM ON THAT
ISLAND

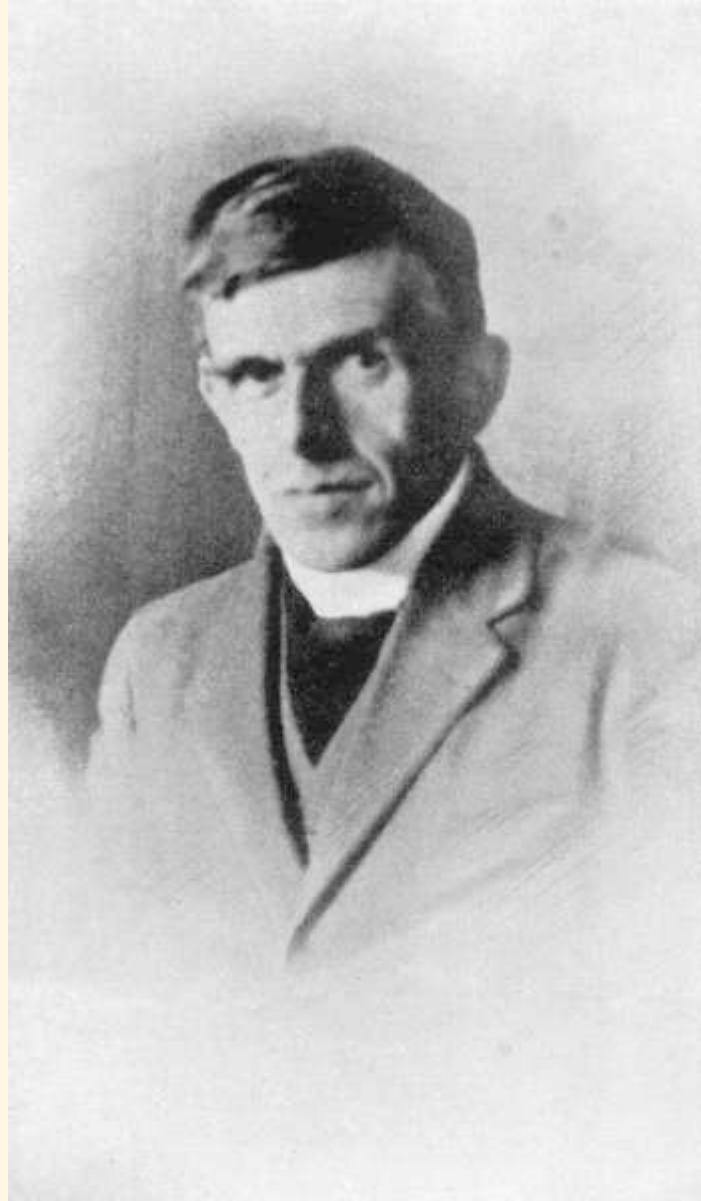
WITH A MAP AND 24 ILLUSTRATIONS

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DEDICATED
TO
THE MEMBERS OF OUT LITTLE FLOCK
ON THE ISLAND OF TRISTAN DA CUNHA



HENRY MARTYN ROGERS

In Memoriam

HENRY MARTYN ROGERS

Born February 22, 1879. Died May 14, 1926.

"The rushing of the Atlantic waves is still in my ears, while I can still smell the kelp on the beach, and can see those eager, tear-stained faces pleading for our return—for my heart is ever there and I hope I may yet be able to return to the little island flock I love so well."

HENRY MARTYN ROGERS, *in a public lecture delivered shortly before his death.*

IN MEMORIAM

THE service of Henry Martyn Rogers on behalf of the people of Tristan da Cunha has been a sacrifice throughout, and it has ended in the supreme sacrifice. He volunteered well knowing that there was the minimum of reward attaching to the work, and it afforded no means of provision for the future. He knew, too, that

the funds available did not admit of adequate equipment or safeguard against those privations that were inevitable in life on a barren rock in the very centre of the South Atlantic Ocean and out of the way of all regular ships' traffic. Moreover, his acceptance of the conditions held good despite the realization later of what he had undertaken. For, as is well known, he and his devoted wife, who was his staunch supporter in his resolution to go, had to wait nearly a year for the means of passage to the island, and their decision to undertake the work remained steadfast and unshaken to the end.

The character thus displayed by Mr. and Mrs. Rogers was of good promise for the fulfilment of the task they had set themselves, and their devotion to duty is shown in a conspicuous way by a note which I received from Mrs. Rogers when they had been on the island some sixteen months. Knowing as I did their anxieties consequent on the birth of their child there, Mrs. Rogers wrote to reassure me, and she did so in these words: " We have many difficulties which, by God's grace, we shall overcome. Both my husband and I will always do our very best for these poor people, and shall stay as long as ever we can to help them. Don't trouble about us."

Mr. and Mrs. Rogers stayed on the island for a further eighteen months, and how well their promise to do their best for the people was performed is shown by the letters they received after they had left. Selected from many is one, typical of the rest, which came from Mrs. Frances Repetto, one of the most respected women of the island. It was written a month after their departure and it has this touching tribute in it:

Peter has hung up your photograph, and so we always look at you and think and talk about you—for we shall never see such good, kind friends again. I keep Sunday School for as many as come, and always tell them how pleased you and the Minister would be to see the children keeping Sunday. I will try and remember all you taught me, and do what I can, but you know I am not strong. When I look over the sea I always think of you, and though, dear Madam, we are many miles apart, we can pray for one another and the good God will take care of us all. Peace, health, and happiness. I am too upset to write more.

Separated as they were from people giving proof of such attachment to them, it is not to be wondered at that there grew upon Mr. and Mrs. Rogers a longing to return, and only a fortnight before his death, moved by an appeal which he had received from the people, Mr. Rogers wrote to me intimating his readiness to go back if only it were made possible for him to do so. But his career was ended and his work done—how well those who saw him at it testified—and his return was not to be.

DOUGLAS M. GANE,
Hon. Sec.,
TRISTAN DA CUNHA FUND.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

I PUBLISH this little book in tender and honoured memory of my husband, who helped me to write it. It makes no claim to literary merit. Its aim is merely to describe in familiar terms the daily life of the quaintest and most isolated community in the British Empire. At Tristan da Cunha even the ordinary happenings of everyday life seem to take on a glow of romance, and commonplace folk come to fill conspicuous places in our interest which in a

larger setting are denied to them. On this account I have taken the liberty of introducing most of the islanders to my readers by name, and I have done this in the hope that they will feel a more intimate and personal interest in them as my narrative proceeds.

I offer my grateful acknowledgments to Mr. Douglas M. Gane, who is behind the present movement for helping the island, and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, its oldest friend, for their endeavours throughout to ease our task and render its accomplishment within our reach. And I also thank all those kind friends, at home and abroad, interested in the island, who, in diverse ways, gave us their assistance and support.

Furthermore, I thank Mr. Gane for his contributions to the book, and I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Messrs. George Alien & Unwin, Ltd., for undertaking the publication of it, and for so kindly making it their contribution to what they are good enough to call "a very worthy cause."

I am under obligation, too, for permission to use photographs—the work of Captain G. H. Wilkins—forming part of the *Quest* collection, and for others taken by officers of H.M.S. *Dublin* and the *Ramon da Larrinaga* on their visits to the island and the visitors who accompanied the *Dublin*. Unfortunately my own camera broke down soon after my arrival.

For the description of the new bird given in one of the Appendices I am indebted to Dr. Percy Lowe, of the Natural History Museum, and I offer him thanks for his valuable service in this connection. My thanks are also due to the Editor of the *Illustrated London News* for allowing me to reproduce from that paper Mr. G. E. Lodge's drawing, in which he so ably reconstructs the bird.

CONTENTS

		PAGE
	IN MEMORIAM	10
	AUTHOR'S PREFACE	13
CHAPTER		
I.	<u>SOME GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY</u>	19
II.	<u>THE BRINK OF A GREAT ADVENTURE</u>	27
III.	<u>ARRIVAL AND FIRST IMPRESSIONS</u>	35
IV.	<u>LIFE ON TRISTAN DA CUNHA</u>	43
V.	<u>THE "QUEST" AT TRISTAN</u>	60
VI.	<u>A TRIP TO SEAL BAY</u>	76
VII.	<u>THE COMING OF BABY EDWARD</u>	90
VIII.	<u>CHRISTMAS ON TRISTAN DA CUNHA</u>	98
IX.	<u>THE VISIT OF H.M.S. "DUBLIN"</u>	120
X.	<u>BUILDING A CHURCH</u>	133
XI.	<u>ISLAND CUSTOMS AND FESTIVITIES</u>	150
XII.	<u>EXPLORATIONS AND DISCOVERIES</u>	164
	(a) Inaccesssible Island	
	(b) Nightingale Island	

	(c) The Caves	
	(d) Sandy Point	
	(e) Up the Base	
	(f) The "Pyramids"	
XIII.	<u>THE LAST YEAR AND ITS DIFFICULTIES</u>	190
APPENDIX		
I.	<u>CENSUS OF THE ISLANDERS</u>	206
II.	<u>DR. PERCY LOWE'S DESCRIPTION OF THE "FLIGHTLESS RAIL"</u>	209
III.	<u>THE ISLANDERS' PETITION AND THE GOVERNMENT REPLY</u>	214
IV.	<u>CUSTOM IN TRISTAN DA CUNHA</u>	217

ILLUSTRATIONS

EDINBURGH, THE SETTLEMENT OF TRISTAN DA CUNHA	<i>FRONTISPIECE</i>
MAP OF THE ISLAND	<i>Page 5</i>
	FACING PAGE
HENRY MARTYN ROGERS	9
THE TRISTAN DA CUNHA MISSION FIELD	27
ISLAND COTTAGE, WITH THE LATE BETTY COTTON IN THE GROUP	43
THE MISSION HOUSE, WITH MRS. ROGERS AND COMMANDER FRANK WILD IN FRONT	43
THE SCHOOL CHILDREN OF THE ISLAND OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL-HOUSE	49
THE PENGUIN TROOP RECEIVING THE CHIEF SCOUT'S PRESENTATION FLAG	57
ISLAND BOATS AT SEA	65
LANDING SHORES FROM THE "QUEST" BY NIGHT	65
EDWARD TRISTAN CHESELDON ROGERS	97
MRS. REPETTO AND HER THREE SONS	97
H.M.S. "DUBLIN" PREPARING TO LAND STORES	121
ANOTHER TRISTAN COTTAGE	121
THE MAIL BEING BROUGHT ASHORE FROM H.M.S. "DUBLIN"	125
THE LANDING OF THE STORES FROM H.M.S. "DUBLIN"	125
THE BISHOP OF ST. HELENA AND CAPTAIN SHIPWAY ASHORE	129
MR. AND MRS. ROGERS DISTRIBUTING THE MAIL	129
THE POTATO PATCHES	137
INACCESSIBLE ISLAND	169
THE FLIGHTLESS RAIL	177
A MOUNTAIN SEA-VIEW	193

MR. AND MRS. ROGERS WITH THE OFFICERS OF THE "RAMON DA LARRINAGA"	193
A TRISTAN BULLOCK-WAGON	201
THE LAST FAREWELL ON THE BEACH	201

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THE LONELY ISLAND

CHAPTER I

SOME GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

TRISTAN DA CUNHA is one of a group of three islands situated in mid-Atlantic in latitude 37° 5' 50" south and longitude 12° 16' "40 west, or midway between South Africa and South America, and 1,320 miles from St. Helena, which is the nearest inhabited land. It is an extinct volcano, rising at its summit to a height of nearly 8,000 feet, with a circumference at its base of 21 miles. In the summit is a crater lake of icy cold water. The other islands of the group, Inaccessible and Nightingale, are distant about 20 miles from Tristan and some 10 miles from each other. Inaccessible has precipitous cliffs rising to a height of 2,000 feet, and is about 4 square miles in area; while Nightingale, with two small islets adjoining, is about 1 ½ miles across and has two peaks about 1,000 feet high. Tristan da Cunha is the only island of the group that is inhabited, and the Settlement is situated at the north-west corner on a narrow plateau about 9 miles long by 1 ½ broad, at the foot of the mountain, and about 100 feet above sea-level.

The island was discovered, by a Portuguese navigator, Tristan da Cunha, in 1506, and he gave it his own name. It became part of the British Empire by annexation in 1816.

The early history of the island has its romance of pirates and buried treasure. One Jonathan Lambert, said, with his companions, some half a dozen men and lads, to have been fugitive from justice, was the first settler. The party arrived in 1811 in a small sailing lugger with a big iron chest of loot, the plunder doubtless of many wild affrays upon the Spanish Main. At Tristan for a season the pirates settled down to a peaceful life as cultivators of the land and traders with passing ships. The island had become a port of call for many ships in those early days, the crews seeking fresh water or vegetables, and the pirates found honesty pay better than evil courses and began to grow rich. Lambert called himself by the swelling title of "Emperor of Tristan da Cunha," and issued a proclamation inviting "all the world to trade with his kingdom, and bidding none molest or injure his sovereign rights."

The pirates, however, were all addicted to rum, and, finding honesty dull, began to quarrel over their shares in the treasure of Spanish gold and gems. They had buried it for safety, it is traditionally alleged, between the two waterfalls that descend over the cliffs on to the beach. When the British garrison arrived in 1816 to take over the island there was only one survivor, an Italian half-caste, by name Thomaso Corri. The old pirate in his cups would sing of the bloodstained days of the buccaneers and boast of his untold wealth in its secret place. Sometimes he would vanish into the bush and return with handfuls of gold, but he died suddenly without telling the exact spot where the treasure is hidden and the soldiers searched in vain.

Corri boasted of silver plate, pearls and diamonds, besides rolls of golden coin, and the grandfathers of some of Tristan's oldest inhabitants repeated the story to their children in his words to them. Old Betty Cotton, who died aged ninety-four, told my husband that Corri said to her father, "The treasure is hidden somewhere on the right-hand side of the last house on the Settlement

down in the direction of Little Beach, between the two waterfalls." Old Betty's mother had seen Napoleon in the flesh at St. Helena scowling from the deck of H.M.S. *Bellerophon* at his island prison. The ex-Emperor was dressed in tight duck trousers, a green coat and a black waistcoat, and wore a cocked hat with a huge feather. When he landed a guard of soldiers marched beside him. The people said his favourite dish was roasted bullock's heart, and he was to be seen often enjoying his chief amusement of riding on horseback.

A tragedy marked the departure from Tristan da Cunha of the British garrison only one year after its arrival. The ship sent to remove the troops, H.M.S. *Julia*, sloop of war, ran upon the rocks driven by a sudden gale, and over sixty souls perished. I have seen their place of burial by the lonely sea at Big Beach, but no memorial marks it now.

One William Glass, a native of Kelso, Scotland, an officer's servant and corporal of artillery, with two companions got leave to remain at Tristan when the rest of the garrison were removed by a second warship, and they were soon joined by three others, Riley, Swain, and Cotton. These were nearly all men who had fought under Nelson or guarded Napoleon at St. Helena. Swain was reported to be the very sailor who caught the dying Admiral in his arms as he fell mortally wounded on the deck of H.M.S. *Victory*. He lived to be a centenarian, and was buried in the island cemetery, where the inscription on his grave still remains as follows:

THOMAS SWAIN
Born at Hastings, England.
Died on 26th April, 1862.
Aged 102 years.

An amusing story of the early days relates how the first settlers obtained wives. Glass was a married man, and his neighbours, envying his domestic felicity, commissioned the obliging captain of a Norwegian whaler, one Captain Amm, to fetch them wives from abroad. He remarked, "I will do my best," and one fine summer day returned with five ladies of colour from St. Helena who had agreed to take pot-luck in the marriage market. They were lined up on the beach, inspected, admired, and each man picked the lady of his choice. They were married duly, and all lived happy ever after, or so the tale runs.

But to turn from gay to grave, William Glass was a deeply religious man, and had a good education, coupled with administrative gifts of no mean order. He was chosen headman, and in the course of a long life governed the growing community with vigour and justice.

He regularly held religious service, reading morning and evening prayer daily, and adding one of Dr. Hugh Blair's sermons on Sundays. Of these discourses he remarked, "They are very good, but no one can understand them much," and pleaded for something simpler. The islanders still keep much of the patriarchal way of life instituted by William Glass, who used to assemble all his family in the house on Christmas Day, his own birthday, and other high occasions. Rev. W. F. Taylor, the missionary at the time, was of the company the year before the old man's death in 1853, and on that occasion thirty-four persons, all his descendants or connections by marriage, sat down to dinner. Glass had the remarkable family of sixteen—eight boys and eight girls. Like Swain, he is buried in the island cemetery. His monument, subscribed for and sent by his sons in America, is a handsome piece of marble. The inscription is

rather an interesting one:

In memory of
WILLIAM GLASS.
Born at Kelso, Scotland,
the Founder of the Settlement of Tristan da Cunha
in which he resided 37 years, and fell asleep in Jesus
November 24, 1853, aged 67 years.

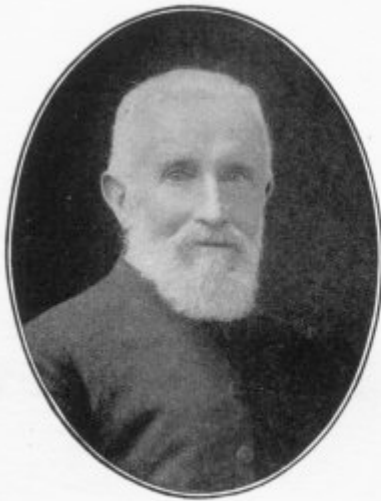
Asleep in Jesus, far from thee
Thy kindred and their graves may be
But thine is still a blessed sleep
From which none ever wakes to weep.

The next Governor of the island was Peter Green, a native of Holland, who came to Tristan some twenty years later. His ship was wrecked there, but he decided to settle on the island and he married a Tristan woman. Queen Victoria sent him her picture with an autograph signature, but when some of his family emigrated to the Cape this picture was taken away by them. He lived to be ninety-four and died in 1902. He was of fine presence and a commanding personality, and both he and his predecessor, William Glass, were instrumental in saving many lives from shipwrecked vessels.

About 1850 came Rogers and Hagan from America, and some forty years later Repetto and Lavarello, two Italian sailors, from the neighbourhood of Genoa, were shipwrecked on the island and elected to marry Tristan girls and settle there. Repetto had been a petty officer in the Italian Navy, but he became a member of the Church of England, having married a daughter of Peter Green, and, when the missionary and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Barrow, left the island in 1909, he acted as lay reader and marriage officer. He was spokesman for the island, and exercised a very good influence, until his decease a few years later.

The present population of 140, consisting of about thirty families, is the largest ever recorded in the history of the island. Their language is English, spoken with a drawl, and a peculiar high-pitched intonation. They have many local idioms, but the vocabulary is very limited.

[Chapter 2](#)



The Rev. W. F. TAYLOR
1851-7



The Rev. E. H. DODGSON
1880-4 and 1886-9



The Rev. J. G. BARROW
1906-9

THE TRISTAN DA CUNHA MISSION FIELD

The clergymen preceding Henry Martyn Rogers who have served under the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel

CHAPTER II

THE BRINK OF A GREAT ADVENTURE

IT was not until 1851 that the Rev. W. F. Taylor, the first missionary, reached Tristan da Cunha. He sailed for it in November, and arrived the following February after a difficult voyage. The ship bringing him cruised in the vicinity of the island for a week, but fogs hid it from sight, and the captain nearly gave up the quest when luckily Mr. Taylor himself sighted the distant peak above the clouds and a new course was set and the missionary duly landed. He remained until 1856, teaching school and holding service in Mr. Glass's biggest room (16 feet by 12) and living in true apostolic poverty, often with insufficient food and clothing. It was under such conditions that the first bishop to visit the island, Bishop Gray, of Cape Town, found him living in 1856.^[1] The Bishop confirmed thirty-two persons, and examined the school children, whom he found "well instructed in the three R's and in the Church Catechism"; but after remaining for a fortnight there he pronounced the island "unsuitable for human habitation owing to the poverty of its natural resources" and advised the emigration of the people to Cape Colony. Twenty-five islanders shortly before had left its inhospitable shores for the United States, and now some forty more departed, accompanied by the Rev. Mr. Taylor, for a new settlement at Riversdale and Mossel Bay, in Cape Colony, where they thrived and did well. Those islanders who have left Tristan have generally made good, and we met some of these people in South Africa ourselves, and were struck by the fact that they had overcome so many disabilities by industry and good conduct.

The second clergyman to live at Tristan was the Rev. E. Dodgson, brother of "Lewis Carroll," the well-known author of *Alice in Wonderland*. He arrived in 1880 and landed in safety, but the vessel which brought him suffered almost immediate shipwreck, and he lost all his books and almost all his stores and clothing. Most curiously the tiny stone font that he had with him was washed up intact, and is now in the little church we built ourselves, "St. Mary the Virgin, Tristan da Cunha." Our baby boy was baptized in it.

Mr. Dodgson remained until 1884, when for reasons of health he returned to the Cape. He did not then design to revisit Tristan, but he was scarcely gone a year before the worst disaster recorded in the island history befell. Fifteen islanders put off in rough weather to try and intercept a sailing ship named the *West Riding*. They were driven by the great need of provisions to tempt the seas. Their boat was a new one to which they were not used, and it is probable it capsized or filled in a sudden squall and all its crew were drowned. Tristan thus became an island of widows and children. All the male adults save four perished, and one of these was crazy and giving trouble. When Mr. Dodgson heard of the accident he determined to return to the island. It was supposed that the people were almost starving, and H.M.S. *Thalia* was sent with relief stores, and in this ship Mr. Dodgson returned. He remained in charge as missionary-schoolmaster until 1889, when ill health again compelled him to leave. This time ten persons left with him.

The next missionary was my husband's immediate predecessor, the Rev. J. G. Barrow, who came out accompanied by his wife and a maidservant in 1906 and remained until 1909. A somewhat remarkable circumstance in this connection was that in the year 1821 the ship *Blendon Hall*, East Indiaman, was wrecked on Inaccessible Island during a dense fog. The passengers and crew managed to get ashore on spars and fragments of the vessel. Little food was saved, and for months the people lived on sea-birds' eggs. Some sailors tried to get to Tristan on a raft, but were lost at sea in the attempt.^[2] At length some of the men got across, and Glass and the Tristanites rescued the remainder in their small boats. Among the rescued passengers was a little girl of four years of age, destined to become Mr. Barrow's mother in after years. Gratitude for the kindness of these islanders moved her son to go out and minister to their descendants. Some twelve years after Mr. Barrow left, viz. in February 1921, there appeared in *The Times* and *The Guardian* an appeal for a missionary and schoolmaster to go out to the island of Tristan da Cunha. The appeal was signed by Mr. Douglas M. Gane, a London solicitor, of Gray's Inn, who is much interested in the island, having visited it formerly in the days of the sailing ships. As the founder of the Tristan da Cunha Fund he has been in close touch with the islanders for many years, and he had then recently received letters from the people containing urgent requests for a missionary, as the children were being left to grow up in ignorance and the island was without any kind of religious ministrations.

Tristan da Cunha! What does the name convey to the average person? My husband and I first heard of the island when we read the appeal. At the time he was curate-in-charge at Alexton, Leicester, and he immediately wrote asking for further particulars and stating that under certain circumstances he would be willing to go out with his wife for three years, the period suggested. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, to which Mr. Rogers was referred by Mr. Gane, is the Society which had been instrumental in sending out the previous missionaries, and in due course they gladly accepted my husband's offer and he was told to prepare.

Tristan da Cunha is in many ways one of the most difficult places in the world to reach, and mails are exceedingly irregular owing to the uncertainty of communications. Sometimes a mail reaches the island only once in three years. There is no regular line of shipping visiting it. It has no trade and no manufacture, and there is no harbour or safe shelter for ships except in fine weather. Mr. Gane's efforts to get us a passage were unceasing, but we had to

endure a whole year's waiting before the means came. A passage on a Japanese vessel, the *Tacoma Maru*, of the Osaka Shosen Kaisha Line, was at length arranged through the kind offices of Messrs. M. Samuel, Ltd., the Company's London agents, and by special favour of the Imperial Japanese Government, which allowed the mail steamer to depart from its course and land us at Tristan.

The long period of waiting was not wasted time, however, for there was much to do to make our mission fruitful. We were greatly assisted by the newspaper Press, and we received kindly sympathy from the Royal Family. My husband received a very gracious letter from the King to be read to the islanders on our arrival. It came through Mr. Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, and it expressed His Majesty's hope that the people would give heed to my husband's instructions and it assured them of the King's interest in their welfare.

We travelled to the Cape by the Union Castle liner *Kinfauns Castle*, and waited in Cape Town a few days, during which time we were hospitably and kindly entertained by the Archbishop of Cape Town at Bishop's Court, Claremont. During our stay we were presented with a small wireless set at a public meeting presided over by the Mayor and the Archbishop in the St. George's Cathedral Rooms. It was hoped by this means to break the almost complete isolation of life at Tristan da Cunha.

We took with us 150 packets of stores for the island intended to be of service in church, school and household, and the gathering of these was quite a piece of work in itself. We had to take with us grocery supplies for a year, as we could expect to find none on the island, and these we knew we should have to share with the people to a large extent.

We left Cape Town feeling rather depressed, in spite of our kindly welcome and send-off in South Africa, for we knew that, should the weather be rough on our arrival, we might not be able to land, and then we should be carried on to South America, and that would be the end of our adventure. Weather is a most uncertain feature at Tristan da Cunha, and the steamer could not afford a long delay on our account, though the Company had very kindly promised to wait a couple of days. The Japanese commander, Captain Kamaishi, was courtesy itself, and did everything to make us comfortable on our week's voyage to the island. This was the first Japanese ship which had ever called there, and we found it curious to be surrounded by a Japanese crew and to hear all speaking Japanese about us. Meals were served for us in English fashion, as the efforts we made to feed ourselves with chop-sticks afforded our Japanese friends much amusement; but we were able to partake of tea in pretty little Japanese cups and enjoy Japanese sweetmeats and cakes. We reached Tristan da Cunha on April 1, 1922, early in the morning of what proved to be a very rainy day, but I must reserve my first impressions of the island and its people for another chapter.

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1. Bishop Gray's visit was due to the fact that Tristan da Cunha was included in the original Letters Patent constituting the See of Cape Town.
 2. Mr. Taylor, however, stated they were picked up at sea by a sailing vessel.
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[Chapter 3](#)

CHAPTER III

ARRIVAL AND FIRST IMPRESSIONS

THE morning of April 1, 1922, was misty, and soon it poured with rain, but the sea was beautifully calm, and when I woke and looked from the porthole of my cabin in the *Tacoma Maru* I thanked God for that. But my feelings were very mingled as I stood gazing at the big lonely rock which was to be our home for the next three years. In the rain of the cold, foggy dawn it looked very cheerless and uninviting. It gave me the idea of a somewhat awful desolation. The island rises sheer out of the sea for 2,000 feet, and above this tableland is the gigantic peak, 8,000 feet above sea-level, with no smaller peaks to diminish the effect.

We kept a good couple of miles from the shore, drawing in a little as our vessel rounded Sandy Point and Big Head and came in sight of the tiny Settlement, called Edinburgh on the maps after the Royal Duke who visited it in 1867. It was still very early, and there was little sign of life, save a few stray animals, until the sudden blast of our siren roused the whole place to bustling excitement. Immediately there was every sign of the wildest commotion. The entire population could be seen hurrying shorewards, the dogs commenced a loud barking, there was evident surprise and confusion, and very quickly the men and boys had launched three boats with very full crews, and these raced towards us propelled by lusty rowers. I thought, however, as I watched them draw near that the island boats, built of canvas and thin planking, looked very frail and small and much in need of paint, and the men also looked wild and strange with unshaven faces and clothes much patched. They wore stockings of white wool pulled high over their trousers up to the knee, and moccasins instead of shoes or boots, and a few lads were barefooted. Their headgear was very varied. They did not make a good impression on me, as all were shouting and gesticulating at once, while many were dark-complexioned, and I had rather a fear of coloured races.

The Japanese captain soon brought his ship to anchor, but seemed dubious as to the expediency of allowing the Tristanites aboard, and at length lowered a gangway and requested my husband to go down it and speak to the men in the boats.

My husband did so, telling the men that we were missionaries sent out by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to the island to hold church services and teach the little children in school, and we wished to help them in every possible way, and added that, as we had brought a mail and stores, boats would be required and assistance to land the things, and that, if they were pleased to see us, would they signify their pleasure by holding up their hands.

When he ceased speaking all held their hands up, and then stood up in the boats and gave three cheers for us, waving their caps and smiling. They seemed genuinely pleased we had come, and, as I stood looking at them over the side of the ship, my fear vanished and I felt really sorry for them.

The captain now asked my husband to invite one man from each boat to come on board, saying that he could allow no more up at present. There were about sixteen or seventeen hands in each boat. The three who came up we learned were Tom Rogers, Old Sam Swain, and Bob Glass. Tom Rogers came up to me and said that his wife would be very pleased if we would come and stay with them at their house until our house was built. I said, "Thank you very much; I will tell my husband of your kind offer." Bob Glass, who as yet did not

know who I was, rather amused me by trying to barter some island curios with me, remarking, "I would like some clothes, if you can spare any, as I have a lot of big girls and boys to provide for, and it is hard to get anything for them."

The men told us that they had not had a ship at the island for eighteen months.

The Japanese lowered one of the ship's own boats to take us ashore, and, taking two of the islanders as pilots, we got in and the stewards placed our bags and boxes in it. Captain Kamaishi, his chief officer, and the purser, with seven Japanese sailors, rowed us ashore to Big Beach. The Japanese could not speak English, and so there was much gesticulating and nodding on both sides, and they seemed bothered at not finding a pier or landing-stage. We had to make our way through big masses of kelp which surrounds the islands on all sides. The current was also very strong. However, we made a safe landing, and as we struck the beach one of the men waiting on the shore to meet the boat waded in knee deep and carried me up to the dry sand and set me down among a crowd of women and girls. My husband was next lifted out and a crowd of curious youngsters pressed round us, along with a host of mongrel dogs, and I noticed a good many donkeys wandering round aimlessly. Several dark-faced elderly women came up to me and rather shyly held out a hand and said in soft voices, "Welcome, marm, to Tristan da Cunha." One woman, Mrs. Frances Repetto, a widow, said as she took my hand with tears in her eyes, "Thank God that I have lived to see another missionary come to our island, for we greatly need a leader and someone to teach the little children."

Soon, I was left quite alone while my husband and the people were busy superintending the landing of the mail and our stores. I began to feel very tired and hungry, for I was not in very good health and the rain was falling heavily. I walked up to the nearest woman and said, "Please, where is the Settlement?" However, she was so frightened that she simply turned and ran away, but a tall, dark woman, who was Mrs. Tom Rogers, came up and asked me if I would come along with her, saying that her husband had spoken to us on the ship and everything was now quite ready for us. She hoped she was not insulting me by asking, but it was so wet on the beach. I went with her gladly but it made me feel very tired walking over the big loose stones and climbing up a long, rather steep cliff pathway.

After we had thus set the example, a general movement took place, everyone carrying something in the way of boxes, sacks, or parcels. As soon as I had got up to the house with my hostess, I longed for some food and the means to wash; but I quickly found that I should not get any of these things, for just as I had settled myself on the only wooden chair a number of women came in. As they entered they curtseyed and said, "Good afternoon, marm," and sat down on the two boxes or a wooden bench which, with a table, comprised all the furniture. Some stood against the wall, all with hands folded and no one speaking a word. Finally some mail sacks were brought in by two men and placed in front of me. I realized I was expected to give them out, and thinking these sacks were all the mail and the sooner they were given out the sooner my new friends would go home, I hastened to distribute them.

I was rather nervous and very much overtired, and no one spoke to me, yet I felt that I should get to love these poor people, for they clearly meant to do their best for our comfort. Seeing me standing up rather forlornly one woman got me a chair, and when I said, "Thank you so much," she broke into a smile, and I noticed that, though she was very dark, she had quite a nice face and beautiful

eyes. Two others now came forward to help me distribute the mails. One woman cut the strings of the bags and another handed me packets of letters, and as I called the names people took their letters and departed with a "Thank you, marm." More sacks suddenly appeared, rather to my dismay, and fresh crowds poured into the room, and it grew stifling hot, and the door and window were obscured by numbers of men and boys. Someone called out, "Tell the Missus the ship is going away," and as I looked through the window the men moved very considerably so that I might see clearly.

The steamer's siren gave a farewell hoot for "good-bye," and I saw the *Tacoma Maru* steaming slowly away. My heart felt heavy, and as I looked I could have wept. However, I went back to my work, fully realizing that after nearly thirteen months of waiting we were now upon Tristan da Cunha, with miles of ocean between us and our dear ones at home. That evening all the men who were heads of families visited us to have a look at us, and all expressed their appreciation of our coming to the island "to larn the children."

About seven o'clock we managed to get our first meal. It consisted of roast mutton, baked potatoes, and tea. I found out later that a boy had been sent six miles for a sheep when we landed, and it had to be killed and prepared for cooking, hence the long delay in dinner. Almost everyone brought us a present of some sort as a token of amity—eggs, milk, or stockings. People kept coming and going, speaking little but often staying a long time; so at length, feeling utterly exhausted, I left them to my husband and departed into the bedroom. Alas! under the scarlet blanket I could not sleep, for the bed only boasted of one sheet, and was, as nearly all Tristan houses are, full of fleas. I got up next day at dawn to find my husband sitting on a chair half dozing, but in spite of such a disturbed night we both felt refreshed and eager to make a start with our work on the island.

[Chapter 4](#)



ISLAND COTTAGE, WITH THE LATE BETTY COTTON IN THE GROUP



THE MISSION HOUSE, WITH MRS. ROGERS AND COMMANDER FRANK WILD IN FRONT

CHAPTER IV

LIFE ON TRISTAN DA CUNHA

MR. AND MRS. TOM ROGERS were very kind to us, and did everything in their power to make our stay in their house agreeable, but there were many inconveniences.

Our little room was almost full with our boxes. The family still lived in the kitchen of the house by day and slept out at night. There was one boy, "Paddy," who was a nephew—they had no children of their own and had adopted him. He was about twelve years of age. It was curious to find so many families of the same name as our own on the island; there were, in fact, five families with this surname. Before we did much unpacking we had to arrange with the men to bring up our tiny frame house, which we had brought out with us, from the beach, where it had been landed by the Japanese, and put it together. As it was too clumsy to go in the little boats, it had been put in the sea and rafted ashore. It got very wet and sandy, but the sun soon dried the timbers, and, as every board and section was numbered, it was not difficult to erect. We had to choose a site for it. The men remarked, "The whole Settlement is open for you to choose from. We will build wherever you wish." Tom Rogers said, "I will give a piece of my own land, near to my house, and my wife can help the Missus with her work." We accepted with thankfulness, although we could see some disadvantages as it was near to a lot of sheep-pens, but we had also access to a spring or water-brook, and there was a ready-made garden. The men worked with a good will, and on April 8, 1922, we moved into our own house, quite glad to have a place to ourselves. It seemed more private and homelike. The men had taken a good deal of trouble in preparing the ground before erecting the house, levelling the earth and getting up big boulders of rock which abound everywhere.

Directly we moved in, however, fresh difficulties arose. The house was terribly small, only 19 feet long, and divided into two rooms, bedroom and sitting-room. All our belongings except some cases of stores were crowded in, and we could scarcely move round. In my state of health I could not do any really hard work, so my husband had to do most things. Then Tom Rogers, acting as spokesman for the rest, came to us and said: "The men say that a lot must be done to make your house safe for you to live in it. It is so lightly built, of such thin materials, the big Tristan winds will blow it down and smash it all up, and you might get hurt. We must erect a high stone wall on three sides as a shelter, and fasten the house down with ropes and bolt the foundation to heavy timbers. The men are waiting to begin at once."

There was soon a great bustle round us. Ox teams, drawing stones in the carts peculiar to Tristan, plied busily to and fro, while a gang of hands worked at the building up as fast as the stones were unloaded. The walls were as high as the roof. The men then threw a couple of stout wire rope hawsers over the roof fixed to baulks of timber and placed a couple of supporting props. The foundations were secured by heavy iron bolts to stout timbers, and we felt we might sleep in security. The men used the wood they were saving for a new boat's keel, as it was the only long, thick timber available, surely a fine piece of unselfishness when you think how hard it is to get wood here and how invaluable boats are to them. I think they were still a bit anxious, and when a very heavy gale arose and the house timbers creaked ominously, we were sometimes roused in the night by hearing footsteps of anxious watchers come to see we were not in danger of being blown to pieces.

Our next bother was our cooking stove. It was of iron, with a high stove pipe and chimney outside, but it drew so fiercely that we could not bear the heat, and

the walls began to scorch in spite of a sheet-iron protection. It was impossible to use it, as it was meant to burn coal and wood did not suit it. We asked Tom Rogers's advice, and he and the men decided to build us a small stone kitchen near the house and fit it with an island firegrate. This is of stone, with two iron crossbars to rest pots upon, and is generally on a level with the floor.

The people brought us a good supply of fuel, but the wood has to be fetched some considerable distance in boats, involving several hours' work to procure it. There is no longer any wood left near the Settlement or on the lower levels of the mountain. The firewood is from a big shrub-like tree called "Island tree" (*Phyllica nitida*). It is only met with in the Tristan group, and one other lonely island, Amsterdam Island, in the Indian Ocean. It burns even in a green state. Curiously, it once grew at a much lower level, but was destroyed by the ravages of some insect years ago.

The kitchen took a few days to construct, and in the meantime we had to get all our cooking done at Tom Rogers's house. When at length the kitchen was finished Andrew Swain, who seemed to be fiddler-in-chief to the island, fetched his fiddle, and, sitting on the floor in a corner, played a lively tune, and the builders took turns in dancing round and round the tiny room in couples and in and out of the door. Afterwards one or two men with good voices favoured the company with some quaint old sea songs, all present joining in the chorus. This is done in every newly finished house, "for good luck," they say. Before they left I gave to all cups of tea and some biscuits. Mrs. Tom Rogers helped me prepare the refreshments and handed them round. We then shook hands with all the men, and said, "Thank you all very much for your work in building us our kitchen." The men replied, "Very welcome, marm." As we were moving in our belongings a few curious passers-by peeped in "just to have a look," and two of the women came along and swept up the room and gave the floor a scrub down. Tom Rogers put up some neat shelves for us with hooks for cups and jugs, and also made me a nice little corner cupboard. The kitchen had a thatched roof with a loft under to hold stores. We had very little furniture in our house as we could not bring out much from England.

All we had were two camp beds, a deck-chair, two other small chairs, two arm-chairs of light construction, a couple of tables, and a few pictures. My husband had a book-case with a few books in it. I think ours was one of the smallest and most modestly furnished parsonages in the world, but even so it was better filled than most of the Tristan houses. Many houses are worse furnished than a prison cell.

We lived fairly comfortably during the first part of our stay at Tristan, as we had brought a certain quantity of stores with us, enough for about twelve months. We were very economical, but we gave away a lot to our needy neighbours, for we felt very sorry for the people who were without, and this was especially hard in times of sickness. They gave us meat, potatoes and milk, and sometimes butter and eggs as well as firewood, each family taking it in turns for one week at a time in accordance with custom. We had fish given to us also, but we found it did not suit us. Sometimes also the meat was very poor in quality, and in winter the milk was scarce. Now and again it came really hard on people to keep us supplied, as on two occasions while we were there the potato crops were partial failures and we all had to go rather short.

The average island menu is very simple. They have fish and boiled potatoes or sea-birds or sea-birds' eggs, and sometimes potato puddings or cranberries in addition. Meat is considered rather a luxury and only to be had at times. Fat is

scarce, and fried or baked potatoes are thought luxuries. All the cooking, or rather the baking and roasting, has to be done in big iron pots about 14 inches across, with iron lids. The wood fire is put on top and only a little firing underneath. I found it hard to get the lid off with the fire on it when I required to examine progress of the cooking. Usually I dropped burning embers on the top of my precious cakes, but at last I got so used to it I could cook anything without accident. The women, coming in occasionally, remarked, "they had never seen anything so lovely cooked." I introduced the one and only seed-cake ever seen on Tristan. I made it on my twenty-first birthday and all hands had "just a taste."



THE SCHOOL CHILDREN OF THE ISLAND OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL-HOUSE

Whilst our house was being erected we were employed for several days in a public distribution of the gifts our kind friends in England and South Africa and the S.P.G. and the Tristan da Cunha Fund had provided. We tried to make the sharing-out as fair as possible by giving a rather larger share to all the bigger families, but in general we were guided by the island custom. The method is peculiar. When all are met together at one of the houses where the things have been brought for distribution, an equal share is allotted to each family until all is used up. So many pounds of tea, so many cakes of soap are counted out in small lots, even down to spoonfuls, or a bar of soap is cut up into bits. Much care is exercised to secure equality of distribution. Clothes, household necessities like saucepans, plates or cups, are shared by means of a book which contains the names of all adults or heads of families, and if there is not enough to go round "this mail," the next on the list wait until "next mail" and then have first call. Perhaps you might have to wait a year or two for a skirt or a shirt or a pair of trousers. Some things are shared by a method peculiar to the island. The things are placed on the ground with one man or woman facing them, and another with back turned to them, and the one calling out the name of the thing to be allotted and the other the name of the person to receive it. This method, strange as it is, seems to suit the people, and cause less jealousy than any other, so we let it go on without remark. I must say we gave out a queer assortment of things—mouse-traps, rat-poison, fish-hooks, nails, tobacco, tea, soap, coffee, cocoa,

clothing, rice, clothes for men, women and children, sweets and toys, books and papers.

As soon as the work of distribution was over, my husband was anxious to get the day-school started, so he interviewed several of the islanders to try and get a big room. Mr. Andrew Hagan, who has the largest room in the only two-storey house on the island, kindly offered this for our use. He said, also, we could use it on Sundays to hold church services in, as he had only a small family, and, to make it more useful, we could move the partition between two rooms and throw them into one. When this was done we had quite a big room. Afterwards we had concerts and all public meetings in it, and it was often used for dances after the church was built.

We began school on Monday, April 24, 1922. We had been on the island just three weeks, so I do not think much time was lost. On the first day there were forty-two scholars of all ages present, and the numbers varied a good deal, sometimes reaching sixty. It was hard to teach scholars of all ages from three to thirty years in one class, and we had afterwards three divisions or grades. We found that some of the young married couples had been at the school kept by the Rev. J. G. Barrow when he was on the island with his wife, and these could read and write quite nicely.

At first we used slates entirely for writing on, and it was a hard job to keep the little ones from running off with their pencils, or losing them. Once my husband said to a small boy, "Cyril, where is your slate pencil?" and the little fellow pointed an accusing finger at his neighbour, "Please, sir, Teddie has eat it up." Some of the big girls were so shy at first that when one was asked a question she hid her head behind the back of the next girl instead of answering.

I think our first church services were as interesting as the school. We had the altar screened off with a curtain, as we were using the same room for both church and school. We had only landed on the Saturday, but at our first service, the next day, Sunday, April 2, 1922, "Palm Sunday," everyone, including dear old Betty Cotton, the oldest inhabitant, aged ninety-three years, was present. She was a remarkably intelligent old woman, with fine manners, and could remember the first missionary, the Rev. Mr. Taylor, who arrived in 1851. The people came carrying forms for each family to sit upon. The harmonium, by some odd mischance, had been lost en route, and we had to wait until the next year for one, but the people can all sing readily by ear and are very fond of hymn-singing as recreation, some of the men having fine tenor voices, while there were good sopranos among the women. The men had placed the altar in position the night before, and we brought new frontals with us, candlesticks and a cross, so it looked quite "churchy." There was a lectern with a huge family Bible and the historic font which survived a shipwreck in Mr. Dodgson's time. We had a shortened form of Evensong, with an address from my husband of a simple kind, at the end of which he read the letter from H.M. King George V, which was listened to with great attention.

After church we went for a short walk over Hottentot Gulch. When the soldiers were here more than a century ago a large party of Cape Hottentots resided for a time across this gulch, hence its name. The high point in the cliffs here is named Hottentot Point. Over the gulch we had a fine sight of Inaccessible Island in the far distance. The whole of Tristan is everywhere intersected by these deep gulches running from all sides of the Central Peak like spokes in a huge wheel. They are made by water floods washing out the gravel and big stones, and are often many feet deep with dangerous precipitous sides. They go

right down towards the sea and break off high above it very steeply. There had been a heavy flood or cloudburst about a year before we reached Tristan. It happened in the month of May. Some of the people had narrow escapes from being drowned and some livestock were lost. The flood, roaring down Hottentot Gulch, shook the island like an earthquake, and huge rocks weighing tons were swept along and out towards the sea.

An interesting story is connected with one of these cloudbursts, or excessive rainstorms, which come on with peculiar suddenness, and are recorded to have happened at regular intervals of about fifteen years. Old Betty Cotton related to my husband that when she was quite a young child her father and younger brother were out at work some distance from the Settlement and the clouds broke so suddenly they had no chance to get to shelter. The gulches filled with tons of water and the roar was terrific. Cotton and his boy fled for their lives, and, descending a cliff, sought to find their road home along the beaches. All the gulches, however, end in abrupt precipices above the beaches, and over all this were pouring vast volumes of flood waters. The descending torrent at one spot caught the unfortunate boy, and he was swept away and drowned before his father's eyes. The remarkable part of the disaster is this. The boy's mother was at the Settlement, and she told her neighbours that she knew her husband would return with bad news, for she had had a vision at the moment of her son being swept away by a flood and drowned while his father was near but powerless to help. People at Tristan believe very much in dreams and visions and are rather superstitious, and her neighbours did not think of making light of her tears, but tried to console her, and the whole Settlement was filled with lamentation. When Cotton returned home, to his surprise he found everyone aware of the disaster.

I do not know if our surroundings influence our minds to an extra and abnormal degree, but it was more than curious that each time we had a ship, even up to the last that brought us away from the island, I had a presentiment of its coming. I told my husband of the approach of the *Quest*, the *Dublin*, the small whaleships and the *Ramon da Larrinaga*. I seemed somehow aware twenty-four hours previously. I told him the Bishop would be on this ship, referring to the *Dublin*, and that we should not be on the island for his birthday in 1925. My husband seemed sceptical, but made a note in his diary on each occasion.

On Easter Monday 1922, which was a bright cold day, two of the men, John Baptist Lavarello and William Rogers, called to invite my husband to ascend the base of the mountain at a place named "Burnt Wood," where it is possible to get up fairly easily. The party started after an early breakfast, and, walking about four miles, began the climb. My husband was a pretty good walker, and as Lavarello and Rogers are very active themselves they were pleased at his capabilities in that direction. The last fifty yards from the top were almost perpendicular, though a sort of hold was afforded by the grass and heather. Once up, the view was extraordinarily fine, as it is over 2,000 feet above the sea, and the atmosphere was very clear. They could see Nightingale Island, which my husband afterwards visited and explored. They had meant to try for the Peak, but had omitted to bring any food, so after getting up 3,000 feet had to turn back. They came down to the level by way of Ankerstock Gulch and back by a narrow cliff foot-track high over the sea. At the same place a sad accident once befell a young man who visited Tristan on the ship *Pandora*. While exploring the island on his own account without a guide, he was returning to the ship at dusk and somehow fell over the cliff and was drowned, or maybe he was trying to cross a

cliff and was swept off by a high wave. He is buried in the little island cemetery within sound of the vast Atlantic surges, and a little wooden cross pathetically marks the spot, "Ronald McCann, aged nineteen." At the request of his mother in England we planted fresh flowers on the grave each Christmas and Easter.



THE PENGUIN GROUP RECEIVING THE CHIEF SCOUT'S PRESENTATION
FLAG FROM SCOUT MARR, OF THE "QUEST"

In May a night school for young men was started. It was held in Mr. Hagan's house and was well attended, but we were obliged to give it up after a time as we had no means of illumination. My husband was very anxious to improve the conditions of life on the island, so amongst other things he got the men to start building new boats and repairing the old ones. When we arrived there were only two or three seaworthy boats, but at the time we left the people had fifteen—five large ones and ten small. The big boats are about 30 feet long, and the small ones called "dinghies" are from 15 to 18 feet in length. They are of canvas, and have to be frequently painted to keep them watertight. They carry two small sails, have one mast, and hold about eight hands, but as many as fourteen will often squeeze into them. This overloading I thought rather dangerous.

My husband was a very great believer in the Boy Scout movement, and before he went out to Tristan he planned to have a Scout troop on the island, and Sir Robert Baden-Powell himself showed a great personal interest in the idea. Headquarters made a special grant for uniforms and equipment, and we took out with us a signed portrait of the Chief Scout to hang up in the Troop Club-room.

Thirteen boys joined, but at first there was some reluctance among the parents to allow them to join, as they believed that they would have to go away and fight. My husband dispelled their fears in this direction, and the 1st Tristan da Cunha Troop "Penguin" Patrol, named after the most characteristic Tristan sea-bird, was duly launched. Headquarters allowed my husband the special privilege of conferring badges at his discretion. I was appointed Assistant Scoutmaster, Donald Glass Patrol Leader, and Joe Glass second.

One of the saddest sights to me when I first arrived at Tristan was to see all the little children, whenever they were not hard at work, hanging listlessly

round, children who did not know how to play. They just moped or quarrelled. School soon changed all that: we taught them to play organized games. When we came to Tristan we found the boys endeavouring to play cricket with a barrel stave for a bat, a ball made out of a lump of kelp, and a pile of rocks for wickets; but my husband wrote away for proper bats and balls, and we got them a year later on H.M.S. *Dublin*. He was an ardent football player—the Association game—and he taught his schoolboys to play, and, in spite of his age, always played with them. His place on the field was back or half-back, but none of them could get past him. The Boy Scouts and some of the bigger Tristan lads became immensely keen on football, and I think would have liked a season to last all the year round. We made flags and goal posts, and laid out a fairly decent football ground with great difficulty, as the island is so rough naturally. Sides were picked for every game, and my husband captained one and Joe Repetto the other. The games were usually very strenuous, and there was a good deal of cheerful noise about them.

Christmas was the great cricket season, and in the Christmas holidays a match lasted three or four days between married and single and was a great feature in the festivities. The singles generally won, but the number of players on a side was quite unlimited, and the players included all the men and bigger boys. Nobody, however, seemed to mind much who won or lost, as at Tristan they certainly do not take their pleasures sadly, and there was always much merriment at the expense of the players among the onlookers.

[Chapter 5](#)

CHAPTER V

THE *QUEST* AT TRISTAN

THE great happening of May 1922 was the visit of R.Y.S. *Quest* to the island, with the members of the Shackleton-Rowett Expedition.

Very early in the morning of May 19, 1922, we were awakened by the joyful cry of "Sail Ho!" I heard people running about and talking loudly and excitedly close outside the house, and there was much barking of the dogs. We were soon up and dressed, and Robert Glass came to the door to tell us he had seen the ship first and it was the eagerly expected *Quest*, and that she was steaming in towards the beach coming from the westward and the direction of Inaccessible Island. We looked at the brave little ship with a very great interest, and were glad she had come so far safely through the perils of her voyage of discovery amid the unknown seas and islands of the south.

It was not a very cheerful day for a visit to Tristan da Cunha. The island is sadly desolate-looking at any time, but to-day it was obscured by heavy clouds and rain was falling thickly. The sea had also rather a heavy ground swell running. The bad weather kept the people more closely indoors than usual, but the *Quest* hastened activity on the Settlement by firing a detonator, and soon the people were all out of their doors and running towards the beach, and the men quickly got boats out and rowed swiftly to the ship. As soon as she had taken some of the men on board to act as pilots, the *Quest* came in as near as was safe and anchored in the kelp. Out of compliment to the ship the people afterwards named her anchorage in the inner bay "Quest Bay," and also one of the new small dinghies was christened the *Quest*, so it was a double-barrelled compliment of a permanent character to our visitors. We had approached the *Quest* ourselves a year before, when we heard of her intention to call at Tristan da Cunha with a mail, asking for the favour of a passage to the island, but Sir Ernest Shackleton had been unable to accede to our request as there was no spare accommodation on board. This decision turned out for the best, for the plans of the expedition had to be changed, and, as it was, we succeeded in reaching our destination about a month before the *Quest* arrived.

After the *Quest* anchored a number of men got on board from several small boats and tried to begin a bit of trading by bartering curios and offering to supply fresh meat and poultry to the captain and crew. There is always a lot of shouting and confusion among the boats' crews as they seem never to acknowledge any leader and all talk together, but the *Quest* officers took the invasion good-naturedly. Commander Wild asked if they had any headman, and after a consultation they put Bob Glass forward as spokesman for the island, my husband being still on his way. There had only been one ship since December 1920, besides the Tacoma Maru which brought us, until the *Quest* came.

When my husband arrived, he went on board the *Quest* and had a little talk with Commander Wild and the officers, and noticed Scout Marr, in whom as a brother Scout he felt a particular interest. The ship was rolling a good deal, and he said afterwards it upset him a bit, though he is a good sailor as a rule. He noticed that it rolled even at anchor in a calm sea, and one of the *Quest* men said, "She would roll even if she were propped up underneath." He was glad to get back on shore after having made some arrangements as to the landing of the mails and some cases for us and the people.

The islanders were fond of comparing my husband with the Rev. J. G.

Barrow, the last missionary before us, and used to say, "Mr. Barrow was a fine climber but a bad one on the water, and Mr. Rogers is a good sailor but not much at mountaineering." My husband constantly went out with the men in the small boats, and was very seldom seasick even in a ground-swell.

During the morning Commander Wild came ashore and had a good look round the Settlement. He said "it reminded him of an Irish village in many respects. The thatched cottages seemed to be cosy inside, though rather bare of furniture." Commander Wild expressed himself pleased that we had been able to start a church and school and get a troop of Boy Scouts going. The boys had turned out in their new uniforms, looking very smart, and showed much keenness to help in any jobs going. But what most interested him was the island boats. He considered them, as also did the commander of H.M.S. *Dublin*, our next important visitor, to be marvels of skill in building, made as they are of a combination of pieces of driftwood picked up on the beaches and bits of branches from the small apple-trees grown on the island, and then covered with one thickness of canvas and painted. Several other members of the *Quest* Expedition were ashore with Commander Wild, and they came and had lunch with us, taking island fare.

I spent the afternoon giving out mails and parcels to the people. A year previously, long before we left England, we had written letters to the island to let the people know that we were coming, and we had the curious experience of anticipating the arrival of these letters, for they had come by the *Quest*. As they were no longer of service I impounded them.

The people were full of joyful excitement as the *Quest* Expedition presented the islanders with a very considerable gift of stores in a large variety. They all said how grateful they felt to Commander Wild and Dr. Macklin, the store-keeper of the expedition. During the few days of their visit to Tristan the members of the *Quest* Expedition were all very active, and kept the island very full of life. The botanist collected plants, and Mr. Douglas, the geologist, with another man, made the ascent of the Peak, taking two young men, Robert Lavarello and Arthur Rogers, as guides. They went up from a point close to the Settlement near to Hottentot Gulch and Goat Ridge. They were gone all day, though an early start had been made, as Mr. Douglas was collecting geological specimens and surveying operations were conducted. Mr. Douglas says: "Tristan da Cunha rises as a prism for about 2,000 feet, above which it ascends as a cone for about 6,000 feet. The base is of hard columnar lava with alternating layers of basalt, agglomerate, scorial, and cinder. The rainfall on the upper levels is considerable and the erosion correspondingly great." The Expedition also took important soundings round the island, and did some re-charting where it was incorrect on the standard maps.



ISLAND BOATS AT SEA



LANDING STORES FROM THE "*QUEST*" BY NIGHT

Dr. Macklin spent a great deal of time going round amongst the people, and seemed to take a most kindly interest in their curious ways of thinking and living, of which he afterwards wrote a very good description in the volume *Shackleton's Last Voyage*. He stayed ashore with Bob Glass and family, and it took him some time to get used to one of Tristan's inconveniences. He said, "I could not sleep at night on account of an army of small marauders." Fleas are one of the minor drawbacks to life at Tristan.

I spent a part of one day going round with Mr. G. H. Wilkins, the *Quest* naturalist, who was also its photographer, and he kindly took photographs of every family on the island and promised to send each a copy and a set to me. He got some very interesting studies of the boats, the women at work spinning and carding wool, the Boy Scouts and school children, and many good ones of island scenery. Some of these were for film exhibition.

The *Quest* officers and men were from all parts of the Empire, and we enjoyed chatting with representatives of New Zealand (which my husband and I had both visited), South Africa, and Canada. Three of them slept at Tom Rogers's house, and we lent our largest bed and some bedding. They camped out in the big front room and said next day that they were very comfortable. Commander Wild was photographed with me standing outside our house, the tiniest parsonage in the world, less than 20 feet long. They soon adopted the Tristan title for me and called me "the Missus."

The great events on the second and third days of the *Quest* visit were the presentation of the Troop flag specially given for the Tristan da Cunha Troop by the Chief Scout and the erection of the wireless pole. The Scouts were paraded outside the school house with my husband in Scout kit at their head, with

Commander Wild present and myself as A.S.M. Scout Marr presented the flag, which was received by the Patrol Leader, Donald Glass, on behalf of the Troop, and he then made a straightforward little speech on the real meaning of scouting, and, after the boys had given the salute and been dismissed, he came up with us to the parsonage and had a meal of damper bread and tea. We had a pleasant talk on Scouting and other matters. He was in his Highland dress as a Scottish Scout Patrol Leader, and the Tristan folk, who had never seen the kilt, were much impressed. Scout Marr is a big, hefty fellow, and his fine manly style was a great help to our lads, and he must have been a valuable asset to the *Quest* crew.

The next day my husband was early on board the *Quest*, as we were all waked up by the "time" rocket which she fired at 5.30 to enable us to correct our clocks or watches, which had all gone wrong. The noise startled the whole population, and some of the women and children screamed loudly and were much frightened. Tom Rogers took my husband off from Little Beach to the ship, and they carried our mail with them, as the ship, it was known, might leave at any time then, the voyagers having done all they intended to do in these parts with their exploration of all three islands of the Tristan Group. Their next port of call was Gough Island, 200 miles away, which, like Inaccessible and Nightingale, is uninhabited and little known. Strangely enough, John Glass and his brother Robert have both been to Gough Island and lived there with a sealing expedition. On this visit to the ship my husband was not seasick, though he said that the old *Quest* rolled as much as ever, so that Sidney Glass, one of the Scout boys who had come on board with his father, was obliged to lie down on the deck he was so upset. Bob Glass, John Glass, and Henry Green were also on board, and the *Quest* cook gave all a good breakfast in the tiny saloon. They had porridge, fried bacon and potatoes, bread and butter, marmalade and hot coffee with condensed milk, so they did not do so badly. Mr. Wilkins was most anxious to get a good photograph of the Peak, and accordingly the ship steamed out about a mile and a half, but it was rather too cloudy for the best effects, though my husband said the Peak looked very imposing and majestic from the sea.

As it was Empire Day (May 24th), as soon as the *Quest* had returned to its anchorage my husband came ashore to review the Scouts, and the ceremony went off very well. They marched round the Settlement and halted at Henry Green's, where the oldest flagstaff stands, and there the Union Jack was hoisted and the boys listened to a short address on "Good Citizenship," and gave three cheers for the King and three for the Chief Scout.

By this time a party had come ashore headed by the *Quest* wireless operator, and including "Mae" Marr, Naisbitt, and some others, and they were going to erect the wireless given to us in Cape Town on a site near Tom Rogers's house. My husband was helping, assisted by a big crowd of almost too willing helpers amongst the Tristanites. A hole had been excavated with difficulty to hold the pole, which was made up of lengths of hollow iron piping. It was about 60 feet in length, and by means of improvised tackle of all sorts they were trying to hoist it. Just as the whole dubious-looking thing was rising into the perpendicular it was noticed to be sagging dangerously at the top, there was a loud shout of warning, and everyone had to run for his life. A big length of piping crashed to the earth, and a bad accident was only averted by a hairbreadth.

The over-zeal of the assistants had caused the top-heavy structure to snap above a joint. At length it was again hoisted and finally fixed in position, but the pole was a good deal shorter than at first intended. We were never able to make

much use of it. It was hastily erected in an unsuitable spot, and the islanders were frankly nervous of it, fearing it would attract lightning. One day when Tom Rogers was putting in new windows to his house, he quietly disconnected the wires, and he was careful never to set them up again. My husband grumbled, but not very seriously, as he did not think we should get calls in any case.

Commander Wild took three Tristan men with him as guides to Inaccessible and Nightingale when the *Quest* left us to explore these two islands on the evening of May 20th—Henry Green and John and Robert Glass. They proved very useful, as they knew every inch of the ground and are all good seamen. It was not a nice day and blew up very rough at night, and we heard that they were not able to land at Inaccessible the next day, but had to steam across to Nightingale. They explored Nightingale and Middle Islands pretty thoroughly, and then returned to Inaccessible and managed to land at the second attempt. They thought the scenery of the interior good, and that the island was better suited for human habitation in some ways than Tristan. There is plenty of vegetation there and good water.

Ascension Day, May 25th, proved to be the last day of the *Quest's* visit. It was very wet and the sea seemed making up, but the boats went out early to the ship and remained by her. She blew a farewell on her syren, and very soon the boats returned. The Expedition was very kind to the people, and my husband wrote a letter thanking them and sending a case of souvenirs from Tristan for Mr. Rowett. "The islanders," one of the officers said, "behaved like big children. I was immensely sorry for them, as they seemed to lack even common necessities." One man asked for a mouth-organ, a pipe, and a suit of clothes, while another was ready to barter an entire sheep for a pipe of tobacco. When the *Quest* arrived the islanders seemed to have very poor clothes, as the crew did not fail to note, but the *Dublin*, which came a year later, in her report describes the Tristan folk as There is probably no place in where people are so careful of their clothes as at Tristan.

It seemed very dull again when the *Quest* was gone and life settled down in the old ruts. We missed our friends, even "Query," that big dog, who had landed and made friends with the Tristan dogs and the children, and it was with great grief we heard long after that he had been washed overboard and drowned on the way to Gough Island. We have one cherished souvenir of the visit of the *Quest* to Tristan da Cunha in the shape of a beautiful Bible presented by Commander Wild on behalf of the Expedition to my husband. We were personally grateful for the useful gifts consisting of carefully selected stores, for, while on the island, we had no means of replenishing our own save by chance ships. We had no idea at this time that within a year the *Dublin* would come with relief stores for the whole island, and certainly, if it had not been for the visit of these two ships, our people would have suffered extreme hardship, as the potato harvest failed us two years out of three.

On the next Sunday my husband held a Thanksgiving for the visit of the *Quest*, and sought to point the moral by urging the men to do as Commander Wild had suggested, and all to pull together and try and improve the conditions of life. He endeavoured during his stay at Tristan to evolve some system of local government which should induce a sense of corporate responsibility among the men of the island, which seemed to us to be a good deal lacking, and as a first step he took up and utilized the islanders' own custom of the Meeting of all the Heads of Families. He called it "Our Parliament," and he always took the opportunity to call together this gathering when big public matters were

concerned. He wished now to employ it to enforce the lesson of the visit of the *Quest* more insistently, and so the bell was rung and all the men came, and my husband constituted himself chairman or speaker, controlling the debate and putting resolutions. He was listened to very respectfully and good work resulted, and matters affecting the school, roads, boats, houses, and other welfare matters were discussed and decisions arrived at. I think this assembly met four times during our stay on the island, as it is never called except for really important matters touching public morals or public business.

A missionary in these days has to be a jack-of-all-trades, and, as we got to know, more particularly so if he or she goes to Tristan da Cunha. Our ordinary avocations were very varied. We did all our own housework save washing and scrubbing floors, for we found the island girls unsuitable as cooks and for general work. They are, however, excellent as charwomen. We added to our own business the departments of postmaster, schoolmaster, Scoutmaster, medical adviser, dispenser, first-aider, architect, explorer, journalist, meteorological observer, organizer of entertainments, magistrate, and universal umpire, with more or less success. We had had some medical experience. I am fairly skilled in ambulance work, and so was my husband, and we often had to handle more or less serious accidents. Dangers on sea and land are a feature of daily life at Tristan. I give a few of our cases.

William Rogers, thrown out of surf boat on shingly beach, two fractured ribs; Peter Repetto, two accidents—head cut open by stones falling from cliff, and neck badly cut in fall on mountain patch by axe he was carrying; Tom Swain, fall from mountain, fracture of collar-bone and many bruises; John the Baptist Lavarello, hand badly bitten by a snoek fish, the bite of which is always poisonous. Cuts, bruises, and sprains are of daily occurrence. The patients generally neglected everything at first, let the wounds get shockingly dirty, and when thoroughly septic came to me expecting to be cured in a few days. My husband considers that I "was wonderfully successful in my treatments." My great standby was hot water and permanganate of potash, and I used iodine. Though there are no germ diseases at Tristan there is much need for better sanitation, more cleanliness, and more hygienic conditions. There is much dirt and carelessness. On one occasion I cured a woman who had swallowed quantities of raw, dried beans. She was delirious when I was called in, but I gave her a strong emetic and she completely recovered. An awkward complication in the case was that she was expecting a baby.

We treated a good deal of sickness by administering castor oil and Epsom salts, as the islanders suffer very much from stomach and bowel disorders caused by bad food. Round-worms are almost a universal complaint, and cause much sickness among old and young. There is also a mild form of dysentery, which is so common at certain seasons that my husband named it "Tristan sickness." It is troublesome and weakening, and for this I had a special mixture. I had with me a medicine chest supplied by Parke Davis, Ltd., of carefully selected drugs, with directions as to use. Missionaries and explorers need one of these. Asthma, rheumatism, and lumbago are all ordinary complaints at Tristan. We used saltpetre and various embrocations, and thermogene wool. We kept a dispensary and were asked constantly for pills. My husband said, "I believe here they think pills will cure a broken arm." We had to be careful over bandages as some would pretend to be sick or hurt to get bandages to mend their clothes. They come in handy for everything, from shirt-cuffs to boat-sails. We were asked daily and hourly for all sorts of things. In fact they seemed to think we

were a kind of Universal providers, and must have hidden hoards of everything in heaven or earth.

[Chapter 6](#)

CHAPTER VI

A TRIP TO SEAL BAY

MY husband was anxious to explore as much of the island as he could during our stay, so when he heard that a boat was going to Seal Bay he asked to be one of the party. The men were quite glad to have him, and he went in Tom Rogers's big boat, the *Canton*. They do not as a rule take the small boats to Seal Bay unless the weather is a settled calm.

The following is his description of the visit:

"Seal Bay is on the south side of the island. It is interesting as being the haunt of penguins, which come to moult in March and again arrive in August and lay in September. Seals no longer much frequent the caves, which abound in this part of the island. The islanders make fairly frequent trips to Seal Bay in search of driftwood, which floats up here in considerable quantities sometimes, being brought along by the strong current which sets into the Bay. Pieces of timber from wrecked ships or washed overboard are often found, and are of considerable service to the Tristanites for housebuilding or for ox-wagons or for repair of the boats. All manner of wood, save firewood, is very scarce indeed; in fact, there is always a wood famine! The Bay is also visited to get the berries which flourish in this part, while the islanders have a few apple-trees planted there in sheltered nooks. Some tame cattle, too, are kept on the flat above the Bay. Tom Rogers was going to kill a cow he was pasturing at Seal Bay to get the meat ready for salting down for winter use, while other members of his boat's crew desired to fetch some wood which was lying ready stacked near the beach. The journey can be done in favourable weather in one day, conditionally on the boat being able to sail one way at least. But as a rule the crew have to row a great deal of the journey owing to the variable winds and strong currents which prevail round the island at all seasons, and it is most often a piece of hard rowing even when a favourable day has been picked.

"The first attempt to reach Seal Bay was most disappointing. We were only able to row a couple of miles, to Hill Piece and Red Hole. This is a high red cliff just beyond Hottentot Point and near the first Hardies (Hardies is a Tristan word for the high rocks standing up perpendicular out of the sea which my husband named "the old woman and her daughter"). For half an hour we hung in the current off Hill Piece and gained not a yard in spite of desperate pulling at the oars. The wind was contrary and the sea rising, and so Tom Rogers reluctantly gave the order to turn back, and we landed at Little Beach with our jackets wet with spray.

"The next day the weather seemed a little easier, and we made an early fresh start. For myself I was not very entranced by the weather prospects. There was a head wind, a rather considerable cross sea running with what the natives here call 'blenders' (waves that break out at sea and in an irregular manner), and we had a very hard pull to get along at all. The boat, as a precaution, had been ballasted with sacks of stones before starting, and rode the heavy sea very well, but nevertheless rocked unpleasantly from side to side, and only careful pulling and good steering made it possible to get along without shipping a green sea of a size to have sent us all to Davy Jones's locker unpleasantly quickly.

"The course for Seal Bay lies past Ankerstock Point and Long Bluff, and it was confidently predicted by some of the crew that when we had passed

Ankerstock Point it would grow smoother. It did not; it grew rougher, and we were all relieved when Cave Point, which is one termination of Seal Bay, hove in sight. In a cross sea when there are 'white caps' on the waves, Seal Bay is not a nice place to negotiate in a canvas boat. It is well to look at, indeed, a fine wide bay with deep water close in. But it is full of shoals, beset by reefs with here and there snags of sharp rocks rising above the water. Over these reefs the sea breaks in a welter of white spray. The usual landing-place is in a clear space betwixt two rocks called 'the pond,' but ugly in a swell as the boat might be swept on either reef and smashed. Our boatmen, however, knew their business, and we got in just in the nick of time between the big waves, and quickly had our boat hauled up safe on the shingle.

"There is another landing-place on the near side of Cave Point, but it is quite impossible in rough weather. After unloading our boat of the stores we had brought over, as we intended camping out for the night, we carried all into a big cave running back deep and having a high front facing the sand and the sea, which from its form is called the 'Archway Cavern.' There are several much smaller caves near, and a bank of sand drifted some 40 feet high on which the Rev. J. G. Barrow slept once when staying over at Seal Bay. The wind had drifted the sand almost as high as the low cliff, which there overhangs the beach. There is also a fine natural archway of rock called 'Archway Rock,' but it is some little distance from the Archway Cave. The men are experienced campers, and soon had plenty of wood collected for a fire and fresh water brought from a clean mountain spring a half of a mile distant along the beach. Tea is always brewed (if there is any to be had) on these occasions, and, besides, we had some potatoes, some small flour cakes, and some tinned meat. I much enjoyed the picnic, though June is a winter month in these latitudes.

"Everyone was very tired with the exciting and arduous row over, but dried grass was collected and filled into clean, empty sacks to make a comfortable bed. Tom Rogers said 'he would not try to kill the cow that night, but would look for it at dawn the next day.' Its whereabouts were, however, ascertained. It was feeding with some ten more in a green gully near. The tame cows do not go near the wild ones, curiously. The wild cattle are at Stony Hill, a most interesting geological formation. The land at Seal Bay is like that at the Settlement, shut in by the huge cliffs of the Base, as the people call the lower approaches of the Central Peak, which occupies the greater part of the island. Seal Bay district is divided into two fine levels of moderate extent, with a break in between, for there the Base comes out to the sea and forms the headlands beyond Seal Bay at either side. On the second or farthest level is Stony Hill, an isolated cone with a flattened top. The two levels together are about the size of Settlement Plateau, some 9 miles in length, but Seal Bay is rather the smaller, and communication is possible only by ascending the hill or going along the beach under the cliff at low tide.

"Stony Hill Plateau is the home of the Tristan wild cattle. We saw one herd of twenty in charge of a big fierce old black bull, who on scenting our approach quickly assembled his family into a compact body and seemed to be preparing for active hostilities, but we eluded him by going down along the beaches. It is a chance, the men say, whether 'they run away from you or run at you.' They are very wary; they soon scent human beings or dogs coming, and can only be stalked like deer. No one really knows the number or the exact origin of the herd, for the islanders are very vague and have a mental inability for counting. They only manage to kill some of these beasts by shooting them from a safe

distance and an ambush.

"The whole of Tristan da Cunha bears aggressive evidence as to its volcanic origin. The Peak is approached over dry beds of decayed lava, which crushes under your feet, and it is bare of vegetation, and the entire surface of the island is thick with water-worn volcanic rock. It gives an air of intense ruggedness and desolation. Stony Hill was, we can be sure, the scene of prehistoric volcanic activity. It stands by itself, a mass of stones piled up as if they had boiled over from underneath with little or no earth atop. Along the beach near the Potato Patches and Hill Piece on the way up to Seal Bay are a series of detached cones or sugar loaves, like hills, only in miniature, which once on a time were clearly engines of furious volcanic activity, and to-day you may find sulphur stones anywhere.

"It was wonderful lying down in this vast cave with its great arch as high as a cathedral over us and open to the sea, and gazing over the vast, empty expanse of ocean illuminated by a brilliant African moon. I could only doze intermittently, for the roar of the great sea was ever in my ears. The men seemed to feel the influence of the majestic surroundings, and by the ruddy flames of a huge campfire I could see them sitting like statues, only talking in low, hushed voices and saying a few words and relapsing into silence, and so I fell asleep. During the night the wind changed, and the sea, rough the day before, got up strongly, and by daybreak the bay was yellow with heavy rollers breaking in all directions. I was up soon after daylight, and stepping out of the cavern watched the great rollers running into the bay. Long rollers are unusual at Tristan, but very common, I believe, at Ascension and St. Helena.

"Tom Rogers soon joined me, and remarked, 'It is quite impossible for any boat to-day,' which was obvious, and he added, 'I have never seen the sea get up so quick before.' There was no interval between the big waves.

"We had the option of remaining at Seal Bay until the weather moderated and the sea went down, or returning overland, which is by a stiff climb and over a rough track across the mountain, or else along the beaches and a footpath which runs round the Bluff. The Bluff path is very narrow, and runs along the face of a cliff many hundred feet sheer above the sea. It is fast rock and earthy, and one wonders why the islanders have never set to and made a decent wagon road and so obtained easy communication between Seal Bay and the Settlement. They lack enterprise sadly, and there is no recognized headman, and so no efficient leadership in matters of public benefit. Years ago the present somewhat dangerous path was worked out, but since then nothing has been done. They say it is because they have no tools. There is something in this excuse, for their tools are few for even such a simple engineering feat. Mattocks, shovels, and crow-bars are badly needed, and barrows they have none.

"The walk from Seal Bay by the shortest route takes several hours, and nothing can be carried but a small pack. At times when the sea is calm they walk along beneath the cliffs, but this is dangerous, for one could be caught by the sea or overwhelmed by a sudden fall of stones, and such accidents have occurred with fatal results. If a road to Seal Bay were once made immense benefit would ensue in new pasturage, fuel and wood, and access to good flat land would be easily available.

"On the third day at Seal Bay our provisions began to give out. The islanders usually run short in this way when on journeys. They bring food for one or two days, and are often compelled by stress of weather to stay a good deal longer. However, the folk at the Settlement were well aware that we should be short of

food, and very thoughtfully sent a party of three to our relief."

Here I insert an extract from my own diary, as follows:

"When the Seal Bay party did not return on the appointed day I felt rather anxious for my husband, as he had not taken much in the way of food nor a change of clothing, and this the islanders always take in case of getting wet. Nor was it nice to be alone so long. However, later on in the evening, Mrs. Bill Rogers came across to say that 'little Charles Green,' a big lad, had been sent home with a message that the Seal Bay party were all right, but the sea was too rough for the boat to get off, and the men were staying by the Minister, but they had no food except the beef and fish. Mrs. Rogers said, 'Her husband would walk round with food for the Minister, as we can't let him starve, and he's not used to the kind of food our folk eat.' She also said, 'Bill will start before daybreak, so will you cook to-night?' I hurriedly baked some rolls and small cakes before I went to bed, and whilst I was in the midst of cooking John Glass came to the door. He is Parish Clerk, and he volunteered to walk along with Bill Rogers and help carry supplies, so I sent some clothes as well as food."

My husband writes: "The relief party told us on arrival that they had started from the Settlement at 4 a.m., and they reached us at 8.30 a.m., just as we were about to start for home breakfastless.

"The sea had gone down at the Settlement, but it was still very rough on our side. The men had been eyeing it very doubtfully, but, encouraged by the report of conditions farther round, they began to load up in better spirits. Tom Rogers, who is an excellent boatman, remarked, 'It would be quite safe if they got out smartly, but he thought the boat a bit heavy laden for a flying start.' The cargo consisted of cow beef and some big blocks of timber off the famous Big Tree, and some other pieces of driftwood. The Big Tree deserves special mention. Mrs. Barrow says in her book, *Three Years in Tristan da Cunha*, that it measured then 120 feet long and 20 feet round, but there is evidence that it had been even longer, for it was broken off. The currents washed it up under Long Bluff, and then off again and into Seal Bay. It was probably a redwood tree from South America, and it lasted the islanders for twenty years as a 'cut and come again.' But now it is all used up for ox-wagons, furniture, and so on. It is interesting that some of the wood of this much-travelled tree was made into models by the islanders and sent to the Wembley Exhibition of 1924-25, where a good many must have seen them in the little Tristan da Cunha corner of the South African Pavilion.

"Seal Bay is more interesting to the naturalist than the Settlement. Not only is it possible from here to see Nightingale and Inaccessible at one time, which cannot be done elsewhere, but there is an interesting penguin rookery of large size, and shells in several varieties are found, also stinging jellyfish, called the 'Portuguese man-of-war,' and sharks and cat-fish abound. The jelly-fish sting is most severe and quite dangerous. Fish are easily caught with handlines in the deep water near the shore, so though we might have been forced to a rather carnivorous diet we should not have starved. I found vast quantities of small mice everywhere, and these with an occasional rat ran over us while we slept in the big cave.

"We were very glad to see the reinforcements for our crew as we were all hungry, and it was not a 'cushy' job getting our heavy-laden boat out through the boiling surf into the smoother water beyond. I helped push her off with the rest,

and when Big John Glass, who is one of the strongest men on the island, put his back into his oar with a pull all together, we were soon outside the surf and going for home for all we were worth. Seal Bay is full of kelp, which is of immense size, and often serves to mitigate the force of the big seas, but it is laborious to row through. We got back to the Settlement in about three hours—quite good under the circumstances.

"Watchers had been posted to look for us at Hottentot Point and warn the Settlement by running back and crying 'Tally Ho!' The women at once prepared tea for us, and my wife, with Mrs. Repetto, came down on to the beach to meet me armed with cups and teapots. A very pleasant finale! The usage is to cry 'Tally Ho!' if an island boat is sighted from a house, and the inmates cry out to their next neighbour throughout the Settlement and all then run down to meet the boats. But if it is a steamer they cry, 'Sail Ho!' and the men hasten down to put off a boat at once. Ox-wagons had been brought down, and soon willing hands were unloading our boat, and it was pulled up to its usual station on the beach.

"Our prolonged absence had caused some anxiety, and everyone seemed very glad to have us safely back. It was a Sunday afternoon when the boat returned, but we were, of course, obliged to take the chance of fine weather for coming, no matter what day it was. As soon as everything was carted up to the Settlement and the folk had had their dinners, I announced that there would be Evensong as usual, though I felt rather tired. I think all felt the same, and we went to bed quite early that night."

[Chapter 7](#)

CHAPTER VII

THE COMING OF BABY EDWARD

SEPTEMBER came and with it "Baby Edward." He was born on Thursday, September 21, 1922, at a quarter to three o'clock in the afternoon. We had only sent for the nurse, old Martha Green, aged eighty-seven, and her helper, Mrs. Bill Rogers, our near neighbour, at twelve o'clock. Martha Green is old Betty Cotton's sister, the only one of her family now living at Tristan, as the other brothers and sister emigrated to the Cape, where they are now resident near Cape Town. Old Martha has been midwife for over fifty years, and Tristan owes her a real debt for all these years of loving care over its babies. Her sight is now beginning to fail, and she is obliged to have an assistant, but she is wonderful in many ways.

I was impressed by her fervent prayer when Edward was born, and I then realized her great anxiety and nervousness on my behalf. Every day she and her assistant arrived close upon 8 a.m. She bathed the baby, and when he was ready to come back to his mother he was given a kiss with, "You pretty clean little thing! You're the best and whitest baby I shall ever see." I did not know, but many people flocked round the house to hear any news, and some told me they spent the time in prayer on our behalf. That day and for many days I had constant visitors, every woman coming to see little Edward and his mother. They all insisted on coming in, and knelt and kissed the baby, saying, "May you grow up a good boy and be a blessing to your brave mother." I felt very proud and happy.

When I was making my recovery after baby's birth I found the food rather poor and unsuitable, and it seemed hard having no relations near me and no mails, but everyone round me did their best for my comfort. After ten days I got up. The house was beginning to get upside-down, and my husband was being overworked very much, trying to cope alone with all the duties of home, school, and church services as usual.

Tom Rogers had made Baby Edward a cot out of the wood of the famous redwood-tree which had drifted up on Tristan twenty years before from America as described in the previous chapter. The little cot was modelled after an old Norwegian pattern and was very quaint.

I think the coming of "Baby Edward" made a great difference in the attitude of the islanders towards us and our work. It seemed a living link between us and them; we were outsiders no more, for was not baby "a real Tristan baby"? The people asked to be allowed to choose his name, and begged that it might be "Edward," after H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, the people of Tristan having a great admiration for the Prince. They were also very proud that baby was to have Tristan godparents.

The baptism of Baby Edward was quite an event for Tristan da Cunha. They were all immensely proud and pleased with the first English baby ever born on the island. He was a pretty little fellow with a crop of silky, golden curls and a lovely shell-like pink and white complexion. He was quite big for his age and had large brown eyes. Fair people are thought a lot of at Tristan, and those few islanders who are fortunate in having fair-haired children are very proud of them. Some of the darkest ones can hardly get anyone to marry them, so strong is the prejudice. Tuesday, October 24, 1922, was the day fixed for the public baptism, and luckily it turned out a nice fine day.

At daybreak all the available Union Jacks were hoisted on the various flag-poles, some five in number, and we could hear Tom Rogers and his nephew, Paddy Rogers, one of the Boy Scouts, at work trying to get a flag hoisted on the roof of the tiniest parsonage in the world. Everyone hastened to put on his best clothes, and no work was being done, as the people were determined to make the day a public holiday. The godfathers were especially well dressed, and looked fine but rather awkward and uncomfortable. They wore medals and ribbons and button-holes, and starched high collars reserved for rare and very great occasions. Edward's godmother was in white, with a string of beads and a hat instead of the usual handkerchief. The little island girls were looking very pretty in white frocks with big sashes and white stockings or socks, but the whole gave rather a fancy-dress ball impression, as one saw soldiers, sailors, dungaree suits, corduroys, a dress-coated gentleman, Boy Scouts, ladies in mid-Victorian frocks, and many ornamented with big rosettes of coloured ribbon or nosegays, hurrying hither and thither. The big girls had decorated the little church schoolroom with flowers. St. Mary's Church Room, as my husband called it, looked quite gay, and a good while before three o'clock service time the room was crowded by all who could possibly squeeze in to see the missionary baptize his own baby.

There was the usual hymn-singing, which is their joy at all services, and little Edward had six sponsors, two for England and four for Tristan. Four leading Tristan citizens were chosen to represent all the rest—Mrs. Frances Repetto, Tom Rogers, John Glass, and Fred Swain. John Glass has been parish clerk under more than one of the missionaries, and he and Peter Repetto are the heaviest men on the island.

After the baptism was satisfactorily over we invited "all hands" to come up to the Parsonage and drink to baby's health in tea, and more than a hundred came in and shook hands with us both. I had projected a baptismal cake for this party, but owing to a shortage of flour and raisins, and the difficulty of getting milk, it was so small that there was barely a taste for the sponsors and ourselves. Everyone else was promised a "piece of cake when the mail comes." We always expect to have sufficient after the next ship reaches the island, for Tristan is like *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*—"jam yesterday and jam to-morrow, but never jam to-day."

Those who could find anything made up gifts for baby, and soon he was in possession of half the coin of the realm on the island, viz. a half-crown, a shilling, and a threepenny bit; also several pairs of Tristan socks for the knitting of which the island is famous, some coloured "moral" pocket-handkerchiefs with pictures and words on them, which are much thought of, and also several of the hats, or rather bonnets, the children wear, called "cappies." There were besides a metal teaspoon and a gorgeously patterned teacup, all made over "jintly" (like Captain Cuttle's silver) to Master Edward and his mother.

Our most honoured guest was dear old Martha Green, whose greatest pride for evermore will be that she was able to preside at the arrival of Baby Edward in a very curious world. During the evening we entertained our visitors with tunes on the gramophone, at which concert one man remarked, "I could listen all night and never be tired," but as we are not so constituted, we were rather tired by 10.30, and dismissed our friends rather thankfully and went to bed.

During all the time we were at Tristan Edward had two "nannas," as he called his kind nurses himself. The first was Mrs. Tom Rogers, who took charge of him until he was about a year old, when she died, greatly to our sorrow, as she was a good friend to us from the day we landed. After her death, Mrs. Frances

Repetto, Edward's godmother, took care of him. Describing Edward and his first "nanna," an officer of H.M.S. *Dublin* wrote: "I soon discovered the missionary's bonnie baby, the fat, fair little man lay fast asleep in the arms of a big dark Tristan woman. They made a vivid contrast."

At Tristan, godparents are expected to do a great deal for their god-children, often minding them all day and making their clothes, besides giving them moral and religious instruction; in fact the post is no sinecure. Mrs. Frances Repetto is rather a remarkable character, exceedingly good, clean, and strict with her family, and one of the most truthful and honest persons on the island. We found her a sincere Christian, trying to lead a right life, and one of the best-educated women on Tristan, and she proved a very sympathetic friend.



EDWARD TRISTAN CHESELDEN ROGERS,
BORN ON THE ISLAND OF TRISTAN
DA CUNHA



'Quest' photo: G. H. Wilkins

MRS. REPETTO AND HER THREE SONS—WILLIAM PETER, JOSEPH
AND JOHN

"As Edward's godmother I am the right person to look after him, so be sure and bring him over to me," she said one day, and until our last day on Tristan she looked after him. She was, as I have said, a very strict disciplinarian, and at first Edward was a good deal afraid of her and screamed prodigiously. I have seen her take a stick to her two big sons—and Peter Repetto was one of the biggest men on the island—if they ventured to disobey her orders. Her sons were all fair, good-looking lads, and took after their Italian father, Andreo. The families of Italian descent, Repetto's and Lavarello's, are perhaps the best-looking and most intelligent people on the island. Edward was particularly fond of Mrs. Repetto's son, Joe Repetto, whom he called "Uncle Joe," and Joe was as truly devoted to Edward, and would carry him round all day and amuse him, and in fact was as good as a big brother to him.

CHAPTER VIII

CHRISTMAS ON TRISTAN DA CUNHA

WHEN we came out to Tristan we brought with us a collection of seeds from all parts kindly obtained for us by Sir David Prain, at that time director of Kew Gardens, with the idea of introducing new plants helpful to the island. William Rogers lent my husband a plot of ground out at the Patches to get them started, but though the soil was carefully prepared for sowing the result was a heavy disappointment, as practically nothing grew. Seeds often fail to germinate at Tristan, for either the seed is too old when it reaches the island or the climatic conditions are unsuitable. Efforts of this kind had been made before. The Rev. J. G. Barrow planted gorse and blackberry, but after twelve or fifteen years they are only small bushes, and have not spread at all. A few gum-trees were introduced, but they are small and gnarled, and have made little growth, as the winds destroy them. Willow-trees and apple-trees, however, will grow, and many more could be planted profitably.

There are many flower-seeds that will grow, but the people are not much inclined to cultivate flower-gardens. The best flower-garden on the island is that round the house of Arthur Rogers. He takes great pains over it, and it is sheltered by a wall, and as it is nearly the last house in the Settlement, and not much troubled by animals or children, it does pretty well. Mrs. Arthur Rogers generally supplied flowers for the church altar vases, and had quite a variety, including stocks, geraniums, wallflowers, sweet-williams, hollyhocks, sweet-peas, and garden daisies.

My husband was fond of gardening, and as we had a fair-sized garden in front of the Parsonage given by Tom Rogers, he set to with some vigour to get it into good order. He laid it out in beds and paths, and paved the paths with flat stones and planted flax for shelter. He sowed part with vegetable-seeds and part with flower-seeds. A good variety grew, and soon it was gay with marigolds, sunflowers, poppies, and some beautiful South African flowers the seeds of which were given by the Archbishop of Cape Town from his own beautiful garden at Bishop's Court, Claremont. We had carrots, onions, leeks, lettuce, radishes, beetroot, vegetable-marrow, and pumpkins. Tomatoes and cucumbers would not grow, and kidney-beans and peas were killed by the wind. White flies destroyed the cabbages, but the other things were doing well.

My husband, however, at last gave the gardening up. As he said, there were so many enemies to contend with it was almost a hopeless job, for pigs, dogs, children, donkeys, chicken, and even cows all invaded the garden and did immense havoc. I fear the children were hungry, and the sight of growing vegetables was a temptation too great to be resisted. Anyhow, our leeks, onions, and carrots disappeared rapidly.

All dodges to protect our crops failed: stone walls, tin covers, wire-netting were of no use. But of course the climate alone would depress the most enthusiastic gardener. A flourishing garden to-night may be a desolate ruin by to-morrow at daylight from wind and rain. No wonder the islanders in general say, "They have no time or ground to spare for gardening; the potatoes need all their care and labour." Most of the garden space is directed to growing flax and tussock, plants required for thatching sheds and houses and therefore valuable and necessary. It takes a thousand bundles of tussock to thatch one roof, and they have to be thatched at regular intervals, and often repaired in the meantime.

A few like Old Sam Swain, Henry Green, Bob Green, and some others do try and grow vegetables if they can get the seeds, but mails are so seldom they cannot even do what they would. Those who had vegetables were delighted to send up a few every now and then to the Parsonage, and were pleased to be told that "people at home in England cannot grow better vegetables." Root and bulb crops seem to grow very well at Tristan.

Old Sam Swain is the island patriarch, a notable figure with his dark face and long beard. He is the oldest man, all the rest of his contemporaries having been in the boat that was lost in the great disaster when sixteen men were drowned. Old Mrs. Sam Swain is very deaf, poor soul. There is another Sam Swain on the island who, by the way of distinction, is spoken of as "little Sam Swain," "little" at Tristan meaning "junior."

On November 2, 1922, there was a great excitement. Before we had breakfast I was in the kitchen making some coffee for my husband and two of the men who were working at the new church building, and I had taken the cups in my hands through the garden and over the brook and was returning to bath the baby, when there was a cry of "Sail Ho! Ships from the east'ard!" Some women rushed out of the houses with their hair down and no handkerchiefs on their heads, and a tribe of half-dressed children just tumbled out of their beds, all screaming at the top of their voices, "Ship! Ship!" Men ran from house to house in frantic haste to get oars and boat-sails preparatory to pulling out the small boats. Boys came climbing over every wall till almost the whole island was gathered outside our house shouting with joy and excitement, "Three ships from the east! It will be the mails at last!" Some women whose husbands had already gone out to the Patches or across Big Beach lit fires as signals or sent boys on donkeys to call them back. Soon two men were seen rushing along towards the Settlement, hot and dirty, but crying out, "Boys, get the boats down sharp and hurry up with your trade stuff."

By this time it was clear that our visitors were three small whaling steamers apparently bound from Cape Town to South Georgia, but evidently they were intending to call in at Tristan en route, for they were heading in towards the Bay. My husband put off in one of the three biggest boats, all of which were launched speedily, and with a glass we could read the names on the little steamers: *Truls*, *Barroby*, and *Southern Cross*. They had each some small cases of stores on board, but told us that one more little steamer, the *Storm Vogel*, was coming along with the mails and some further stores. In about an hour the *Storm Vogel* was also at anchor in the Bay. Old Martha Green said to me: "Ma'am, this will be a happy Christmas, like old times, with four ships at Tristan at once." My husband and his boat's crew rowed round, boarding each ship in turn for a talk with the captain. One of the steamers took our mail on board, promising to post it at South Georgia.

At three o'clock my husband came ashore again, rather tired, but full of news. "The church harmonium has arrived at last, and some much-needed stores for us and lots of letters," were his first words. Mrs. Fred Swain and Mrs. Charles Green came up to the Parsonage to bring us some bread that their men had got by trading. Bread is much esteemed at Tristan, and is usually spoken of as "cake." When they say bread they mean ship's biscuit. At first I did not want to take any of their bread, but, being pressed, did not like to hurt their feelings by refusal, so I gave a small present of flour and sugar of our own in exchange. We both sat up till midnight reading our home letters and talking over the home news. The whale ships had been gone several hours, but we were too excited to

sleep. We knelt down before going to rest and said prayers of special thanksgiving to God for all His goodness, especially for the coming of these ships.

There were many parcels and stores of letters, with kind messages of encouragement and sympathy for us in our lonely life. The next day we were kept busy distributing gifts and mails to the people.

The islanders were delighted to listen to the letter from Princess Mary thanking them all for their good wishes to herself and Viscount Lascelles on the occasion of her marriage. Two other letters told us that an effort was on foot to send a schooner down to Tristan to bring stores and mails and offer a passage to any young man who would like to visit South Africa, also that the *British Trade*, the proposed Exhibition ship, would call at Tristan on her itinerary. For many weeks the islanders talked over and prepared for these wonderful happenings, but, alas! they were doomed to disappointment. No *British Trade* and no schooner ever reached us at Tristan, and at length we gave them up, but one of the big boats that belonged to Bob Glass was named *British Trade* in remembrance of the ship which never came. The boats all have their names; there is the *Canton*, the *Quest*, the *Rammer*, the *Long Boat*, the *Morning Star*, the *G.P.O.*, the *Dublin*, and so on.

Christmas is always a great time with the people of Tristan da Cunha, and some weeks before the real holiday time active preparations for the festival are begun. December being a hot month and close on midsummer, everybody wants to be in white, and the women and children wish for the prettiest dresses possible. The mothers are soon busy making new underclothes for the little ones, and there is a great demand for coloured ribbons and lace, without which no petticoat or frock is thought to have any style. Men and boys are equally anxious to appear in new white shirts and trousers, and also curtains have to be washed and starched and put away carefully until Christmas Eve. The starch is cleverly made from potatoes grated fine, and the same useful vegetable will have to serve for the foundations of the Christmas dinner, being used as stuffing for the meat, also fried, roasted or boiled, and serving yet again for the pudding. Potato pudding is undoubtedly the Tristan dish, above all. It is made from a mixture of raw and boiled potatoes cooked several hours, and it is very solid. We called it "footballs," from its appearance. It is eaten with fat or jam, if obtainable.

Old sheets and nightdresses, articles dispensed with except on great occasions and carefully stored away in the family sea-chest with the best clothes (and without one of these chests no Tristan house is considered properly furnished), are bleached by being laid on the grassy common for several days in the sun. Stones have to be placed on the corners to keep the articles from blowing away, for there is almost always a strong wind. Tristan is the home of all the winds that blow.

This year old coats carefully hoarded were brought out, and, after being pressed neatly with a hot iron to remove creases, a pair of trousers to go with them had to be sought for, and there was much consultation as to getting a new suit, or at any rate a new pair of trousers, from somewhere when it was discovered Jack or Tom had quite outgrown his old ones. Many visitors came shyly to the Parsonage to beg for tape to trim the sailor jackets which are the favourite garb for the younger boys, or lace for the little girls' frocks or big girls' blouses. Soap was also much in request, and our little store of blue was soon exhausted. One anxious mother appeared with a half-finished shirt, and asked me for materials to make a sleeve; and another woman said that "she could knit

a shirt if I would give her a piece of calico for the collar and cuffs." A fine variety in men's collars and neckties is soon to be seen on stones and walls. The men seldom wear collars except on Sundays, birthdays, and great festivals, like Christmas and Easter, or at weddings.

Little bits of sugar and tea are also most carefully put away in the house loft or stored in some secret "cubby" hole for Christmas, and perhaps a little flour or a pot of jam will be brought out from the same secret hiding-place, where the housewife conceals it so long from the hungry family. I would often make little presents of such commodities to some aged widow or pretty baby, or to someone who had done me a special good turn, and the things would be put by for the Christmas dinner. The housewives save up their eggs, and make little cups or jars of butter for the holiday week, and for two or three mornings before Christmas the men and boys can be seen riding off early upon donkeys, or driving the patient bullocks in carts, out to the Patches to fetch the sacks of Christmas potatoes. They will have to go some eight miles out to the Bluff to drive up the sheep and pick the fattest in the flock for the Christmas dinner. There is much friendly chaff and laughter over choosing the Christmas sheep, for each one is anxious to get a finer beast than his neighbour, and will display it to his friends as it hangs up in his hut and expatiate on its merits. A few families owning more stock will kill off a couple, and those are thought lucky who have a sucking-pig to vary the menu, as this is thought a rare delicacy.

On Christmas Eve all will have to be up long before daylight, for the whole house must be scrubbed, floors, windows, paint, pictures, chairs or benches, and tables all rubbed down. The walls and ceiling will have been repasted over with fresh pictures or advertisements, cut out for the purpose from newspapers and magazines. My husband used to say that "when on a visit he enjoyed studying the walls, as it reminded him of a bill-posters' hoarding in England."

The Christmas decoration of the houses include big nosegays of flowers, chiefly pink roses and white dog daisies, with much greenstuff, set about in vases, or indeed any sort of jars, for vases are scarce.

The children were all given a fortnight's holiday for Christmas, about a week before and a week after, but we had some extra choir practices, for though the children learned the carols in school, the choir and congregation had to be taught the words as well as the tunes, for so few can read. They all loved the carols, and we often heard the lads singing the "First Noel" or "Good King Wenceslas" on their way to work. The church was always decorated elaborately for Christmas by the choir girls and myself. My husband and endless Boy Scouts and school children ran round to every house begging flowers and greenery, and the girls made them into garlands and wreaths to be hung up. Altar, reading-desk, font, pulpit, and windows were all bedecked gaily with blossom and greenery. The girls seemed very proud of their efforts, and resolved to come to church early in their Christmas finery of white frocks and beads, sure of admiration from all beholders. Relations often club together for the Christmas dinner party, as there is rather a marked shortage of tablecloths and kitchen utensils, as well as glass and china. The lucky possessors of large tins or pots boil several big potato puddings, their own and those of their less fortunate friends. I gave away all my big tins for cooking pots.

During the afternoon and evening of Christmas Eve every woman and girl used to be engaged in peeling potatoes and getting the stuffed mutton ready for cooking. Christmas Day would start at one in the morning, the women getting up early to put on dinner. They would all come to early Celebration in church at

eight o'clock. The men and boys would get up early also, as they often sleep in the kitchen and are awakened by the bustle. The potatoes have to be grated with a tin pierced with holes and then strained through a cloth and mixed with mashed potatoes and boiled, and the result is a very indigestible pudding.

Just before Christmas many of the girls and boys walk over to Seal Bay or the children go to Plantations to pick cranberries to make pudding or pie. Berry pudding, as it is called, is quite a traditional Christmas dish, but without "sweetening," as they call sugar, it is very sour. It is eaten with milk or cream. The mutton or little pig having been stuffed with mashed potatoes, pepper and onions and parsley, the "berry" pudding and potato pudding made, and the difficulty of pudding cloths and cooking tins solved, the housewife has to see if her menfolk have provided an adequate supply of firewood. They usually have plenty fetched from the other side of the island and ready stacked and chopped in the potato hut next the house.

An oven is specially erected, made of flat sheets of tin and big stones, and a fire is lit inside and removed like the old ovens in the country in England. When the cooking is well under way everyone has a special wash and puts on the very best clothes they have, and proceeds to morning church, save a cook or two left in charge, and they will return to dinner ready for serving. After dinner the little ones are sent to Sunday School. The girls have new moccasins and white stockings, long white knickers coming well below their frocks, white petticoats with lace and tucks under their best dress, which will be threaded with ribbon through the neck and sleeves, the front having as much lace and insertion as it is possible to get in, and over this a fully laced pinafore, with a wide bright blue or red sash, the hair being combed and covered with a new Tristan "cappie," or sun-bonnet, which has a knot of coloured ribbon on top. A handkerchief and nosegay and beads and bow-tie added make a fine little girl indeed. Small boys will wear striped socks, new moccasins, white three-quarter trousers and sailor jumpers with a broad collar, trimmed with buttons and white tape, a red tie, and a handkerchief and nosegay, and a home-made cap of any colour. Very likely a medal, toy watch, or badge will be added. They do not join their sisters, but stand about in groups till something happens, church, dinner, or a dance. At church boys sit on one side and girls on the other, and women and men usually sit apart.

If a ship had visited the island recently the Christmas menu would be much grander, cakes and real plum pudding and jam tarts. Supper would be almost like dinner all over again: meat, puddings, pies, and cakes, with tea and coffee. When there is no ship and no tea, they drink milk and water. They often eat to excess at Christmas, and we were amused at a yarn about one man who ate so much that he had to be rolled over and over to cure him, and another who had to be helped to bed by his relations to sleep off his gorge. The majority of the people go to see the children dance in the afternoon when church is over and dinner cleared away.

A number of the men are able to play on the accordion, but Tom Rogers is the best player, while Andrew Swain plays the violin and Bill Rogers the banjo. The prettiest dancing is by the children. Every little girl has on her prettiest frock and ribbons and beads, and is ready to perform, but the boys are rather shy and will only dance a few sets with the girls. We always went to watch the children dancing, and it was amusing to see how their different characters came out.

The dances for grown-ups were generally given in Charles Green's house or at Mr. Hagan's or the big schoolroom, and it was Bob Glass who conceived the

bright idea of decorating the rooms for the occasion, and pressed the island flags into the service. The flags were draped gracefully over the walls, and the big couch reserved for us at the head of the room in the place of honour. The rest of the folk sat round on forms, or rather the women and children did so, for the men and boys, by Tristan etiquette, all stand apart at the far end of the room, except a few of the elders and the members of the orchestra. Tom Rogers, his brother Bill, and Andrew Swain, are the inevitable performers, and play the favourite airs until the small hours of morning. Very often the only refreshment served is cold water, but when we had our stores we usually provided some tea. One or two women and girls were specially deputed to boil the tea, and cups were handed round to all the grown-ups, the first being given to us and the next to the oldest people present.

As the rooms are too small for so many and they get very hot and there is much dust, it makes them rather a trial to visitors. The method of conducting the evening is quite amusing. The ball opens by each married man dancing the first dance with his wife. After that there is a change of partners. The men advance to where the girls are seated and each stands in silence with arm crooked before the lady of his choice, who at first shyly averts her head, but at length rises majestically and takes the proffered arm and is led to her place in the dance ready to begin. Waltzes are the favourite dance, and next a sort of barn dance, a step-dance, also what is called a schottische. The step-dance goes on noisily till everyone is tired, each stepping as fast as she or he can move the feet. A few fancy dances with local names are danced, such as "Tapioca's Big Toe," the "Heel and Toe," the "Donkey Dance" and the "Handkerchief Dance," or some Scottish dances. The regulation costume is white for women and white trousers for men. All who can, beg or borrow boots and shoes for the dance party, moccasins are not the thing. The man holds a handkerchief over his hand instead of gloves so as not to soil the white frock, and often dances in his shirt-sleeves. Coats are discarded as too hot.

It was amusing how the younger generation went to work to get a room to dance in. Three or four little girls and some shy boys would approach my husband, while the whole school stood afar off to watch results and beg him to try and get Charles Green's room, or some other place, for them. The deputation usually consisted of Margaret Lavarello, May Glass, Alice Swain, Hilda Green and Elsie Swain, with Godfrey Glass, Victor and Paddy Rogers, and Norman Swain. "Please, sir, will you come and watch us dance, and we could get Charles Green's room, and Andrew Swain would play for us if you would ask him and give him a packet of cigarettes or a pipe of tobacco." No one could have resisted such arguments. The elder girls, my choir girls, were much more shy, and took a long while to pluck up courage to approach me. I must be persuaded to beard the dragon, this time Andrew Hagan, in his den. Mr. Hagan is the smallest man on the island, quite a kindly person in reality, and he and his wife were always most obliging to us. "He'd never refuse you, marm," volunteered Lizzie Rogers, who was not so shy as Violet Glass and some of the other girls, as she always worked for me in the Parsonage. "But why not go and ask him yourselves?" I reply. "He says we only break his floors and keep him awake," is the answer; so we said, "What if we fetch the Missus to you?" He talks very slowly, "If the Missus comes I shan't say no to her. I wouldn't be so insulting as to refuse anything she asked me after she come so far as out here, but you'll get the room no more after she's gone back." Encouraged by these words, and being escorted as far as the end of his house, I am left to persuade the old man. I find him only too willing to lend

me the room at any time, and, thanking him, I depart to be told by my anxious dancers that "I am the best Missus in the world, and they were real scared what he would say."

We were always invited out to dine on Christmas Day and during the Christmas week by leading islanders. At Tristan if you go to dinner you always return later to have supper, and some prepared breakfast for us also. The menu of the feasts does not vary much, being usually roast or fried meat, fried eggs, potatoes boiled and roast, and potato pudding. A long list of visitors marks the day, as all call in some time to pay their respects to the Missionary and his family, and to exchange the compliments of the season and bring presents. I always thought these presents were given to show their gratitude for my Christmas gifts to each family. I gave 1 lb. of tea and 1 lb. of sugar on Christmas Eve to each household. Edward's godparents and our five godchildren were all given a cake of scented soap in addition, and the four old widows a special parcel to themselves. Christmas and New Year are kept up very much together, the festivities intermingling, but the New Year's Mumming Play deserves a special description.

Tristan da Cunha is the home of old-world songs and customs and styles of dress. Many of the dances are like the dances of old and merry England, and perhaps the Mumming Play is a survival too. For a few days before New Year's Eve the boys and men may be seen conspiring mysteriously with much laughter and chatter in corners, and dark hints are thrown out of great things in store. Every man and boy is hard at it hatching up quaint costumes and disguises in concert with his particular friends and cronies, the aim being to conceal the identity so well that the public will not be able to guess who's who on the night itself. There are torchlight and moonlight processions from house to house of all the mummers to the accompaniment of drum, fiddle, concertina, and banjo. The drum is very noteworthy, making a terrific din under a rain of thwacks. At each house a halt is made and a grand demonstration of dancing and capering about of queer-looking characters in weird dresses takes place. Shrieks and wails and whistles fill the air, and then, after the band has played for a bit, the householder invites all the performers inside and refreshments are handed round and some sort of drinks. In prosperous years we gave them tea and cakes, but last year only tea, as our flour was all exhausted. The other island houses had potato puddings or potato cakes ready. Open house is kept on New Year's Eve all over the Settlement, for there is much running to and fro of cooks and performers, and the mumming goes on all night, as it takes quite a long time to get round to every house, but any island housewife would feel deeply hurt if her hospitality was not claimed.

My husband quite won the hearts of the men and boys by joining in the play one year. He and two of the young men, Jack Rogers and Joe Repetto, arranged to go along together, being nearly the same height and build, and so disguised that it was hoped no one could detect which was which. They called themselves "the three noble brothers," having dyed their faces and arranged humps on their backs, put on strange and weird suits, and obtained awful pipes; they were scarcely recognizable, and were held to have scored distinctly when one woman got so confused over identities that she handed her cup of tea to Jack with a polite speech, "Really, sir, you are so nicely dressed up I wouldn't have known you for the Minister!" She was overwhelmed at the delighted roars of laughter, but soon recovered her spirits sufficiently to join in the laugh against herself, and good-naturedly brought out fresh tea and cakes.

The mummers usually come early to the Parsonage so as not to keep us up late, but they stayed long enough to go through the entire programme of songs and dances. All the older men were invited indoors, and there was quite a lot of nice speechifying to thank us. The Boy Scouts were out in full force as usual, and a good many lads had come with blackened faces and looked very droll under straw hats decorated with wreaths of flowers. Most of the younger married men had shaved off their moustaches, which are generally worn, and looked strange and unfamiliar. Others had added black spectacles and long skirts and women's headgear, looking like the famous " Charley's Aunt," and the irreverent Scouts immediately dubbed these " Aunt Sarah," after a local lady of uncertain age and temper. As a rule my husband and I merely accompanied the players to a few of the principal houses and had light refreshments, listened to a few songs and returned home, but the noise of the jubilations is so considerable that one does not get much sleep that night. Ted, our dog, went with us to a few houses, but seemed to grow rather discontented with the noisy performance, and, returning home, turned in under our window as usual.

[Chapter 9](#)

CHAPTER IX

THE VISIT OF H.M.S. *DUBLIN*

AT Tristan da Cunha time seems to be reckoned by the visits of ships rather than by dates, so people would say to us "such and such happened after the first man-of-war (i.e. the *Yarmouth*) or that happened after the second man-of-war (the *Dartmouth*), and we ourselves reckoned from the *Quest* and from the visit of H.M.S. *Dublin*. It is very likely now they are counting from the visit of the *Ramon de Larrinaga* and our departure from the island. There is also a strong idea among the people that visits from ships are most likely at Easter and Christmas, and as it was a good many months since there had been a mail, at the end of March 1923 we were all eagerly scanning the horizon day by day anxiously looking over the endless expanse of empty waters for the thin trail of smoke in the distance which betokens a ship coming to the island. Rather curiously I always seemed to feel that a ship was near before one was sighted, and I warned my husband "not to go far from the Settlement as I was sure that a ship was close at hand which would bring us our much-needed stores and our mails." I also spoke to Mrs. Repetto and some other of the women, describing what a bishop was like as none of them had ever seen one. I told them what he would do when he arrived, and that he would come on the next boat. I said to my husband: "It is a good thing that you have been holding confirmation classes and begun to build the church as I am sure the Bishop is coming." He was a bit sceptical of my prophecies at first, but he said: "I remember you foretold a ship before," and he kept near the Settlement in his walks.



H.M.S. "*DUBLIN*" PREPARING TO LAND STORES



ANOTHER TRISTAN COTTAGE

The morning of March 26, 1923, was clear and fine, though we had just had some bad days. The sea, too, was calm. My husband was taking school alone; I often took the infants for the first lessons and then returned to the Parsonage to prepare our dinner, and had my special class for girls in the afternoon. We always let the school children out for a short recess in the middle of morning school, generally about fifteen minutes, and to-day I heard the bell ring for second school and they all marched in as usual. But hardly had they got in their places when there was a loud shout of "Sail Ho!" and out they rushed.

My husband never would use a cane in school as he always seemed able to maintain good order without, but this time he said: "All my scholars jumped up, threw down their books on the tables and were out of the door and down the steps pell-mell, shouting as they ran, before I realized what was the matter. There was nothing to do but follow them, so out I ran after the rest, and from the Parsonage garden I could see a thick trail of smoke coming from the eastward."

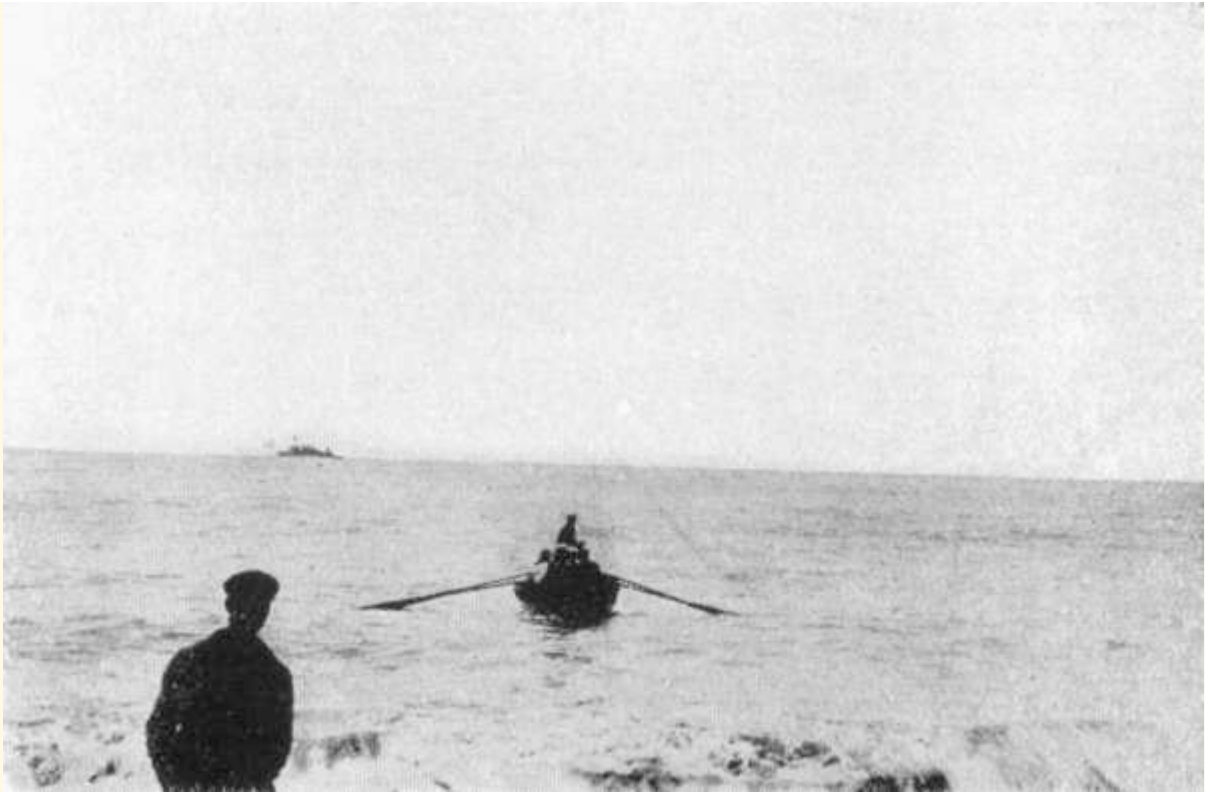
The people were all gathered outside our house as usual, and several said: "It is a big ship; it must be a mail steamer, as it is coming from the eastward. Perhaps it is a man-of-war." After a time the approaching vessel was seen to be a man-of-war for certain, and preparations to receive her began apace. The vessel proved to be the light-cruiser H.M.S. *Dublin*.[\[1\]](#)

I had cooked our dinner, but we were too excited to eat much, and the islanders were too busy to stop for a meal. Boys were sent out riding post-haste on donkeys to the Patches to fetch home the men out that way, and more boys were despatched to blow whistles to call down the men cutting green wood up at the Ponds. Two women took their sons' best clothes and milk tea (i.e. milk and water) down to Big Beach, where they changed all their clothes and just rushed into the boats at the last minute. Four big boats put out to meet the warship. My husband was in Tom Rogers's boat, with our mail bag slung across his shoulders, for which we had scribbled a hasty postscript to our home letters, as the mail is always the first consideration when you see a ship at Tristan, because you never know how long or short her visit may be, on account of the weather being so

uncertain. My husband's boat was the last to reach the ship, but the Commander of the *Dublin* would not allow anyone up before he arrived. The Captain then allowed two or three of the older men up, and said that "he would have no trading until all the stores and mails were landed, and the island boats must assist as his boats could not go through the surf on to a stony beach." When my husband got on board he learnt that Bishop Holbech, the Bishop of St. Helena, had come, and he was introduced to him, as, though he is our Bishop, his diocese consisting of the islands of Tristan, Ascension, and St. Helena, we had not met him before. Mr. Lawrence Green, Jnr., of the *Cape Argus*, and Mr. Sara, of the South African Film Company, also were amongst the visitors, and Mr. Andrew Kemm, who had married a Tristan girl, and Mr. Hagan, a former resident, both of whom now reside in Cape Town and hold good positions there, and who had obtained a passage in order to visit their relations.

Captain Shipway, the Commander of the *Dublin*, invited my husband to his cabin, and there handed him the copies of *The Prince of Wales' Tour in the East*, specially sent out by H.M. the Queen, one copy for my husband and the other for the island, and also some special Government letters from the Colonial Office and the Governor-General of South Africa. After a while my husband, the Bishop, and Messrs. Green, Sara, Kemm, and Hagan came ashore, also the Doctor and Chaplain of the *Dublin*. Our visitors all spent the night on shore, the Bishop and the Rev. Mr. Kent, the Chaplain, staying with us at the Parsonage.

The islanders, assisted by a number of sailors from the warship, set to work very energetically to land the stores. I think there were about twenty-five tons in all, including a great variety of useful things, and the mails for the island. They found they could land goods at about the rate of four tons in an hour. Everything had to be transferred from the ship's boats to island boats in the sea. The ship's boats came in as far as the surf-line and then they transferred into island boats, which did the actual landing work, being used to the landing and more easily handled. All the goods were landed on Little Beach. At first the Tristanites were very eager, and the women and children joined very actively in the work of hauling up the boats and unloading stores, but later on they seemed to get tired.



THE MAIL BEING BROUGHT ASHORE FROM H.M.S. "DUBLIN"



THE LANDING OF THE STORES FROM H.M.S. "DUBLIN" AT BIG BEACH

Landing operations, however, had to be continued all night, as there were indications of a change in the weather, and the warship put on her searchlights and landed more sailors to help on the beach. The whole cliff road and beach were lit up brightly by the glare of the big searchlights. It was a busy scene, with bullock teams and parties of men and boys going up and down all night.

I was down on the beach early in the afternoon watching my husband and the Bishop come ashore, and after a little conversation I returned to the Settlement in company with our visitors. Many snapshots were taken of us all,

and Baby Edward and I figured in a lot of them.

I went round the houses with the two doctors, Surgeon-Commander Rickard and the Doctor of the *Dublin*, to visit any sick. The Surgeon-Commander had been sent by the Union Government to furnish a report on the conditions of life of the people, which would be of use in determining their future, and he remarked to me, "The people here are of good physique and quite average intelligence," and he only considered one case of sickness to need serious treatment. He also said: "It is no wonder the people suffer a lot from indigestion, as the food is so poor." He noticed what good teeth they had. Dental caries is almost unknown. My husband had a set of dental instruments given to him at Cape Town, but, as he said, "Luckily I had no applicants for extractions; it would probably have been painful for both parties." We also had some toothache mixture among our medical stores, stuff redolent strongly of cloves, and when this was discovered by accident some of the people asked for doses, but my husband found out they were using it not for toothache, but for scent at dance parties, and he would give no more, but recommended hot poultices to the face.

We were fearfully busy during the visit of the *Dublin*, and I wonder now how we managed to get through at all, as we had to attend to the Bishop and church services, to the ship's officers, our own housework and Baby Edward, the landing of all our stores and mails, and to supervise their removal from the beach or many would have been lost, for questions of "meum and tuum" on such occasions are apt to lead to confusion.

That afternoon the wind changed and the sea got very choppy, and there was a recall gun fired for all on shore to come aboard at once, so there was a hurried and rather exciting departure from Big Beach Corner, and the Bishop and our other visitors were well tossed up and splashed until they got safely alongside. They had also to face a rather difficult climb up a rope-ladder over the high side of the cruiser, quite a piece of gymnastics at any time, let alone in a high wind. But the *Dublin* did not sail after all until the next day, when the weather had again begun to moderate, and so we were able to send answers to a few of our most important letters.

While he was on shore the Bishop had several long conversations with my husband on the subject of his work. He went to view the foundations of the new Church of St. Mary's, and made some suggestions as to architectural arrangements, and told my husband that he would have to hold his own service of dedication, as the building was not sufficiently advanced to be consecrated. The Bishop held a Confirmation Service at 8.30 on the first night and an early Celebration of the Holy Communion the second day at seven o'clock, and there was a second Confirmation at 9.30.

There were about sixty persons at Holy Communion, and in all seventy-three were confirmed. My husband assisted the Bishop at all the services.

For the late evening service the Bishop brought some ship's candles and Confirmation veils, and he chose four hymns. I placed the benches for altar rails, and as soon as John Glass rang the bell the room was crowded. We hung two lanterns to the ceiling to get better light, and I had a candle on the harmonium, which I had great difficulty in balancing as people kept knocking against me—we were all so crowded. Everyone stood up for my husband, but they had to be told to "stand up" when the Bishop came out of the tiny vestry. I think they were frightened, or thought that, as he was a strange person in a strange service, they would make mistakes. The Bishop himself told everyone what to do. They sang the hymns very well. We said the Litany as a preparation to the

Confirmation Service. The Bishop spoke very nicely to them, but I do not think some of them understood; they take so long getting used to one's voice.

I had to put the veils on the women's heads, six being confirmed in a row. They needed a little steering, for the room was so small and crowded. The Bishop complimented me afterwards on how well the arrangements all went off at the service.



THE BISHOP OF ST. HELENA AND CAPTAIN SHIPWAY ASHORE



The stores had by now been mostly brought up and placed in the houses of Charles Green, Little Sam Swain, or Bill Rogers to wait distribution, and the rest of Tuesday morning was spent over this. A sack was brought forward, a man cut the string, and I, or my husband, called the names. My husband sent a letter by the *Dublin* to thank H.M. Queen Mary for her kind thought for far-off Tristan and its people, and others to the Bishop and the Captain to mark his gratitude for what they had done for the islanders. And to Mr. Gane he wrote, summing up the situation in these hurried sentences, which are eloquent proof of the strain and excitement of the occasion: " Visit of Dublin most happy. Relief stores have saved situation. People immensely grateful. Convey through Press our thanks to generous donors of stores. Please thank Admiralty from islanders and myself. H.M. Queen kindly sent to us and island a copy of Prince's Travel Book with inscription. Personal kindly touch gave rare pleasure. *Dublin* captain and officers and crew most kind to us—much appreciated here. Bishop of St. Helena here. Held confirmations—historical event. A full mail, such a blessing!"

We did not soon forget the Bishop's stay at our house. His lordship slept in our only bedroom and the Rev. Mr. Kent in the parlour. We ourselves slept in the kitchen, on a bed composed of a substratum of tin boxes, and baby woke up and howled once or twice during the night, for it was far from comfortable. We were, of course, only too glad to have the visit. We gave the Bishop porridge, mutton, potatoes and tea, and begged some bread and jam, but I do not think there was any butter. I am afraid he did not care for a Tristan menu, but preferred the *Dublin's* cook to the islanders'.

The visit of the *Dublin* really saved the situation at Tristan for the time being, for stores had run terribly short, both in food and clothes, and we were very near semi-starvation when the warship arrived.

We were all vastly pleased to read that H.M. the Queen had personally sent £5 to buy flour for Tristan when Mr. Gane's appeal appeared in *The Times*. The visit also made possible the completion of the church, for amongst the stores sent were liberal supplies of timber, roofing, window glass, ironmongery, and tools.

On Easter Sunday, the first Sunday after the *Dublin* had left, we had a special Thanksgiving Service "for the Bishop's visit and its spiritual opportunities, and for the relief so needed after the failure of the potato harvest."

The church was decorated with such flowers as we could get, and Holy Communion was the chief service of the day.

After the departure of H.M.S. *Dublin* there was quite an epidemic of very bad colds all through the island, and many of the people were very unwell for some days, but it did not amount to influenza. It is, however, very curious that this is always the case when a ship from outside stays at the island.

A large number of gifts came for us and the people by the *Dublin*, and it took us quite a long time writing to thank each donor personally. Fortunately, the means to despatch our letters soon came, for a small whaling steamer, the *Herkules*, bound from South Georgia to Durban, appeared on May 19th, the anniversary of the *Quest's* visit, and my husband and a boat's crew of men and big lads put a boat out and boarded it with the mails. It so happened that most of the men and the larger boats had gone across a few days before to Inaccessible Island, but a "scratch" crew was soon got together, and they had the boat shoved down the steep path to Little Beach and launched in a very few minutes. The

"scratch" crew was a wonderful combination, being made up of my husband, three "old crocks," and some Boy Scouts, but they did very well in their trading with the ship, and were given a nice present for me by the kindly Norwegian captain, consisting of sugar, pickles, scented soap, biscuits for Baby Edward, and cigarettes for my husband. The islanders traded with sheep and a calf, and got various stores in exchange, including some paint for their boats. The whaler also took on board a supply of fresh water, for Tristan water is very good. The captain of the *Herkules* came ashore with his chief mate, and looked round the Settlement, visiting the Church Room and the Parsonage. He seemed pleased to see how we all lived. After we left the island, by a curious coincidence my husband met Mr. Laasen, manager of the Union Whaling and Fishing Company at Durban, to which firm the whaler belonged, and endeavoured to interest him in an effort to try and develop an industry in whaling and cray-fishing at Tristan. This particular firm have, I believe, done a lot to develop the whaling industry from Durban; but they seemed doubtful if much could be done to help Tristan, there are so many difficulties in the way.

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1. The visit of the *Dublin* took place as the answer to an appeal to Mr. Amery, then First Lord of the Admiralty, made by Mr. Gane, who had collected a large quantity of stores for the island but could find no means of shipment. See Tristan da Cunha Fund Report, 1921-25.
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[Chapter 10](#)

CHAPTER X

BUILDING A CHURCH

PEOPLE in England have often said to me that they thought Tristan men must be an idle lot, but we always replied: "No, indeed, they have to work hard enough in order to be able to live at all." "What do they do, then?" is often asked. "Well, they like to be considered farmers." This was the description or occupation they liked my husband to put down in his registers. They nearly all run a few head of sheep or cattle, a few geese and chickens, and a pair of drawing bullocks. Those who have none are spoken of a bit contemptuously as "poor," but two men—Henry Green, who has the best cows, and Gaetano Lavarello, who has the most sheep—may be considered as fairly well-to-do Tristanites. Their position may be owing to luck or better management of their flocks.

Every season has its special work, and much is required in connection with the potato patches, of which there are some three hundred, of different sizes and shapes, all walled round with stone to keep out animals. The soil is poor, though deep in places, but as there is no rotation of crops, or fallow, and a very trying climate, one cannot wonder at the failures. The ground is manured largely with kelp and a mixture of sheep and cow manure. Work on a potato patch entails the processes of spading, harrowing, weeding, sowing, ridging and harvesting, besides the manuring. The Patches are a stiff walk of two or three miles from the Settlement, over a very rough road, ill-kept, more a track than a road, and the kelp has to be fetched in small loads in the bullock wagons from Little Beach or Runaway Beach and carted right out to the Patches. To get the sheep manure, the sheep are driven in each night and penned up on a mixture of grass and moss, and other manure is collected in a very painstaking fashion chiefly by the bigger boys.

The men go fishing when the weather permits, but on many days at all seasons of the year fishing is not possible, and in the winter for two or three months quite out of the question. The fish are coarse and oily, and not very healthy as food. Often they will not bite, and I have seen the little children waiting hungry all day "until daddy came home with the fish." The fish had then to be cleaned and scaled, a dirty and laborious process, and very often the meal was just plain boiled fish with no vegetable. They liked it fried better, but often fat was so scarce that to fry was not possible. I think, anyhow, fish was considered "poor eating," and sea-birds, or even the eggs of sea-birds, were thought nicer. Meat is, of course, a luxury at Tristan, and only partaken of now and then. We thought it was the bad food and poor milk that gave so many worms. The meat is often eaten from very poor animals, and fish and birds are eaten when scarcely fit for consumption. They do not keep good long in the climate, but the people are loath to throw them away when they begin to go off.

A great deal of time is given by the men and boys to hunting for sea-birds and their eggs for food. Bob Glass used to collect the figures and give them to my husband. Penguin eggs are hunted for and used in immense quantities in September and October. 25,200 eggs were said to be used in one year, and 7,400 eggs have been collected in one day by boats at Stony Beach, Trypot, Seal Bay, and Sandy Point rookeries. Black eaglets are got in June and July, and we found these good eating, but molly mawks, which are hunted from January to March, were very strong and unpleasant. 2,139 mollies were taken in one January and 4,800 in March. From these figures it is evident that the people would be starved

if they had not sea-birds and their eggs to fall back upon as articles of diet. The people eat every conceivable kind of sea-bird except penguins and sea-hens, but petrels, molly mawks, and black eaglets are most liked. Night birds are getting scarce, and albatross have left the island entirely. All varieties of eggs are eaten, but most are fishy and indigestible. I tasted six varieties of sea-birds' eggs, but black eaglets, penguins, and night birds are the best, and molly mawks the worst; petrel eggs are not bad eating. They are all best fried hard on both sides, and eaten with plenty of salt and pepper.

From January 1, 1924, to March 21st the islanders fetched fifty boat-loads of wood from the other side of the island, and in the process this is handled three times over and a journey of ten miles is involved. Potatoes are planted generally in September and October, and from January to March they are harvested. Then, too, is the time for visits to Inaccessible and Nightingale Islands in search of petrels for food and to get driftwood. A trip to other islands is more often made in November. April and May are the months for drawing kelp, while July is the month for spading. In June the bullocks are killed and salted with salt made from sea-water boiled down previously, and the hide is hung up in the wind and sun to dry so that leather may be had for moccasins for the family throughout the winter. June to September is the hardest time for the islanders, as these are the scarce-food months and the weather is at its worst.

When we were on the island the men built or enlarged ten houses, and also built the church and walled in the old and new cemetery grounds. They dug many new potato patches, and thirteen new boats were built. They worked, too, at the roads, made new wagons, constructed benches for the church, a pulpit and Communion rails.



THE POTATO PATCHES WITH THE "PYRAMIDS" IN THE DISTANCE

Whatever the men at Tristan da Cunha are, it cannot justly be said that they were idle when we were there. The circumstances of their life are all against idleness. They cannot get their sheep without going about eight miles over hill

and dale to seek for them; they must spend days upon the mountain to catch birds that their children may be fed, and make long boat journeys for wood that their wives may cook the food. I have seen as many as nine little dinghies sailing at once round Big Beach at early dawn looking like the start of a tiny yacht race, but it would be hours before the boats return. Often, indeed, they may have hard and dangerous work to get back at all, for one of the sudden changes which characterize Tristan weather may take place and they may have to make a forced landing on the way home, abandon the boats on some tiny beach, and, after dragging them high up to safety, be compelled to return over the hills on foot. A great deal of energy and time is spent simply in the effort to live at all. The children, perhaps, though one seldom hears them complain, have the hardest time. One little child of a neighbour would come sometimes and beg us not to scrape all the dripping out of our frying-pan, but leave it until she could come and get it for herself, as she was often hungry. We would turn to and fry a couple of eggs and some potatoes lest she should be going dinnerless till late at night. When we had flour of our own I would bake a potful of little cakes for them when they came to bid us good-night.

They had a pretty custom of all the little ones coming by themselves each evening to bid us rather a shy good-night, but each one expected a kiss, and would have been terribly hurt if we had not welcomed the advance, and they generally fled after the effort delightedly munching a cake; but I will not fail to record it was not just cupboard love, for when we had no cakes to give the dear little mites came just the same.

On June 18, 1922, during his sermon, or rather talk, at Evensong, my husband spoke of the necessity of a larger room in which to hold services, and urged that an effort should be made to build a permanent church, saying it should not seem impossible with so many able-bodied men and big lads. He put it so kindly and persuasively I could see from their faces that it was regarded as a good suggestion by the congregation. After church was over we had a number of visitors to the Parsonage, some saying that they would be willing to work at the new building whenever it was decided to begin it. Mr. Andrew Hagan came in and said that, until the new church was ready, we could have the whole top floor of his house, and the men could move away the partition between the front-room and bedroom and this would give us six feet more of space, and he and his wife and son would live downstairs. We accepted his offer very thankfully, for we now had the biggest possible room on the island at our disposal for church services, but even so, since at Tristan every man, woman, and child attends church regularly, it was overcrowded and many had to stand up all the time, and the parents had to hold the children on their laps, even quite big children of ten or eleven.

It was decided to hold a meeting of all the men in the schoolroom on June 21, 1922, at eight o'clock to discuss the idea of the new church. I was not present, but my husband presided, and there was a big muster of the men in spite of pouring rain. Everyone seemed to regard it as a special occasion, and came in their best clothes. It was quite a smart assemblage. My husband shook hands with everyone. A quick discussion of ways and means took place, and it was decided that, as soon as the winter was over and the oxen were thought strong enough to draw stone, the building work should commence. There were a few dubious ones at the meeting who seemed to think a church could never be built, as at that time there was a lack of so many necessary materials like wood, paint, and window glass, but these were swept aside by the more zealous.

My husband and the men soon selected a site for the new church on the ground between Mrs. Repetto's and Tom Rogers's houses. Both agreed to waive any claim to the ground, and a space was allowed to enlarge the church if ever it became necessary. The ground chosen was well in the midst of the Settlement, but quite near to our house. There was room to have built a parsonage near the church. The foundations of a church 50 feet long and 14 feet wide were marked out. Digging was begun in June and almost completed by the end of October. Each family undertook that their men should dig so many feet of foundations as they had leisure. One or two men usually worked at a time, and now and then a good big gang would be at work. It only meant a few hours' labour for each man. I always used to make them tea and give it to them when at work. Early one morning about five o'clock, when the last foot of land only remained to be dug, I noticed two men at work, and just as I was carrying their drink across to them we saw smoke far out at sea, and it proved to be three Norwegian whalers which were bringing us our mail. This was on November 2, 1922, and we got no more letters until March 1923, when the Dublin came and we had our last mails on the island. The island got no news of the outside world at all after that for nearly two years.

The laying of the foundation-stone of the new Church of St. Mary's was quite an imposing ceremony. The men buried some small silver coins in a little tin box under the big stone as it was placed in position. The stone itself was given by Mrs. Repetto. It was one of the Rev. E. Dodgson's original church stones. It had to be hauled into place with chains and ropes, and my husband and his Scouts tugged away with might and main helping the men.

There was a foundation laying service. My husband came in his cassock and surplice, and we had all the choir boys and girls, and the Scouts paraded with their flag, and the congregation was grouped round. John Glass and Tom Rogers brought along the harmonium for me to play the hymns and chants. We had special prayers for the dedication of the stone, and thanksgiving that a church seemed possible after fifty years' hopes and disappointments. It was a nice fine day and quite an impressive little service. My husband believed in outdoor services when possible, and he gave a stirring address urging the people to spare no effort to complete what had been so well begun, and the people seemed much moved.

The building of the church was really wonderful for Tristan da Cunha. It was a true monument of faith overcoming mountains of difficulty. All the previous missionaries had tried to get a church built, and there had been several church houses used for worship for a time, but afterwards always returned to secular uses when that Minister left the island. None of these was really a dedicated church. The Rev. E. Dodgson made the most determined effort to build a church. He hewed a number of good stones and began a building, but progress was so slow that he lost hope of getting it completed, and is reported to have said "at this rate it will take forty years to build," and ordered the stones to be removed and placed for a wall round the cemetery. Mr. Barrow chose a site for a church, but it was not proceeded with as the difficulties were so great. My husband found the population so much increased, and the biggest room on the island so much too small, that from the first he pressed the men to try and build a church big enough to hold everyone.

There had been discussion as to "ways and means," for getting anything done at Tristan seemed nearly hopeless. Stones were plentiful, but there were no stone-cutting implements. Foundations must be dug, but again tools were

insufficient. Spades, shovels, picks, barrows, crow-bars were hopelessly few. Most had to be lookers-on while others worked. Then we had neither woodwork, glass, paint, nails, nor roofing material. But we started as a venture of faith indeed. Letters of appeal for help were sent on the Quest mail, and for twelve months we waited in alternate hope and despair. Yet we worked steadily at the building.

My husband persuaded the men to make use of the stones prepared in Mr. Dodgson's time, and they were fetched from the cemetery and placed in the new church walls, while the cemetery wall was rebuilt with ordinary stones, and so a substantial beginning was made, for the old stones were better than those it is possible to procure now. Considerable time was required to prepare the site, and actual building operations were only begun in October 1922. Yet we finished the church on July 5, 1923, and the first Sunday service in the new church was held on July 8th, at eight o'clock. So we were only nine months over the building—really wonderfully quick, as houses which are much smaller often take over a year to build, or even two years.

My husband and the islanders were deservedly proud of St. Mary's Church. It was 50 feet long and 13 1/2 feet broad, giving the appearance of being rather long and narrow, but it had to be so as we had only short beams available. The zinc roof, being unlined, proved too hot in summer, and very noisy if it rained heavily. In hot weather we were often compelled to remove the windows to secure coolness as people were liable to be overcome by the heat of the building. On the roof over the porch was a little white cross and a larger one on the gable end, to mark the sacred character of the building. The interior was divided into nave and chancel, with a small sanctuary railed off by Communion rails. There was a nice big altar, a credence table, a pulpit and reading desk, all save the altar made on the island; also a lectern and font. The font, which was brought to the island by the Rev. E. Dodgson, shipwrecked and saved from the sea, stood at the bottom of the church. There was a big Bible given by Mr. Barrow. The chancel was raised a step and the altar another step. The altar had nice coloured frontals changed for the seasons of the Christian year, also candlesticks, flower vases, and a beautiful Oberammergau crucifix given by a lady in England. There was also a processional cross and a rood beam, surmounted by a large plain whitewood cross. On the church walls hung the series of pictures known as the Stations of the Cross, framed by the islanders, and a few other sacred pictures. In addition there was a tiny vestry. The church had six windows, but no east window. We had a harmonium, which I played, and special seats were reserved for the choir. Men sat on one side and women on the other.

Dedication Sunday, July 8, 1923, was a red-letter day for Tristan da Cunha, and it was kept with enthusiasm. There were over seventy persons at early church, only three communicants, who were sick, being absent. The morning service at eleven o'clock was crowded, all the school children being present.

The Boy Scouts in full uniform, very spruce, with their flag, headed the procession round the church and churchyard; then came the choir girls and myself; then a big boy with our processional cross; and lastly my husband in surplice and cassock followed by the congregation. "Onward, Christian Soldiers" was our processional hymn. Special prayers of consecration and dedication were said inside and out. We sang "The Church's One Foundation," and the church was solemnly dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin.

The church was prettily decorated with flowers. The people had endeavoured to get new clothes for the occasion, and the men wore medals or ribbons in their

butt on-holes. Everyone felt a personal pride in the new church because everyone had done his share to get it complete. All the time the new church was being built we used a special prayer composed by my husband daily at services and in the school. It was as follows:

PRAYER FOR THE NEW CHURCH BUILDING AT TRISTAN DA CUNHA.

O God and our Heavenly Father, who hast put it into the hearts of these Thy servants at Tristan da Cunha to desire to build a church for Thy glory and the welfare of their own souls, grant to them wisdom, strength, means, and opportunity for the work. All we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Church services were always remarkably well attended; even on weekdays we would have a congregation of as many as fifty, while on Sunday afternoons the church was crowded out. Before we began there would be a long line of waiting people. Once old Sam Swain, the island patriarch, came late, could not find a seat, and had to return home; but Bob Glass, more thoughtful, came provided with a chair, which he planted in the aisle and sat down in state, to the amusement of the young folk. John Glass, the clerk, always rang the bell as long as he could see anyone in sight who seemed to be coming towards the church, so there should be no late-comers. Old Mrs. Swain, who is a little queer at times, would sometimes come up to church when there was no service, and, after sitting patiently for a long while in expectation, get up and go home rather puzzled. The waiting congregation were apt to the last to make a dash for seats, though my husband assured them there was no need as there was room for everybody.

On Sundays everyone liked to come in his best clothes, and a few stayed away if they had not got moccasins, or did not think their clothes good enough to come in. A few children would be carried in, having nothing on their feet but clean, new socks. Sheepskin moccasins were much despised—only bullock or donkey hide would do. On wet days the girls would come flying along in white frocks with old coats or jackets held over their heads and shoulders. Squalls usually seemed to come on just at church time.

We used the Cathedral Psalter and Hymns A. and M., but there was sometimes a controversy over the best tunes, as the old people liked Mr. Dodgson's tunes best, the young married folk Mrs. Barrow's, and our choir were eager for my tunes, as they said the others were "too old-fashioned for nowadays." I think they were quite up to or above the level of the average village choir in England.

The children were catechised in church after the old fashion at home, and generally behaved and answered very well. Baptisms usually took place during Evensong, and when it was known that there would be a baptism there was an extra big congregation. Wilson'Glass, who is one of my Tristan god-children, was the first baby to be baptized in the new church, and his elder sisters, Violet and Dorothy Glass, the first couples to be married in it, their husbands being Willy Lavarello and Ned Green. Ned is the tallest man on the island, being well over six feet.

The men laid out the churchyard as a flower-garden, made two small wooden gates, and built a stone wall round it. The Scouts used to weed the paths and whitewash the walls with island lime, which comes off when it rains hard and has to be done again.

We had to make shutters to save the windows from being broken by the wind

and protect the back windows, which were very low down, from pigs and dogs. Sometimes much amusement was caused by some animal climbing up on to the roof, making weird noises above the heads of the worshippers, and John Glass had to go out and drive the adventurer off.

We had special prayers daily for "those who go down to sea in ships," and that some of these might visit our island with mails and supplies. One is terribly dependent on the visits of chance ships.

[Chapter 11](#)

CHAPTER XI

ISLAND CUSTOMS AND FESTIVITIES

IT was "Alice in Wonderland " who divided presents into "birthday presents " and "un-birthday presents," and certainly at Tristan da Cunha we had to consider things received under these two heads, for there is no place where birthdays are thought so much of and are so well kept up. Everyone joins in the "keeping up" as a friend or relation. I had to keep a birthday book in order to see whose birthday was coming next.

On your birthday you keep open house; all your friends come to visit you during the day, and drink your health, and wish you many happy returns of the day. If it is a prosperous time you give them tea as a drink, but if it is "thin" times and no ship has called for ever so long, it will be milk and water. They all bring you a little present. You will perhaps give your visitors slices of potato pudding also.

When we were on the island everyone who could invited us to dinner on their birthdays, and all of their children, as well as grown-ups, came to see them, brought some small gift, and received something in exchange. They desired to make a special occasion of our birthdays, and we kept them by giving the school children a holiday, holding a special church service, and having sports in the morning and a dance at night, and inviting our chief friends to dinner. My husband's birthday was marked by the holding of the first "sports" ever held on the island, with prizes for the young competitors one year, and the next by a football match for the Boy Scouts. There was also a concert with acting by the children in the evening, an amusing performance of Mrs. Jarley's Waxworks.

The best birthday of all was "Baby Edward's Day."

At Tristan you have three special birthdays— when you are a year old, when you are twenty-one, and when you are fifty.

Baby Edward was a year old on September 21, 1923, and he was the Tristan baby, their baby as well as ours, so they were determined to make his first birthday something very special. Two days before, all the sheep were turned home from the Bluff, and eight of the largest were killed. It is to be noted that Tristan sheep are not really large, but rather like Welsh mountain sheep. Four of these were given by his godparents, and one and another provided potatoes and milk. Celebrations began early on September 21st. At 2.30 a.m. the bells were rung, and at 3.30 the baby was saluted by guns being fired outside the Parsonage, and by 4 a.m., or daylight, every house that could find one had hoisted a flag over the roof. At eleven o'clock a Thanksgiving Service in the church was held and well attended.

The cooks were kept very busy; the women made over forty puddings, and each family undertook to boil one or two, and, there not being enough saucepans on the island, they had to boil many of them in big tins. At 12.30 dinner was ready, and my husband and I received congratulations from all the grown-up people, who first shook hands with us and then sat down with us to a good dinner. The Parsonage was too small to hold everyone, so Mrs. Repetto and Mrs. Fred Swain had kindly lent their houses for the occasion, as these are next one another. The menu was stuffed roast mutton, plain roast mutton, boiled and baked potatoes, plum pudding, boiled suet pudding, potato pudding, jam tart with cream and sugar. Everyone was given tea after dinner, and when the cooks had washed up Mrs. Repetto and I divided all the remains of the feast for the

people to take home for their suppers. Before they left, everyone came and shook hands again, and said, "Thank you, ma'am, for your good dinner." This struck me as rather comical, as they had provided it all themselves, keeping flour, sugar, etc., from the Dublin stores for the occasion, but it certainly showed very good feeling. The dinner was a rather quiet affair, as there was no cheering and no dancing owing to the recent death of Mrs. Tom Rogers. Everything went off very well, except that the dogs broke into one house and devoured a lot of meat. Everybody said afterwards, "This is one of the biggest feasts we have ever had on Tristan."

The entire population came up to the Parsonage some time during the day to visit baby and wish him "many happy returns of his birthday" and bring him presents. He received a most wonderful lot of things, very unique and characteristic of Tristan: over one hundred hen's eggs, twenty goose eggs, all kinds of socks and fancy mats, several frocks and bonnets, petticoats, three pairs of ox horns nicely polished, two pairs of moccasins, sea-shells, a coloured silk handkerchief, butter and milk, a silver-plated teapot, a tablecloth and a silver chain, and some medals and brooches. Each visitor went through the Tristan custom of giving the baby "a kiss and a slap." You have a slap for each year of your life to make you good, and a kiss to make you happy. Edward thought the slaps were a game and crowed with delight.

It was nine at night before our last visitor said good-bye. I think we and all the people were tired that night, but we had scarcely got to bed at 10.15 when there was a loud outcry of "Sail Ho!" and we all got up again to see the lights of a big steamer on the horizon. As it was very calm and moonlight, one boat with fifteen men got out from Little Beach. My husband hoisted our oil lantern on the wireless pole as a signal, hoping to attract notice, as the light can be seen a long way out at sea, but the steamer proceeded at full speed on her course, and the boat carried on and landed at the other side of the island, where the men relieved their feelings by collecting about five thousand penguin eggs and returning the next day with these as cargo. Later on in the same night two more steamers were sighted, but as they were far out and proceeding on their course the men would not go out.

On the Sunday after baby's birthday we dedicated the new piece of ground given by the members of the Glass family for an extension of the cemetery. There is a wall round it and a gate, and it is planted with flowers. There was an outdoor service conducted by my husband in surplice and cassock, with choir, Boy Scouts, myself, and the congregation walking in procession singing hymns from the new church. The cross-bearer headed the procession, then came our banner and the Scouts singing "Onward, Christian Soldiers" with intense enthusiasm. It was very impressive, with the rough sea roaring below us and the weather-beaten faces of the island fishermen round us, all the men and boys with bared heads as my husband prayed aloud and we sang his favourite hymn, "Jesu, Lover of my Soul."

The old cemetery is filled right up and could be used no more. Luckily it was a fine day, but there was a terrible gale blowing, and no one could hold a hymn book, so we sang without. As the beautiful tune of "Holling-side" swelled up from the throats of the hundred and thirty islanders with a note of pathos akin to tears, I felt very deeply moved. It is such a lonely life and such a lonely spot.

Tristan da Cunha might seem the queerest spot on earth to choose as a place to spend one's twenty-first birthday, but it was where I spent mine. The people were full of sympathy and kindness, and quite resolved to make a festival of the

day for me.

I got up at daylight, having spent rather a disturbed night, as during the night the bells were rung and guns fired, and Bob Glass came early as "first foot" and called "Many Happy Returns" at two o'clock in the morning. We overheard an amusing dialogue outside the Parsonage windows, where three young men were endeavouring to fire guns: "'E won't go off! 'E won't go off!" and finally two loud bangs instead of three, James Swain's old muzzle-loader having failed to be persuaded to go off at all, much to the delight of his two cronies, Jack Rogers and Joe Repetto. There was a great display of flags, and someone had hoisted a large Royal Ensign on the wireless pole in our garden. Visitors began to arrive at five o'clock, and we made cups of coffee for them and received congratulations and presents. I soon had sixty visitors and sixty presents. Thirty of the presents were pairs of Tristan stockings. All my school children and the Boy Scouts came to see me and brought little gifts.

We had the usual church service, to which everyone came, all in their best attire, and my husband preached from the text, "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another," saying, "Birthdays gave us our opportunity of showing love to our neighbours." We had the hymn for "absent friends," for, in spite of all the kindness, we could not help feeling a little sad thinking of those dear ones far away who would have us specially in their minds that day. It was very long since we had received any letters, and on a birthday one thinks of that when so far from home.

The whole island was at dinner, the children in one house and the grown-ups in another. We went in and had a look at the children at dinner, and they seemed to be having a real good time. Our dinner with the grown-ups was very nicely served, and Bob Glass, who rather fancies himself as a speaker, got up and proposed "Long life and good health to the Missus," a toast which was drunk in tea. I thanked them all very briefly, and, after grace had been said, got up and waited outside till the children came out, as they all wanted to give us three cheers, and this was done with a right good will. In the afternoon the children danced very prettily at Charles Green's house, and in the evening there was a dance for the grown-ups, and, as it was "special" this day, the old people and married couples joined in.

An interesting island custom obtains in connection with the potato-harvesting. The farmer "calls" whoever he will to work in his vineyard, generally his own relations first, men and boys to the required number. They are notified the day before. Then so many cooks are called in to prepare the meals. The only wages given are food for the day, and the hands expect a payment of three good meals, which, to give full satisfaction, must be meat, potatoes, and pudding, and if possible drink (i.e. tea). The cooks have a lot to do preparing potatoes by peeling and grating, and stuffing the meat with more potatoes.

Very early on the day of the working party the employer mounts on the roof of his house and, like the Mohammedan muezzin, calls his hands in stentorian yells. They come armed with spades, often bringing donkeys and bullock-wagons; breakfast is served at once, and, when partaken of, a cheerful train of hands sets out for the scene of action, in this case the potato patches. They will not return until dark, so about midday a party of girls will set out loaded with luncheons for the men "all hot," packed into tins with lids, for the men at work. Often they will walk briskly, but sometimes will go riding or leading donkeys with packs, and we saw one amusing mischance: a donkey got restive, ran away and spilled all the cakes, which were found and eaten by the boys, so more had

to be cooked, and the workers waited hungrily till they came. At lunch there will be much laughing and joking, pipes will be smoked if everyone is not out of "baccy," as happens too often, and then the girls will return home to see about supper, which is the meal of the day, and the potato harvesters will set to with renewed vigour.

Supper is served rather late; the men have to go home and get a good wash first and change their clothes. It will be quite a social gathering. They will sit long over the meal and "spin yarns," and perhaps someone will sing or play a bit on the accordion. To-morrow the "hands" will tell what a good time Henry gave them.

The potatoes are first dug up, laid in the sun to dry, then sorted over into four classes— eating potatoes, or large ones, first and second seeds, and pig potatoes, or the very small ones. The next process is packing all into different sacks. They are then loaded into the bullock-wagons and brought home and unloaded into the potato shed, being placed all in separate bins according to quality. Sometimes the women and children assist at the potato harvest, but this is to save employing hands all the time, which is too expensive.

Island wedding customs are curious. The marriage ceremony, if there was a missionary on the island, would take place in the ordinary way in church, with a crowded congregation, though instead of bridesmaids the bride would have some married women as her supporters. Otherwise, the couple would be married by an islander who could read, a man by preference, and it would be like a marriage by registration. There would be the witnesses, and, if under twenty-one, the parents' consent would have to be obtained, and perhaps later on the blessing of the Church would be sought.

We had two sets of double weddings when we were at Tristan da Cunha, and so had a good opportunity of seeing their curious customs. The couples about to be married must look sufficiently smart, so they go round borrowing clothes. The girl gets a blouse from one and a skirt from another and a pair of shoes from somebody else. The ring also will be borrowed for the occasion. In the case of a double wedding the danger is that the other party may be before you and get all the best things. The would-be bridegroom has had a worrying time also, for ever since he first contemplated matrimonial bliss he has been striving after an outfit to start a new home. He has had to wait the advent of ships to get an axe or a shovel; he has had to tramp around the island far and wide along the sea-shore after each storm in search of pieces of driftwood to enable him to build his house. It will need many pieces, for the house must be furnished with table, bench and bunk, and partition between bedroom and living-room.

There is an old yarn on the island that the Tristan girls' prayer used to run this way: "God bless father, God bless mother, and send a good shipwreck so I can get married." It would be no use now to wait for a shipwreck. There is another tale of a Tristan girl who sent to England for her wedding frock, and it arrived in time to provide shortcoats for the second baby some three years after.

The first weddings were those of Violet Glass and Willie Lavarello and Dorothy Glass and Ned Green. The two brides were sisters, both daughters of Robert Glass and descendants of William Glass, the founder of the Settlement. They were the first couples married in the new church, and I "stood for" Violet.

There was a great starching of frocks, the brides all like to be married in white. Flowers and gloves are not the fashion, but beads and brooches and a big sash of coloured ribbon is worn round the waist. Before marriage the girl does a great deal for her future husband, knits him socks and cooks him savoury dishes,

but in this topsy-turvy place he seems to do little for his fiancée. The girls and women were immensely amused one day when I said in conversation that I had knitted my husband some pairs of socks before we were married. They said, "So the girls in England do their courting the same as Tristan?" The joke was quite against me and I had to laugh with the rest. Wedding presents are given, and we gave wood for the houses, tea, flour, and sugar.

The parents provide the wedding feast, which is a big affair, with many guests. All friends and relations must be asked or great offence would be taken. The cooks work hard preparing the dinner.

The couples were rather shy and very quiet; no public display of affection is considered good form at Tristan da Cunha, and we were much amused by hearing Dr. Macklin describe his experience of a Tristan "courtin'". He was staying at the house of Bob Glass when the young men engaged to the two girls appeared, and Bob was heard exhorting them behind the scenes with, "Don't be shoiy, lads, come in," and they came in looking rather sheepish and sat down in silence. When silence grew oppressive the good-natured doctor announced that "he was going for a bit of a walk and would be gone some time." He returned after an hour and a half and found the lovers had never moved or spoken a word. No endearments or pet-names are used in families or between husband and wife. They live in the prim, stiff, early Victorian age still.

The Captain of H.M.S. *Dublin* endeavoured to obtain a complete census of the island families, but the people did not make him a very accurate return. For example, one man omitted all mention of his wife's children by a former husband. I give in Appendix I the more exact census taken by my husband.

At the time it was taken the oldest women were Martha Green, 87, Sarah Rogers, 81, Mary Glass, 86, Susan Swain, 78, and the eldest man was Samuel Swain, 67. The lower average age of the men was accounted for by the fact that one generation was practically wiped out in the terrible boat accident in 1886. Twelve married men and three single men were drowned then.

Among the population were one deformed person and one mentally deficient. In the matter of religion there were two Roman Catholics and the rest were members of the English Church.

During our stay on the island there were three deaths—Betty Cotton, aged 94, Rebekah Rogers, aged 47, and a new-born infant.

[Chapter 12](#)

CHAPTER XII

EXPLORATIONS AND DISCOVERIES

(a) *Inaccessible Island.*

MY husband was able to do what no previous missionary had been able to accomplish in visiting personally both Inaccessible and Nightingale Islands in the island boats and exploring them. I give below his own account of the visits. First of his visit to Inaccessible:

"There is something weird and terrible about uninhabited islands. Inaccessible, seen from a distance, looms up as a huge black mass of rock capped with cloud like the smoke of a volcano. On the side nearest Tristan there is not a break in the precipitous cliff rising to about 2,000 feet. The whole island is not very large, about four square miles in extent. From the outside it is by no means an inviting-looking spot, but the interior is well wooded with island trees, ferns, and high tussock. The climate is somewhat milder than Tristan from its lower elevation. Mr. Douglas, of the *Quest*, described the interior country of Inaccessible as 'a beautiful landscape of broken country, clad in verdure with a stream running through it.' This stream emerges as a fine waterfall, pouring in a strong volume of good fresh water into a pool on Salt Beach. The pool is deep, and big enough for several persons to bathe or swim in.

"Inaccessible is, however, well named, as, though a landing can often be easily effected at Salt Beach on the side visible in clear weather from Tristan, when you do land you cannot ascend to the top without the utmost skill and nerve in climbing. One man said, 'You must hold on by hands, feet, and teeth to get up.' The beach at Salt Beach landing is a considerable stretch of shingle close to deep water, though it shelves down, and rises to a low and narrow stretch of green bank with ferns, grass, and a few trees and tussock running all this side of the island from point to point, and on which the Tristan islanders usually fatten three or four bullocks very successfully. Inaccessible is quite fit for human habitation by a small number of families possessed of boats, and, if there is no emigration to the mainland, some of the Tristan people may one day have to settle over there permanently to relieve the over-population. As it is, the Tristan boatmen make the journey across three or four times at least each year in search of birds and eggs for food purposes, and driftwood to build or repair their houses and carts. The island has never been inhabited save by sealing crews for a time, and the two brothers Stoltenhoff, who resided on it for two years and endured great privation, having no stores and for a good while no boat. They were rather at feud with the population of Tristan, who looked on Inaccessible as a necessary appendage to their own island, and accused the brothers of killing the livestock—goats, I think they were—running wild on the island. The Government sent and removed the Stoltenhoffs, but their name is given to a little islet near Nightingale.

"It really is no light undertaking to voyage in an open canvas boat across the rough open strait between Tristan da Cunha and Inaccessible. I think it is quite as bad as it would be crossing the English Channel in a row boat in a rough sea—no joke at all. We put up a record trip on our voyage, getting there and back in one day, which has never been done before nor since. The usual plan is to stop the night at least, and it is certainly safer, for navigating these rough seas

amid rock-bound, current-swept, and surf-beaten coasts in the darkness is surely a venturesome undertaking. The island boatmen, trusting to a very intimate knowledge and something to luck, simply feel their way by the kelp. They listen for the surf also. There was no moon, few stars, and there were rain and wind squalls on our return, though we had a fair wind and a quick voyage over.

"We started too late for Inaccessible in my opinion, but there always was delay in getting off, too much talking and waiting for this and that. But we got our work over very quickly and efficiently when there. The bullock was rounded up, shot, and soon skinned, cut up and loaded into the boats. Meanwhile, I went exploring, and collecting specimens of plants, stones, and other souvenirs of my visit. Patrol Leader Donald Glass and Joe Glass soon had a fire going and a billy boiling for a cup of tea, and we managed a fairly good meal of fish and potatoes. It was later than we thought when we started back, as by a mischance no one had any watch or clock with him, and my watch was out of action. As we got away with two of the other boats, we noticed that the wind was dropping off and veering a good deal, and a change was brewing. Just as we left, the boat which had tried to get to Blendon Hall Beach returned to Salt Beach, where we were, but we could not stay to speak to them, and they landed and camped all night on the beach, while we proceeded on our return journey under all sail. We kept pretty much together all the way over until off Long Bluff at Tristan, and then it got so dark we could not see our consorts at all, but we could hear them shout now and then. My lantern would not light as the wind was too high, but we struck matches once in a while, and so did the others, and the tiny sparks showed up a long distance. We hardly knew when we were off the Settlement—a light on the wireless pole or a fire on Hottentot Point would have been a big help; but I do not think anyone imagined we should get back that night.

"When we got off Little Beach we fired the big rifle they nickname 'Rabbit's Ears' twice over, and we saw lights come directly in the windows up on the Settlement, and soon noticed people emerging with torches and lanterns and making for the beach at full speed. We were all a bit used up, and cold, hungry and wet, and some were seasick too. It was just 11.30 when we got out of the boats on to the beach at Tristan again.

"I got some very interesting impressions of Inaccessible. Like Tristan, it is surrounded by quantities of kelp. The waters round the island are crowded with fish, but they are also much infested by sharks, and big catfish and octopuses. It is much richer than Tristan in sea-shells also. We saw a number of flying fish on our way across, and these do not come near Tristan. I was told later—I do not know with what authority—of a gigantic sea-snail which lives in these waters—quite a monstrosity in sea-snails. I did not secure one, but from Andrew Swain I got one about as large as a half-crown. I had not seen it in any museum, but as I had no alcohol it went bad and I was forced to destroy it.



INACCESSIBLE ISLAND, WITH THE "QUEST" IN THE OFFING

"There are great quantities of sea-birds at Inaccessible, species not now found at Tristan, including albatross, splendid big fellows. The solitary thrush or 'starchy' is plentiful and nests here, and we secured some eggs of it. There is also the Tristan finch, or 'canary' as they call it. But, of course, the most interesting bird of all is the island cock, of which I was fortunate in procuring the first specimen known to science, and which we are going to send to South Kensington and the Cape.^[1] It is a small bird of the rail species, I think, wingless, unable to fly, but can run with great speed, shelters in the tussock, and lives in a burrow. Its eggs are not known, it does not migrate, and it feeds, I understand, on insects and worms. Its radius once extended to Tristan, but it is now solely found on Inaccessible. There was also a large species on Tristan, but it is now extinct, though only in recent years. It is black and brown in colour with pink eyes.^[2] The Shackleton-Rowett Expedition knew of the island cock from the islanders, but Mr. Wilkins, the naturalist, was unable to procure skins on his visit to Inaccessible, and he left me some materials and directions in case I should be able to capture specimens of this very remarkable bird. There are no rats at Inaccessible, and in this it has an advantage over Tristan.

"The best landing-place for exploration purposes is Blendon Hall Beach, but it is full of reefs and rocks and is much exposed to surf, and it is often impossible to land there. The Tristan people have placed some sheep as well as cattle over on Inaccessible, and this year (1923) they were much perturbed by hearing that some of the livestock had vanished mysteriously. Suggested solutions of their disappearance were that they had been taken off by some dishonest whale crew, killed by a wild dog said to be on the island, or simply had died from bad weather or floods.

"The ocean currents throw up considerable quantities of driftwood, and we secured some useful pieces at Salt Beach, but more is found in Blendon Hall Beach, the exposed side of the island. 'Sea beans' drift here from West Africa and South America. Inaccessible is often enshrouded in fog, and in former years had many wrecks on its iron coast. The most notorious was the Blendon Hall, Indiaman, in 1821, after whom the landing-place is named. The crew and

passengers, fifty-two persons, after enduring great privations for several months, were rescued by the Tristan da Cunha islanders led by Corporal Glass. The Shakespeare was wrecked on the island in 1883, and the Helen S. Lea in 1897. The Tristan people received and provided for all the shipwrecked crews in each case."

My husband's trip to Inaccessible was made on February 3, 1923. I give my own brief version of the matter from my diary:

"Bob Glass woke us up this morning at the rather unearthly hour of three o'clock, as three boats were going to start for Inaccessible and my husband had asked to go with them. I got up and prepared breakfast directly, but it was not till after five o'clock that the men went down to Little Beach to get the boats ready, and even then there was a long delay before the start was made at about 6.30. I went down with a number of women and children to see the boats start, which they did hoisting sail and giving the usual three cheers, to which we all responded from the shore. They always cheer when going to the other islands, but not if going round this island to Seal Bay or Sandy Point. I went home to my domestic duties, and then served as my husband's deputy, reading morning prayers at nine o'clock to a good congregation, in the afternoon taking the Mothers' Union Quarterly Service (which my husband usually takes) and giving an address on the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

"Towards evening I got a bit anxious. Some of the women had ridden on donkeys right out to Bluff to watch for the possible return of the boats, and only came home at dark, saying, 'No signs of them.' I wanted to hoist the lantern on the wireless pole, which shows a long way out at sea, but some said, 'They will not be back now till tomorrow,' so I did not put it up. However, I put supper on the table for my husband in case he should get back by any chance, and I also fetched wood and water—a thing which he usually does. Mrs. Repetto said, 'Don't stay in the house alone; bring baby and come over to me,' so I went across at length, and it got so late I lay down and went to sleep. I think everyone was asleep, and it was long past eleven o'clock when someone heard guns fired at sea and there was a loud shout of 'The boats are coming!' We soon had fires and lights going, and in less than half an hour all the women were running down to the beach with hot drinks. It was a very unpleasant night, horribly dark, blowing and pouring with rain, and foggy. Joe Repetto carried the lantern for us, and Mrs. Repetto and I the hot drink. My husband helped pull up his boat and said he had enjoyed the trip very much, but I could see he was fagged out, so we left the people to unload the boats and went home, where he got some supper, and it was one o'clock before we were all in bed."

Inaccessible certainly contains ironstone, and it is reported vaguely to hide diamonds and other valuable minerals, though neither my husband nor the Quest party discovered any. Bob Glass has a certain experience in these matters, and I quote his words to Mr. Lawrence Green, of the Cape Argus, when that gentleman visited us on H.M.S. Dublin. This is Mr. Green's account as given subsequently in that paper:

"See here, Mr. Argus,' he whispered, drawing me on one side; 'I have been over to Inaccessible Island prospecting for diamonds. Look what I found.' He produced a curious species of rock, and asked me to take it to Cape Town and have it tested. I promised to do so, and Bob Glass continued with infinite craft in

his eyes, ' I think it would be worth while someone in Cape Town sending a ship here. It might be diamonds, and I could show them where I found the rock.' So here is a chance for any adventurous spirit to prospect for diamonds under the guidance of the genial Bob Glass."[\[3\]](#)

(b) *Nightingale Island.*

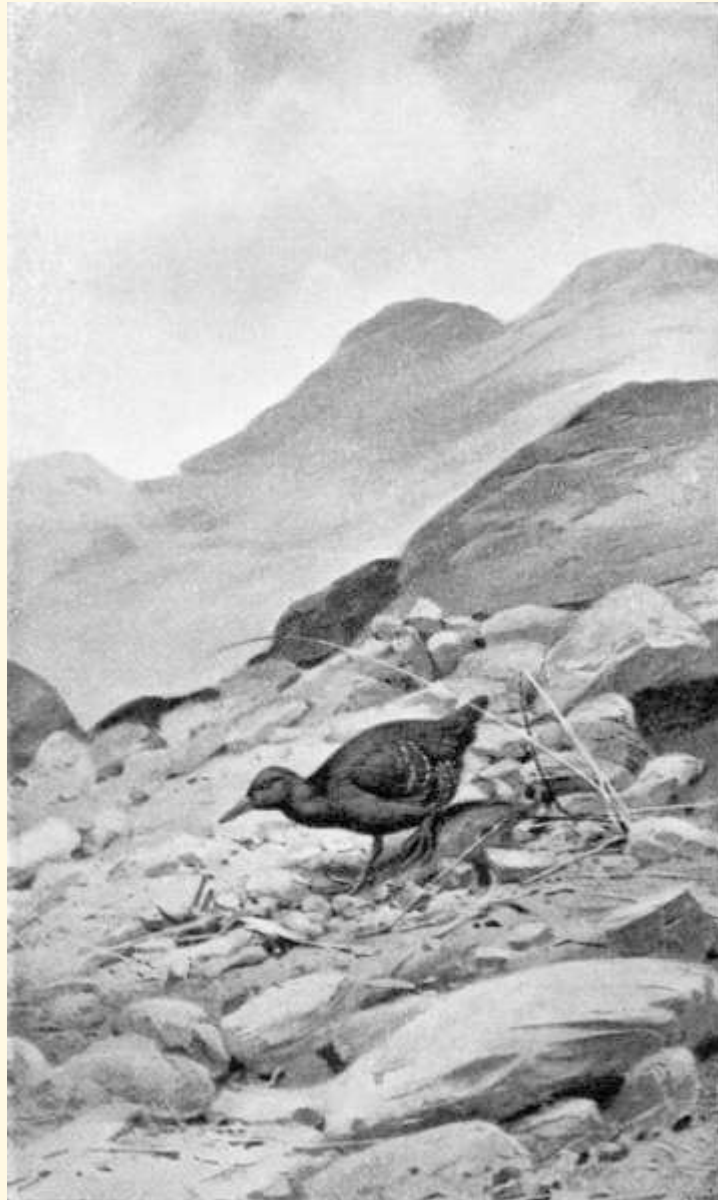
I give my husband's narrative of his visit of exploration to Nightingale Island in his own words. He writes:

"On January 31, 1924, I set sail from Little Beach, Tristan da Cunha, in company with four small open sail and row-boats to visit the uninhabited and little-known Nightingale Island of the Tristan group. Nightingale has several small adjacent islets. The crews of the boats, including myself, numbered twenty-seven hands all told, and two of these were Boy Scouts. Nightingale is about twenty miles by sea from the nearest point on Tristan and about nine from Inaccessible. The islanders do not visit this island so frequently, as there is seldom a good sailing wind from the Settlement, and the water on the island is almost undrinkable, being strongly alkaline. The island has, I think, been only visited three or four times in the past fifty years—by the Challenger in 1873, the Odin in 1904, and the Quest in 1922. For a time also a few sealers camped on the island.

"We slept ashore three nights in a large cave high over the sea, which also offered shelter to hundreds of sea-birds of a dozen species, some of which had young. All night long we were enlivened by weird calls, notes like a hoot of strange goblins in the semi-dark, shrieks in a dozen keys,' He ho-he ha-ha he. Take a walk, take a walk!' At dawn the bird occupants flew with a rustle of wings very surprising. Even as the boats crossed over, the sea was white with this host of birds. There are literally thousands upon thousands of petrels, molly mawks, sea-hens, penguins, and what the people call 'wood-pigeons' (a sea-bird, in reality 'starchies '), also a sort of finch, night birds, stormy petrels, and the big albatross. The beautiful 'king birds' are also plentiful, but the 'island cock,' the bird of my discovery on Inaccessible, has left here, as it has Tristan. The thousands of penguins in their rookeries are a truly remarkable sight. There are large rookeries, too, on the small adjacent islets, ' Alec's Island,' White Island, Stoltenhoff Island, and ' Old Man Island.' The penguins, though moulting, were fat and lively, but we noticed many dead young ones and many spoiled eggs. They nest right up far ashore in the tussock here. Nothing molests them—men, rats, cats, and dogs are all absent. The molly mawks here thrive both in the tussock and in the open valleys, as well as on the cliffs. I saw one rookery in a beautiful but swampy valley containing over five hundred of these handsome, spirited birds. It was right in the interior of the island.

"We got ashore at a place called by the islanders 'New Landing,' after a fine crossing. There is smooth, deep water, and the boats ran right up to the 'step-off' rock, which is as good here as any artificial quay. Nightingale has no sand, few beaches of even small size, and is all rugged cliff broken up into countless caves of all sizes and heights. 'Old Landing' is nearly half a mile farther on, and is on a narrow shingle beach under low cliffs. 'New Landing' is in the corner of a natural harbour, almost completely protected by 'Middle Island' and a reef of high rocks, except when the wind blows in one direction, which is seldom. Huge fields of kelp surround the island, and in ' New Landing' bay the kelp has spread

immensely, as there is seldom a strong enough sea to injure it. Nightingale proper is quite a small island, about a mile long east and west and three-quarters of a mile wide.



THE FLIGHTLESS RAIL (*ATLANTISIA ROGERSI*)

"Nightingale has a very limited flora, even more so than Tristan, as many of the plants found at Tristan are not met with here. The island tree (*Phyllica nitida*) is present only in small numbers, though of good growth, for the island is neither so cold nor windy as Tristan and has many sheltered valleys. It has a drier climate, too. There is little grass, a few flowers, and not much besides ferns and moss, bog-weed and rushes. Cranberries do not seem to grow at all, but wild celery is in plenty. The whole island is covered with high tussock, over a man's head, and very hot and difficult to get through, as we found. There are no animals on the island. The surrounding sea is lull of fish, all the Tristan varieties but in much greater numbers, very fearless, and they can be caught ashore with a barbless hook. There are now no seals, but the sea is shark-infested. Cray-fish abound as at Tristan. The sea-birds are tame and fearless, and the ground is tunnelled by countless petrel holes, so that it gave way under our feet in all directions. There were plenty of flies, but no moths or butterflies, but we saw

many green tussock grubs and small caterpillars. " There is one stream of running water near ' Old Landing,' and two or three small spring ponds in the interior, and one of these on high ground. They never dry up, but the water is horrible. They are practically bog ponds. The water is black or brown, and full of animal and vegetable matter. We drank with a wry face, for it was beastly stuff, strongly alkaline. The men jokingly nicknamed it ' Nightingale beer.' We had brought some big jars of Tristan water over and I drank this after only a taste of the other. Nightingale water made some of our party sick, but did not seem to hurt others. The men had come over to search for driftwood, and there was one large spar at ' Old Landing,' having been first noticed by the Quest party two years before. It was 73 feet long and 8 feet round. We went up to it in a boat, but found it too heavy to tow, so landed ten hands with axes to cut it up into lengths. It was cut into five portions and towed up to 'New Landing,' and there split with wedges after much difficulty, as the tools were few and poor. I got back to ' New Landing' just before sunset, but the landing party came on later. The sea-birds were home-coming for the night in vast numbers—a very picturesque sight.

"New Landing,' with its shelf of bare rock backed by high, gaunt cliffs with the sound of the great Atlantic surges in our ears, was indeed a remarkable spot for a summer camp. Under the starlight there soon rose the smoke of our camp fires, and round the dancing flames were grouped little companies of men and boys in seafaring and Scout garb spinning yarns and smoking pipes and cigarettes. There was a savoury smell of frying fish and potatoes. The fish was just caught. The Boy Scouts were assistant cooks. The petrels and pigeons squeaked annoyance at the disturbance of their ancient peace. The wood-pigeon is a big bird, black and grey, with a long beak, and utters a rather 'cawing' note.

"At length we returned to the big cave, scrambling over some steep sloping rocks, dodging the rush of the tide in one low place, carefully avoiding some deep slimy water holes in others, and when we settled for the night lying so cramped as almost to be touching one another. The roof dripped in many places. Indignant birds flew round and screamed half the night, but no one minded, and I managed to sleep on my bed of dry tussock and clean sacking. At daylight a man called ' Show a leg ' and 4 Stow hammocks,' and we got up rather stiffly and climbed down to breakfast, a repetition of our supper. Washing was perfunctory, for we had only two cakes of soap and one towel between us, and no fresh water to spare. The menu for three days was unvaried: fried or boiled fish and potatoes, or fried sea-birds, very fat and very oily and fishy. Some of the party began to be upset by this diet, and were glad to be on the way back to Tristan. We had no salt or flour, and only a little tea. It was hot weather, but we could not swim or bathe on account of the sharks. Two men swam after some wood, while two others with loaded rifles watched for sharks.

"We started back in uncertain weather, and were caught half-way across by a fog. We had some difficulty in consequence in finding Tristan. One boat sprang her mast, but we got it jury-rigged pretty smartly. I was the first to sight land, and relieved all of some anxiety. Our trouble went on till we landed, for we were four hours crossing, but it took eleven to get back. We had every sort of weather, fog, rain, contrary wind, and, added to this, we were short of food and water and we broke two oars. We had to row right round the island, and this is much the longest way back. I was fagged out, and so were my crew when we landed safely at Little Beach once more.

"I should add that while at Nightingale I ascended both the small peaks, which are about 900 to 1,000 feet high. I called the higher ' Bancroft's Peak,'

after my old school near London."

(c) *The Caves.*

One of our most interesting explorations on Tristan was that of the big adjacent caves under what is called by the islanders the "Hill Piece," and on the sea face of it the "Red Hole." The two caves are named respectively the "Water Cave" and the "Guano or Dry Cave." On this occasion I accompanied my husband in a small dinghy boat rowed by Fred Swain, Bob Glass, and William Rogers, and Alice Swain, a small schoolgirl daughter of Fred Swain, was with me. It was a warm day and the sea fairly smooth. We were soon away from Little Beach and round Hottentot Point and across Red Hole to the landing-place under the cliff and among some rocks. We had to watch our time and jump smartly to avoid the rush of the tide, and there was a bit of sharp climbing over some high, tangly rocks to get to the mouth of the water cave. It is sometimes called "Fresh Water Cave," as it is not salt water but fresh that percolates from above. It is about 100 yards in length. In places the water is quite deep. We waded along the shallowest part carefully, and the water was very cold and up to the waist. Little Alice and I remained at the entrance of the cave, only getting as far as we could into the interior over the rocks. There is a sort of shingly beach and one small dark cave chamber at the end. At one time night birds hid in the cave, but they seem now to have deserted it entirely; indeed, these birds seem now to be leaving Tristan. They used to be easily caught by the curious expedient of lighting fires, which attracted them down. Their eggs are very good eating. The cave once harboured seals, but has not done so for many years now. It was another hard scramble over more rocks to get to the Guano or Dry Cave. This cave also is nearly a hundred yards in length; it is fairly lofty, the floor is dry though much mixed with guano, but it is now probably more sand than guano, as the birds have deserted it. It has in it many huge blocks of yellow sandstone. My husband brought away geological specimens as souvenirs of this cave exploration.

A mile or so farther on is Run-away Beach, with one considerable cave with a high roof and shingle floor. It is situated just above high-water mark, and it was here during our last year that a big sea-elephant was caught and killed. The islanders have a superstition that the coming of the sea-elephant betokens the near approach of a ship.

(d) *Sandy Point.*

Sandy Point is on the north-east side of the island, and is usually got at by a boat journey from Little Beach round Big Head and along the coast past various small headlands with local names such as "Jew's Point," "Rookery Point," "Half-way Beach," and so forth. There is a nice small flat and a landing on sand, but often the boats land higher up, on the shingle, and the men walk down. There is usually more surf here than at Little Beach. There certainly was on February 24, 1924, when we made our expedition to Sandy Point. Two big boats were going down, Fred Swain was taking one and Tom Rogers the other—his boat, the *Canton*. I got up at four o'clock and made cakes and tea to take with us. Mrs. Bill Rogers was to accompany me, and we left Little Beach about 7.30, leaving baby with Mrs. Repetto. We got off quite smoothly, and on my way I passed a big penguin rookery and noticed numbers of molly mawks on the cliffs. This part of the island is well wooded, and the people generally come this way

in the small boats to get firewood. The scenery is a succession of high points of land intersected by deep gulches, and the boat keeps following the sharp curve of the island. We passed one or two small apple orchards, the best of which are at Rookery Point. We also passed "Half-way Beach." It is nearly eight miles from the Settlement, and it was here that the belongings of the Rev. and Mrs. Barrow were landed when they arrived in 1906, as it was too rough to land them nearer the Settlement. The morning mist in which we started was soon dispelled and it cleared up for a fine day. Some of the small boats had preceded us, and others followed with various parties of men and boys and women and girls, all bound on the same errand as ourselves, which was to help harvest the apple crop.

When we arrived at Sandy Point my husband, who had gone in Fred Swain's boat with Alice Swain, Johnny Repetto, Dick and Andrew Swain, was on the beach to assist us in landing. We found it was running quite a swell, and we had to watch our time to disembark. They were very careful with me, and lifted me ashore and set me high and dry on the sand, so I did not get even my feet wet. I found my husband had made a fire, assisted by his Scout boys, and we sat down and had our breakfast. Then, with the help of Tom Rogers and John Glass, I got up the rather steep slope of the mountain to the orchards. The trees this year were full of apples, though mostly of a small size. They seldom prune the trees, and they had grown wild, so that it was like making one's way through a miniature jungle. Among the apple orchards are a few peach-trees, but they do not bear well now. This particular orchard belonged to Andrew Swain, Fred Swain, Mrs. Frances Repetto, Old Sam Swain, and Tom Rogers. Everyone, however, said to us, "Take as many apples as ever you can carry from off any trees you like, and be sure to take only the best ones."

We had to wade through damp grass almost knee high to get to the trees, carrying sacks. I picked apples until I was tired, and then I lay down in the driest spot I could find to wait for the others. I soon got more than I could carry away or my sack would hold, for Tom Rogers, John Glass, and Peter Repetto all gave me plentifully of the best. After some time everyone seemed to have gathered enough, and many sacks were lying on the beach ready to be loaded into the boats. I was assisted to scramble down the hill-side to the beach, and, as it was well past midday and the sea seemed inclined to make up again, it was decided that our party should put off at once for the Settlement. Some of the small boats were already off, the boys and young men having had rather a difficulty in getting them out, and some of them had to swim out in their clothes, but they did not seem to mind the wetting.

We had a job to collect our crew, but when we got off I took the rudder and steered the boat carefully, following the directions given me. It took some hours hard pulling with some sailing, for it was over ten miles, and when we arrived Mrs. Fred Swain was on the beach to meet us with a teapot, and, after a hot cup of tea, I was glad to make my way to her house, where she had kindly prepared dinner for us.

(e) *Up the Base.*

On April 23rd we made our expedition up what the islanders call "The Base" by way of Bugsby Hole and Goat Ridge. My husband had previously ascended the Base by way of Burnt Hill, but I was desirous of seeing the views for myself, for they are very fine as one reaches some 2,000 to 3,000 feet above the

sea-level. Bob Glass came round early to the Parsonage, suggesting it was a suitable day for us to make the climb. It was fine, but a nice cool breeze was blowing, which meant open views over the sea. Mrs. Robert Glass, Donald Glass, the Boy Scouts, P.L. and Joe Repetto were ready to accompany us and carry knapsacks with light refreshments.

Bugsby Hole is a steep mountain slope at no great distance from the Settlement across Hottentot Gulch and on the road towards the Potato Patches. It is a green slope besprinkled by loose boulders of all sizes. We got so far up and then climbed along the side of a valley between two ridges working higher and higher over difficult rocks with advice and some assistance from our guides, and at length struggled on to the Base itself, where we rested while the two big lads, Joe and Donald, made a fire and boiled some tea. The scene from this height was very beautiful, a panorama of lofty peaks, the great Peak in the distance; far below, ravines covered with grass and great ferns, and the Settlement looking like a set of toy houses in a child's farmyard game; and in front of us the blue waters of the Atlantic stretching glittering in the sun and reaching to the horizon.

We should much have liked to try our luck on the Peak itself, but we were rather tired with the steep ascent and not in very good condition, as we had been short of stores for some time now and the lack of sufficient good food tells. We had also to face the climb down, so my husband went up no farther than what is called the "Second Base," a few hundred feet above the first Base, and then returned, and we made our descent by very much the same road as that by which we had come. Our guides very kindly remarked that "I was as good a climber as any Tristan-born woman"—quite a high compliment. The climbing is no light task at Tristan, for there is no easy pass up to the Base anywhere, and we seemed often to be overhanging appalling gulfs, scrambling along by the uncertain help of ferns and tussock, which might give way in one's hands. I brought down a small collection of ferns and mosses as souvenirs of the climb.

(f) The "Pyramids."

Close to what is called Runaway Beach, and in the midst of the "Patches" upon the borders of the cliff, rise a curious collection of what are, or rather were, miniature volcanic cones or craters, named by my husband the "Pyramids," from a fancied resemblance to them. They consist of lava, stone and earth, and are grown over thickly with grass. The largest is a couple of hundred feet high, and has a fine circular open crater of considerable depth. They only serve to illustrate the fact that at one time Tristan must have been a centre of immense volcanic activity, and one of the "hottest" spots on earth. We were thankful this was so only in prehistoric times. The "Pyramids" nowadays are sources of recreation to island donkeys and the children, who both seem to enjoy the pleasure of a scramble up their rather steep slopes.

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1. The two specimens sent to London by Mr. Rogers were shown on the Tristan stall at Wembley; and they are now in the Natural History Museum. The scientific name given to the bird is *Atlantisia Rogersi*, after my husband, and a more precise description of it is given in Appendix II by Dr. Lowe, the head of the Bird Department at the Museum.
 2. There were living specimens of this larger bird at the Zoological Gardens, but they are now dead and their skins are preserved at the Natural History Museum.

[Chapter 13](#)

CHAPTER XIII

THE LAST YEAR AND ITS DIFFICULTIES

EVERY day at Tristan da Cunha is a good deal like every other day. There is a great deal of sameness in island life. We had church, we gave lessons in school, we did our own housework. My husband attended to his meteorological instruments. We dealt with a succession of callers, who came for every reason under the sun at all sorts of times from dawn till dusk. We looked each day for the ship which never came.

The following entries are taken from my diary of 1924 and 1925—the period of greatest stress owing to the want of ships and the failure of island produce:—

June 22, 1924.—To-day is a typical day in the winter season—cold, windy, and steady heavy drizzle of rain. Up early to get breakfast. We lit the kitchen fire, but cannot have one in the parlour as wood is so hard to get and we are short, so sit in our coats.

June 23rd.—Very wet again to-day, and so only a few at church and day school. They have no clothes or footwear for wet weather. The little ones cannot get out at all. During recess a great hustle of men with guns and dogs. A boy had seen a sea-elephant come up, and it was at length shot amid general rejoicing, as they will now get plenty of oil for their lamps. It is over 18 feet long.

July 21st.—For several weeks now we have had no milk or butter. Edward has been very ill all the week. I have been much worried and unable to go to church or school. All the children here suffer a great deal from the poor quality and short quantity of food, more especially when the winter months come on. My husband is looking very thin and worried, but the neighbours are very kind and the women help with cooking and washing, as baby cannot be left. The sea is very rough to-day, huge breakers crashing right up to the bank. Rather a terrible sight.

August 28th.—Very short of soap, and our last tin of coffee. I have been looking over the stores and only got scant consolation.

August 29th.—We have one family here which had practically nothing to eat for days, and I wanted to give them some of our food as there are young children, but was told rather gruffly "they could feed their own family." The people here are very proud and sensitive on some points, so I said no more.

September 7th.—Still worried over Baby Edward: he is not doing well—cannot get suitable meals. The people will be getting penguin eggs soon, which will relieve the food situation, but it would seem rather hard elsewhere to have to live mainly on penguin eggs. Potatoes are getting very short.

September 10th.—Many gone for eggs. A great avalanche of stones fell down the mountain last night, making a noise like thunder or big guns—very alarming, but nothing hurt luckily. Since we have been here so many stones and boulders have fallen that the island looks quite different.

November 7th.—The island boats have gone to Inaccessible to-day for birds for food and to look for wood. Some of the men showed very nice feeling, saying "Goodbye" to us, because they expect to be away some days, and a boat might come and take us off to the Cape in their absence. They "thanked us for our kindness and wished us good luck."

November 27th.—We always have tea and supper in one. To-day we had dinner, tea, and supper all in one, at five o'clock. The children of the island haunt any kitchen where a meal is preparing, and I do not blame them. The last six months has been the shortest time since the Dublin was here two years ago. The storm of wind and rain did so much harm to the potatoes this year.

December 13th.—Christmas is coming and we are all preparing to make the best of the rather hard times, according to the proverb that "It is a poor heart which never rejoices." We have had a busy week, numbers of anxious mothers and children trying to get the problem of "new clothes for Christmas" solved. We felt very sorry for them all, and soon I had given away every spare piece of calico or print I possessed to make new frocks or cappies or renovate old ones. One little girl managed it by having a nice white tablecloth converted into a frock; another fell back on mother's best petticoat, and one lad had trousers from a white sheet, two more used a mackintosh and a yellow canvas mail sack. Really they are wonderful contrivers.

January 16, 1925.—Will the New Year bring a ship? Our time is very nearly up now. Food is very bad still. Our meals for most of the week have consisted of a few boiled potatoes with one

small cup of butter, and about one pint of milk daily between the three of us.



A MOUNTAIN SEA-VIEW, WITH TOM ROGERS
AND GORDON GLASS



MR. AND MRS. ROGERS AND THEIR SON
WITH THE OFFICERS OF THE "RAMON DA
LARRINAGA" ON THE POINT OF DEPARTURE

Our last six or eight months on the island were perhaps the hardest we or the people had experienced in the whole three years of our connection with it. The general shortage of everything was acute. The food was the poorest in quality and shortest in quantity we had known. We were rationing food for a long time. We ourselves had given up everything in the way of imported stores for nearly a year save a daily ration of tea and a minimum of soap. A little flour and a little rice had been kept for baby, and were doled out at one tablespoonful per day and then exhausted. Our entire diet became such as the island provided, a limited supply of very poor mutton and a rationed supply of potatoes with a fish now and then and some berries, and occasionally sea-birds or their eggs and no vegetables. We all began to fall off in weight and to look very thin. My husband said he felt very sorry for the little ones. The parents also found it very difficult to keep the children adequately clothed, and every available source was drawn upon, and some very clever shifts were managed, clothes being fashioned from the most unpromising materials. There had been many discussions as to whether anything could be done to improve conditions of life on the island. My husband and the men had talked it all over a hundred times. Some had said that things are so bad they would all be better off anywhere else, and if they had a chance they would leave the island, but they all said, "This is easier talked about than done for many good reasons." Finally it was decided that my husband should draw up a petition to the British Government, asking for an annual mail and all the men should sign it. The petition was addressed to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and I think every man over eighteen signed it, but it could not be sent

forward to London for some months as there was no ship until we ourselves left.^[1]

The long intervals between mails at the island, often extending over periods of two or three years, are the cause of great distress and inconvenience among the people. The natural resources of Tristan da Cunha are perhaps the most limited in the world; there is little arable land; internal communication over the island is extremely difficult; there is a struggle with rats and climatic conditions; the livestock has deteriorated, and pasturage is poor. There is no trade opportunity for barter with ships. The people are not idle, but what can they do to better things without mails or regular outside assistance and supervision?

In the last year there was more sickness than usual, and great demands on our medicine chest. For example, I got very short of Epsom salts and castor oil and pills. I used all my embrocation. Everyone had stomach and bowel trouble. It got very much on the nerves of the people. We all dreamt of ships. We watched for them day and night. There were false alarms of "Ship!" There began to be disputes which now and then threatened to become serious. There were accusations of theft and dishonesty, and some quarrels and much discontent and grumbling. If it were not that Tristan people have grown used to such a hard struggle and hand-to-mouth existence, it would all have been much worse; but it is looked upon as almost inevitable, and they assume a sort of fatalistic attitude. "It is God's will." My husband was apt to argue, "It is rather man's folly or neglect." Surely on grounds of humanity and public policy some arrangement might be reached to place the colony on a sound footing, spiritually and materially.

Various solutions present themselves rather than the callous one of letting things drift, or become dependent on chance mails and chance missionaries. There is the policy of offering the surplus population a chance to emigrate and settling them with State-aid at the Cape. Such an offer might be accepted by the younger families if generously conceived and presented sympathetically. The islanders themselves always urged the primary need of an annual parcel and letter mail from South Africa by warship or other means. They regard it as essential to the needs of the colony in the matter of food, clothing, and medical and other stores, for it is only by means of periodical intercourse that a system of barter can develop. They also desired a permanent missionary and schoolmaster, preferably a married man, but one who should be supplied with all necessary stores for himself and his family and his work on the island, independent of what the island could supply.

The people, as things are, find it very difficult to supply even such things as meat, butter, milk, and potatoes. These they are glad to supply as some practical return for the work of the missionary among them. But if times are bad the missionary should be so provided as not to suffer from the inability of the people to feed him. The missionary should be a person selected for some gifts of an organizing and governing ability, able to lead and guide the colony as an administrator as well as perform spiritual and scholastic functions. It needs firmness with strong sympathy and much diplomacy or tact. The Government might in this exceptional case entrust the missionary with lay powers, which would be used in a paternal rather than a judicial way.

The islanders regard the visit of a warship with great respect. For them it is the visible and outward sign of Imperial authority and of their Empire connection. In spite of the objection, urged on economic grounds, of the expense of such a visit, it might surely be revived if the colony continues, for its

influence for good is immense. Its moral suasion tends to law and order and right living. It helps both missionary and people. It would always do this. If there were a resident magistrate or missionary magistrate it would be to the commander of the warship that he must look to urge and enforce his regulations or judgments. The commander would ensure the peace of the community by deporting undesirables—this as a last resource—and by warning the islanders and advising them as to their good behaviour and well-being. The annual visit of a warship was a precedent as late as the Boer War, but most unfortunately for the island it has seemed necessary to the Admiralty to discontinue it.

The result of the almost complete absence of shipping at Tristan da Cunha makes it almost like living in the moon. It was the merest chance that the end came for us when our three years' period of voluntary service was just completed. We had long felt as if we were living out of the world altogether. We were naturally wondering how we should get away, ignorant if our friends or relations at home were dead or alive, ignorant as to what efforts were being made on our behalf or on that of the island. Of course our work went on as usual, but we could not help seeing how the people were hard-pressed and weary, and much disheartened in spite of trying to keep up a cheerful front.

It was on February 4, 1925, that the strain was broken. We were still in bed, and it was just after dawn that someone shouted "Sail Ho! Steamer to west'ard ho!" We tumbled out of bed in frantic haste, and dressed and ran outside with Baby Edward bundled up in our arms. There was movement everywhere—no one cares for a meal at such times. We left breakfast to its fate, as did the people who ran to catch fowls and geese and other livestock for trading. My first thought was for our mails, and whether my husband might now at least get a little decent food for baby, who for months had not had anything suitable for a little child. He slung the mail over his shoulder, said a hurried good-bye, and was off to the beach where the men were quickly getting the big boats ready for launching. We could now see it was a large cargo steamer heading for the island, and as the boats hastened to meet her there was much excited talking amongst those on shore. "What might happen? Should we leave the island? Might it be the mail?" Everyone was uneasy. Many went down to the shore to watch for the return of the boats; others crowded up to the Parsonage, where I was making an effort to pack our things, in case the captain was willing to give us a passage home.

The steamer was some distance out from the island when my husband's boat got alongside. It proved to be the *Ramon da Larrinaga*, Larrinaga Line, Liverpool, Captain J. V. Jones, bound for Durban and Australia, returning from South America. She had come into Tristan to try and get fresh meat, as in this direction the stores were short, she having been turned by wireless before touching a South American port. Captain Jones received the boats very kindly, promised to convey the mails, announced he would remain off the island for two hours to give an opportunity for a little trading, and instructed his steward to pay for fresh meat in such stores as the people desired up to value. He also kindly offered us a passage to Durban if we would get ready at once, and blew a loud blast on the siren as a signal to me that the passage had been granted. He and some of his officers came ashore, and kindly allowed a special gift of grocery stores he had prepared for the missionary and his wife to be shared by us amongst the people.

These last two or three hours on the island stand out indelibly in my memory. We had to work our hardest for the time was so short, but it was a

grievous parting in many ways. We were very much touched by the behaviour of the people. Everyone was at the house. There was a succession of little children bringing some farewell gift. The men and boys were eager to help in cording our boxes and carrying them to the beach. Men and women would come and wring our hands, and in a few hurried, broken words try to thank us for our work. I was busy giving out presents of household stuff to this one and that one as a remembrance. My husband had gone to pay a farewell visit to one or two sick folk, and was arranging for a farewell service in the little church we had built ourselves.

Two couples had for some time been contemplating getting married, Rosa Swain and Jack Rogers and Lizzie Rogers and David Hagan. They were going to be married on the 22nd, my husband's birthday, but now they were in much alarm lest the opportunity of being married by the Chaplain would be lost. I quickly dispelled their fears, and by tremendous exertions got the whole party in order for the ceremony, I borrowed or gave clothes to the bridal party, wedding rings had to be borrowed, in fact, nearly everything. Captain Jones had fitted out each of the bridegrooms with a suit of clothes and a flannel shirt, and the brides were resplendent in smart blouses and a hat apiece. The wedding hats are remarkable, as they usually wear handkerchiefs, and there is a yarn that one of them has been on the island fifty years, and it is carefully preserved to do duty at successive weddings. Where the couples would sleep or find bedclothes I have no idea.



A TRISTAN BULLOCK-WAGON



THE LAST FAREWELL ON THE BEACH

The church was crowded for the weddings. I was the brideswoman (for instead of bridesmaid at Tristan the bride is supported by a married friend) and organist and choirmistress and general mistress of ceremonies. Everyone seemed bewildered, and the cheerful strains of the wedding marches and hymns were dolefully interrupted by the sobs of the disconsolate congregation. Even my husband seemed to lose his usual presence of mind, and got mixed over the names of the couples and I had to correct him. During the few farewell words from my husband in which he "thanked the people for many kindnesses, and expressed our sorrow that the time of parting had at length arrived, and urged them to live at peace and have faith in God's love," and especially when we tried to sing the hymn we had practised for the inevitable day of farewells, "God be with you till we meet again," most people were weeping aloud. Some could bear it no longer and were taken out of church, and the big, strong men broke down and wept with the little children. Even the bridal party were in tears.

At the door the Marconi officer snapshotted the wedding group, and afterwards we both went across to the house of Bill Rogers, where there was a curious wedding breakfast of dry bread, jam, and tea. They had just got it from the ship, and were kindly anxious for us to break bread once more for the last time, as we could not stop for the usual Tristan wedding dinner of mutton and potatoes.

We got down to Little Beach, where two boats loaded with bags and boxes were waiting to convey us out to the *Ramon da Larrinaga*, which was waiting with steam up ready for us to embark. Some of the women clung hold of me desperately as if they could not let me go and sobbed aloud, but my husband came and gently pulled me away and put me in the boat. It seemed strange to see the women without their knitting, but they had all been making special white socks for presents for my husband's birthday, and they seemed not to know what to do with these, and their large dark eyes were streaming with tears. As we steamed away the men in the island boats stood up and waved their hats and gave us three parting cheers, and the little crowd on the beach joined in the demonstration, but as we watched the familiar panorama of the little lonely

island fade away our own eyes too were dim. All the islanders stood about in dejected little groups until we turned the point and the Settlement was lost from view.

We owe many thanks to Captain Jones, his officers and his owners, for consistent kindness on our nine days' voyage to Durban. We had most comfortable accommodation, and everything kindness could suggest was done to make us forget any hardships we had been through at Tristan da Cunha. Near the Cape a wireless was sent to inform our friends of our return and make their minds easy as to our health. At Durban we were met by Press men and photographers, and the Church authorities had kindly arranged for our being hospitably entertained. Edward howled at leaving the ship: he wanted Captain Jones to take him back to Tristan, but I think we both thanked God from our hearts during the short service the Archdeacon held, for all His Fatherly kindness and tender care since 1921, when we first offered to go to "The Lonely Island."

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1. The petition was eventually forwarded to Mr. Gane, who presented it to the Colonial Office. A copy of it, and of the Government reply, is given in Appendix III.
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[Appendix 1](#)

APPENDIX I

CENSUS OF THE ISLANDERS

HENRY MARTYN CHESELDEN ROGERS (Missionary).

Rose Annie Rogers (wife).

Edward Lyon Tristan Cheselden Rogers (son), aged two years.

Then came the islanders' names in families and alphabetical order:

<p>1.</p> <p>Glass, Gordon, Mr.</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Susan, Mrs.</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Lily</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Timothy Clement</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Violet</p> <p>2.</p> <p>Glass, John, Mr.</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Jemima, Mrs.</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Florence</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Gordon</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Herbert</p> <p>3.</p> <p>Glass, Robert Franklin, Mr.</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Charlotte, Mrs.</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Robert Frank</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">George</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Donald</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Sidney</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Godfrey</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Wilson</p> <p>4.</p> <p>Green, Alfred, Mr.</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Lily, Mrs.</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Alice</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Nelson</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Ellen</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Margery</p> <p>5.</p> <p>Green, Charles, Mr.</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Emma Mrs.</p>	<p>16.</p> <p>Lavarello, William, Mr.</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Violet, Mrs.</p> <p>17.</p> <p>Repetto, Frances Mrs. (widow)</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">William Peter</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Joseph Dudley</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">John Henry</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Green, Martha (widow)</p> <p>18.</p> <p>Repetto, Arthur, Mr.</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Edith, Mrs.</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Arthur Patrick</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Martyn</p> <p>19.</p> <p>Rogers, Arthur, Mr.</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Martha, Mrs.</p> <p>20.</p> <p>Rogers, Tom, Mr.</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Sarah (widow)</p> <p>21.</p> <p>Rogers, Jack (John), Mr.</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Rosa, Mrs.</p> <p>22.</p> <p>Rogers, William Henry, Mr.</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Jane, Mrs.</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Patrick</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Victor</p>
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Frederick	Maud
Hilda	
Silvia	23.
Maggie	Rogers, William, Mr.
Dorothy	Agnes, Mrs.
	Joseph Glass*
6.	Thomas Glass*
Green, John, Mr.	May Glass*
Sophia, Mrs.	(*Stepchildren)
Catherine	Cyril
Douglas Haig	Rudolph twins
Herbert	Reginald
	Kenneth
7.	
Green, Henry, Mr.	24.
Minnie, Mrs.	Swain, Samuel, Mr.
Christopher	(Old Sam Swain)
Ernest	Lucy, Mrs.
	Ruth
8.	Rachel
Green, Robert, Mr.	Norman
Louisa, Mrs.	
Charles	25.
Gertrude	Swain, Andrew, Mr.
	Annie, Mrs.
9.	James
Green, Ned (Edward), Mr.	Clara
Dorothy, Mrs.	Richard
	Elsie
10.	Agnes
Green, William Peter, Mr.	Beatrice
Selina, Mrs.	Leslie
William Philip	
	26.
11.	Swain, Harry, Mr.
Hagan, Andrew, Mr.	Ethel, Mrs.
Susannah, Mrs.	Cecil Henry
	Ernest
12.	
Hagan, David, Mr.	27.
Elizabeth, Mrs.	Swain, Frederick, Mr.
	Mary, Mrs.

13.	Victoria
Lavarello, Gaetano, Mr.	Alice
Jane, Mrs.	William
Percy	Frances Rose (Baby)
Margaret	
Lawrence	28.
Glass, Mary (widow)	Swain, George, Mr.
	Maggie, Mrs.
14.	Walter
Lavarello, John Baptist, Mr.	Baby (unnamed)
Maria, Mrs.	
Laurie	29.
Cissie	Swain, Susan (widow)
	Ben
15.	
Lavarello, Robert, Mr.	30.
Mabel, Mrs.	Swain, Robert, Mr.
Elden	Selina, Mrs.
Olive	Tom
	Eliza
	Christopher
	Mabel
	Edward

There have been several births since this Census.

[Appendix 2](#)

APPENDIX II

Natural History specimens collected by Mr. and Mrs. Rogers in Tristan da Cunha and Inaccessible and Nightingale Islands and now at the British Museum (Natural History)

1. THE FLIGHTLESS RAIL (*Atlantisia Rogersi*) OF INACCESSIBLE ISLAND

SPECIAL DESCRIPTION BY DR. PERCY LOWE

WHEN the Shackleton-Rowett Expedition touched, in 1922, at the Tristan da Cunha group on its way home from the South Atlantic, Mr. G. H. Wilkins, the naturalist on board the *Quest*, was unable to procure specimens of the "Island Hen" on Inaccessible Island. So desirable was it, however, to find out what this flightless rail was like that he left collecting material with the late Rev. H. M. C. Rogers, then acting as resident chaplain on Tristan da Cunha, with a request that he would try every means in his power to get specimens at the first opportunity. As a result, two skins of an almost black and diminutive flightless rail arrived at the British Museum on July 5, 1923. From what had been previously gathered from past reports no one was very much surprised when this rail proved to be totally different in character from the so-called "Island Hen" (*Porphyriornis nesiotis*) which once lived upon Tristan da Cunha, and still lives upon Gough Island, though in a slightly different form, known as *Porphyriornis comeri*.

The diminutive and flightless rail which lives on Inaccessible Island and, as far as is known, nowhere else in the Atlantic, or for that matter in the whole world, is in fact not even generically allied to the moorhen-like gallinules just referred to. It is a true rail; and besides this there is nothing specifically like it known to science, although it may be that certain rails living on islands in the Pacific Ocean may have sprung from the same original stock. It was for these and other reasons, therefore, that I referred this rail to an entirely new genus and species, naming it in honour of Mr. Rogers, who was the first to procure specimens of it with the object of making it known to science.¹

The bird will therefore now be known as

Atlantisia Rogersi

Although this was the first occasion on which this interesting little rail had ever been taken in the interests of science, other attempts had previously been made to secure specimens of it. Among the most historic of these was that made during the visit of the *Challenger* to Inaccessible Island on October 16, 1873. Sir Whyville Thomson, who accompanied this expedition, writes:²

"Inaccessible, like Tristan, has its 'Island Hen,' and it is one of very few regrets that we found it impossible to, get a specimen of it. It is probably a gallinule, but it is certainly a different species from the Tristan bird. It is only about a fourth the size, and it seems to be markedly different in appearance. The Stoltenhoffs were very familiar with it, and described it as being exactly like a black chicken two days old, the legs and beak black, the latter long and slender, the head small, the wings short and soft and useless for flight. It is common on the plateau, and runs like a partridge among the long grass and ferns, feeding upon insects and seeds."

Judging from the specimens in the possession of the British Museum, of which one is apparently older than the other, it would appear that the young, full-grown rail is almost uniformly black, but as maturity is attained there is some slight barring on the wing-coverts, flanks and abdomen, typical of the genus *Rallus*.

The feathers in both old and immature have discontinuous barbs so that a loose, hairy appearance is given to the plumage. The wings are very small and the tail very feeble. The old bird would appear to acquire a sienna-brown tinge of colour on its upper parts, a slaty-grey below, a condition of plumage somewhat reminiscent of a small rail found in the Pacific (*Porzana tabuensis*).

We are given to understand that these little Inaccessible Island rails live in subterranean retreats beneath the debris of fallen rocks. It is to be hoped that the islanders will do their best to preserve them in memory of the man who with such devotion looked after their welfare on Tristan da Cunha. They may at any rate pride themselves on the fact that there is no other rail like theirs in the whole world. It is also certain that attempts will be made on the part of dealers and collectors to acquire specimens. It is of the utmost importance that no animals such as cats should be introduced on to the island, as they would be certain to exterminate the rails and other birds. The protection of all the birds on their islands within practical limits is indeed a trust for which the islanders are responsible.

(Sgd.) PERCY R. LOWE.

In charge of Ornithology, British Museum (Nat. Hist.).

2. The Sooty Albatros (*Phaebetria fusca*).
3. The Broad-billed Prion (*Pachyptila vittata keyteli*).
4. The Tristan da Cunha Thrush (*Nesocichla eremita*).
5. The Tristan da Cunha Bunting (*Nesospiza acunhae*).
6. The Tern (*Sterna vittata*).
7. The Great Shearwater (*Puffinus gravis*), locally known as the Pediunker.

Birds from Tristan da Cunha

1. Purple Gallinule (*Ionornis martinica*).
2. Long-winged Sulmer (*Pterodroma macroptera*).

Eggs from Tristan da Cunha

1. The egg of the Yellow-nosed Albatros (*Thalassarche chlororhynchus*).
2. The egg of the Cape Seas Albatros (*Thalassarche chrysostoma*).
3. The egg of the Broad-billed Prion (*Pachyptila vittata keyteli*).
4. The egg of the Broad-winged Petrel (*Pterodroma macroptera*).
5. The egg of the Crested Penguin (*Catarrhaites chrysocome*).
6. The egg of the Southern Black-backed Gull (*Larus dominicanus*).
7. The egg of the Great Shearwater (*Puffinus gravis*).

Sea Shells, etc., from Tristan da Cunha

- Shells (*Argobuccinum vexillum*, Sowerby).
Sea-urchins (*Arbacia*, Gray).

From Inaccessible Island

Shells (*Siphonaria tristanensis*).

Shells (*Ianthina communis*).

Shells (*Marinata tristanensis*, Connolly).

Botanical Specimens from Tristan da Cunha

1. The Lady's Fingers³ (*Lycopodium diapharum*, Swartz).
2. Tape-leaf Fern (*Blenchnum australe* L.).
3. Fern (*Asplenium obtusatum* var. *obliquum*, Baker).
4. Fern (*Polystichum adiantiforme*, J. Sm.) (*Aspidium coriaceum* Sw.).
5. Fern (*Lomaria penna marina*, Kuhn).
6. Dog-catcher Plant (*Acaena sanguisorbae*, Vahl).
7. *Pelargonium grassularioidis*, Ait.
8. Wild Cram Bush (*Empetrum nigrum* Linn var. *rubrum*—Hemsley).
9. Wild Daisy (*Chrysanthemum lecanthemum* L.).
10. Mountain Maiden-hair Fern (*Dryopteris aguilina* C. Chr. *Polypodium aguilinum*, Thonars).
11. Shamrock (*Apium australe*, Thonars).
12. Fern (*Oxalis corniculata* L.).
13. Island Tea (*Chenopodium tomentosum*, Thonars).
14. Island Blackberry (*Solanum nigrum* L.).
15. *Plantago major* L.
16. Fowl Berry (*Nertera depressa* Goeotn).
17. Rat-tail Grass (*Plantago lanceolata* L.).
18. Cow-pudding Grass (*Graphalium pyramidale* , Thonars).
19. Island Moss (*Polytrichum juniperinum*—Hedw).
20. Bog Fern growing on mountain-top (*Blechnum tabulare*, Kuhn) (*Lomaria Boryana* Willd).

1. First described in the *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club*, vol. xliii, 1923, p. 175.

2. *Challenger Reports: Atlantic*: vol. ii. p. 185. See also Moseley's *Notes by a Naturalist on the "Challenger"*.

3. The common names given here are those in use on the island.

APPENDIX III

PETITION

From the Inhabitants of
Tristan da Cunha
respecting Letter and Parcel
Mails to the Island

to

The Rt. Hon. The Secretary of State for the Colonies

SIR,—

We, the undersigned inhabitants of Tristan da Cunha, beg to call your attention and that of H.M. Government to the difficulty that this British Colony is placed in by the extreme infrequency of letter mails to this island. It is now two years since we received any mail and above twelve months since we were able to despatch any letters or parcels.

The obvious reason of the mail difficulty is that the island lies off the main trade routes so that few or no vessels can be induced to call in at the island. As this is the case, we are thrown upon our own very slender resources, and while the island produces sufficient food to maintain life, yet our health suffers from the impossibility of obtaining a variety of food such as flour, rice, tea, or sugar.

We look to get all our stores from passing vessels or more usually such as bring us the mail, and in the absence of such we suffer great hardships which press most heavily upon the women and children and more particularly upon sick persons here.

We feel most chiefly the difficulty of obtaining flour for bread-making, soap for washing, medical supplies, clothing, all of which must come to us by mail ; also paint and canvas to maintain our fishing boats. We can get none of these to us vital necessities without a regular mail.

We beg that when it is not possible for the Postmaster-General to fix an annual mail with some steamship company he may try and arrange that by favour of the Lords of the Admiralty a warship from the Cape Station or elsewhere may bring us our mail.

We beg that you will direct our petition to the proper quarter, and grant us the favour of an acknowledgment.

We desire to again assert our loyal affection to H.M. the King and to H.M. Government, and are

Most respectfully yours,

H. MARTYN CHESELDEN ROGERS (Missionary at Tristan 1922-25)

W. S. SWAIN (his mark)

R. F. LAVARELLO

THOMAS ROGERS

FRED SWAIN

ARTHUR HENRY ROGERS

JOHN EDWARD GREEN

HARRY ANDREW SWAIN

JACK ROGERS

CHARLES HENRY GREEN

ROBERT F. GLASS

ANDREW W. SWAIN

WILLIAM LAVARELLO

GEORGE GLASS

PERCY LAVARELLO

BILL ROGERS

JOHNAVARELLO

ROBERT GLASS
WILLIAM PETER REPETTO
S. T. SWAIN
JAMES S. SWAIN
JOSEPH GORDON GLASS
WILLIAM GREEN
DAVID JAMES HAGAN
BEN SWAIN
TOM SWAIN
DONALD GLASS
JOE GLASS
WILLIAM GORDON GLASS
HENRY GREEN

ARTHUR E. REPETTO
EDWARD T. GREEN
ALFRED GREEN
WILLIAM THOMAS ROGERS
GAETANO LAVARELLO
C. GREEN
JOHN GLASS
RICHARD SWAIN
GEORGE SWAIN
ROBERT GREEN
ANDREW HAGAN
JOSEPH ANDREW DUDLEY REPETTO

Copy.

DOWNING STREET,
23rd March, 1925

SIR,

1. I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 13th instant, enclosing a petition from the adult male inhabitants of Tristan da Cunha respecting letter and parcel mails to the island.

2. The Secretary of State will lay before His Majesty the King the expression of loyalty to His Majesty conveyed in the petition, and a letter will be sent to the islanders when an opportunity occurs.

3. His Majesty's Government have, of course, every sympathy with the desire of the petitioners to obtain an annual mail, and the question of the possibility of providing more regular and frequent communication with the island has recently been under careful consideration. It is feared, however, that, having regard to the considerable expense and other difficulties involved, the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty cannot undertake to arrange for a yearly visit of one of His Majesty's ships to the island, though it is hoped that such a visit can be made every three or four years. It does not therefore seem possible to promise any extra facilities at present, but every opportunity will be taken to make use of such means of communication with the island as may present themselves. The Secretary of State is in hope that it may be possible for the *Discovery* to visit the island at some time in the course of its work, though it cannot yet be said with certainty whether this will be found practicable.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
(Sgd.) E. J. HARDING

D. M. GANE, Esq.

APPENDIX IV

Reproduced from " THE SOLICITORS' JOURNAL AND WEEKLY REPORTER " of October 18, 1924 (by courtesy of the Editor)

CUSTOM IN TRISTAN DA CUNHA

THE origins of law and custom are usually the study of the antiquarian, but it is possible to witness the emergence of them as a contemporary process. This opportunity is afforded to us to day within the confines of the British Empire, for, in the Islands of Pitcairn, in the South Pacific, and Tristan da Cunha, in the South Atlantic, may be seen developments for the regulation of society which are a purely native and spontaneous outgrowth.

No regular communications exist with either of these islands, and, to render their isolation and detachment from the world the greater, both have rock bound coasts without harbours or natural facilities for landing. Consequently, the communities settled on them are subject to a minimum of influence and interference from outside, and the present form and character which each has assumed may be regarded as the peculiar product of its immediate environment, and as little as possible attributable to introductions from without.

As is well known, the settlement on Pitcairn took its origin in the mutiny of the *Bounty* towards the end of the eighteenth century. The mutineers, with wives brought from Tahiti, sought refuge there and their whereabouts were not discovered for nearly thirty years, and when they were found, a new generation had appeared. All but one of the mutineers were dead, and the inhabitants, despite their unfavourable origin, had become a God fearing, happy and industrious people, and this they have since remained.

Tristan da Cunha had no such unfavourable beginnings. Though the annexation was due to the American War of 1812 15, the settlement there owed its origin to the imprisonment of Napoleon on St. Helena. William Glass, the founder of it, was one of a company of soldiers who were sent to Tristan to prevent its being used as a jumping ground for contriving the rescue of the Emperor, and Glass remained with his wife and children when the company was withdrawn, and the settlement has grown from that. Both islands have a population seldom numbering many more than a hundred, and, in the case of the one as of the other, there is no crime or immorality amongst them, and the inhabitants of Tristan da Cunha, like those of Pitcairn, have the reputation of being a brave, contented and upright people.

The thing which strikes the inquirer at the outset is the few laws which meet the needs of a community of the kind. We are concerned here more especially with the island of Tristan da Cunha, but, in the case of Pitcairn, it is interesting to note that, so fully aware were the islanders of the undesirability of framing a code of laws, that it was amongst their early decisions to pass no laws until they were actually needed. Sir Matthew Hale, in his day, commented strongly on the undesirability of new laws except under pressing circumstances, and what justification is to be found in the primary instincts of these islanders for our own delays in legislation and the postponement of it until thought is ripe and the demand unanswerable !

In Pitcairn, the rudiments of administrative control appeared at an early date. A magistrate was elected from amongst the inhabitants, and it became his duty to convene public meetings on all complaints arising, and to see all public works

executed. But on Tristan da Cunha it has been otherwise. In 1876 an attempt was made to introduce a similar system there. One of the visiting warships made a report on the subject, and in this report it was suggested that the Commander of the Cape Station should be constituted ex officio Governor of the island with a deputy appointed by the islanders from amongst themselves, and this was accepted by the Government in principle and a simple constitution was actually drafted by the Law Officers of the Crown. It was not proceeded with, however, because the islanders took alarm at the prospect and their preferences were respected.

The system which Tristan da Cunha employs has not been reduced to writing, and in this respect it is unlike that of Pitcairn. The inhabitants of Pitcairn soon came to discover that no system of government could be administered if ignorance of the laws could be pleaded as an excuse for disobedience, and so, with the introduction of an administration, the more important of its customs were written down, and they became its laws, and it was made thenceforth the duty of the magistrate to keep them entered and periodically to read them publicly. Seeing that the British Constitution is rooted in both systems, the unwritten law to which we are accustomed to conform and the written law which we are compelled to obey, the study of Tristan da Cunha and Pitcairn in conjunction are of interest as showing the initial steps by which such a development is reached.

The community of Tristan da Cunha may be defined as a simple republic bound by its customs enforced by common consent. It has been described as exactly fitting Herbert Spencer's definition of a simple society which forms a single working whole unsubjected to any other, and of which the parts co operate with or without (in this case without) any regulating centre. It exemplifies a civilized community in its most elementary form, in which the father exercises rule over his own family, but can impose his will on no one but his wife and children. But though the father is by common consent head in his own household, there is no recognized head of the settlement, and, when, in the past—as in the case of William Glass, the founder, and, after him, of Peter Green—circumstances created one, it has been solely due to the weight of personal ascendancy, and with the passing of personality, equality in the community has revived.

Though the islanders render voluntary assistance as occasion requires, their independence is much cherished by them, and the drawbacks of this become manifest in the stifling of initiative and enterprise destined for the common good by way of public service, a striking instance of which was seen on the occasion of the visit of H.M.S. *Dublin* in 1923. The islanders are expert boatmen, and probably there is little diversity of opinion amongst them as to the right thing to do in emergencies. But the want of an acknowledged head proved a source of embarrassment on this occasion, for, as the official report said, the members of the crew had many suggestions to offer, and it was only when all were agreed as to the course to be adopted or the moment to be chosen that the boats were well handled, and a strong beach party under a determined officer became necessary for the expeditious landing of the stores. From this it may be doubted whether a community can long thrive that is not modelled on the constitution of the family with the discipline implicit in it. When Lycurgus was advised to establish a popular government in Lacedaemon, he said, " Go and first make a trial of it in thy own family," and in these words the need for authority in the state, not less than in the family, was convincingly implied.

It is in the customs attaching to property in Tristan da Cunha that we find the outstanding feature of its dispensation, and it is to these that attention is now more especially drawn.

All land is in the first place regarded as being held in common. That acquired for building purposes becomes the absolute property of the owner when built upon, and land intended for cultivation remains the subject of individual ownership only so long as it is cultivated. Whenever an islander wishes to occupy a portion for cultivation, he encloses it, and it is considered to belong to him and his descendants so long as it is kept under cultivation, but when no longer cultivated it is thrown open and becomes common pasturage again.

With regard to movables, the principle of equality is rigidly enforced in the case of all new acquisitions not addressed expressly to individual islanders, and a method of distribution has developed in the island for giving effect to this. The people have always been largely dependent, in the way of barter, on passing ships for many of their necessaries of life, and the simple customs which have evolved chiefly touch the ownership of the property so acquired. All clothing, stores, provisions, and money (when there is any) coming into the island in this way are, with certain qualifications, deemed to be common property and subject to equal distribution amongst the inhabitants according to families (whatever the constitution of each family may be), and with special treatment of the surviving widows, the wives of the men lost in the boating disaster of 1886. And the produce given by the islanders in exchange is deemed to be given by the community, though, as a matter of fact, for the sake of convenience, it is given by each family in turn. Though the people are entitled according to family to an equal distribution of the supplies furnished by passing shipping, it is one of the qualifying rules that no family, if the father be living and able, is permitted to participate unless he goes out to the ship. And furthermore, provided private barter does not interfere with the quantities required for a visiting ship's use, individual transaction and profit are allowed and the accumulation of wealth is permitted. On the death of the father, the mother stands in his place as head of the family and owner of his possessions, and on her death the children are entitled equally. There is no instance remembered of these rules of inheritance being given a new direction under the will of an islander. Testamentary disposition is apparently unknown.

Customs that have all the authority of law prevail, too, in other connections. The clergyman is kept entirely by the people, and, in order that the obligation may be shared equally, each family, in weekly turn, provides a fixed quantity of food, and, however poor the family may be, "the minister" must never be allowed to go short., it being a point of honour as well as of obligation that he shall be provided for first. In the care of the shipwrecked, too, equality of service obtains. Tristan da Cunha has been the scene of numerous shipwrecks, and a system of billeting amongst the people has grown that provides for an even distribution of the burden.

Though the chief customs of the island may be thus defined, it must not be taken that all render ready obedience to them. At the same time, the people show a strong disposition to protect their system against invasions of it, and from this it may be seen that the upholding of the law may be as much a consideration with a small community as with a great one. In giving an instance of this, it should be first understood that the islanders are a generous people. We have it on the authority of those well informed, and who are not deceived by first impressions, that they are more ready to give than to receive, and when they

accept readily what is given to them they do so as those who are prepared to give in return. The issue in question arose in connection with the consignment sent by the *Dublin* already referred to. The Crown Agents had received many parcels, some addressed " To the Inhabitants," others to individuals by name. In repacking, a parcel addressed to an individual was put by the Agents in a crate addressed " To the Inhabitants." When it arrived, the crate was placed with those goods which were to be the subject of equal distribution, and when there was found in it a parcel addressed to an individual, the question arose which was to prevail, the direction given on the parcel, or the covering direction on the crate. Needless to say, the claim of the individual prevailed, but the way in which the case was debated brought to mind in all its simple aspects the *jus strictum* of the common law on the one side and the amelioration of equity giving recognition to *intention* on the other, and the incident is not without instruction as showing the small beginnings from which our two great systems of jurisprudence have sprung and the need for them.

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