

A MONARCH OF ALL HE SURVEYS.

This article tells of the Happy Isles of the British Empire, which are the Cocos-Keeling and Christmas Islands in the Indian Ocean. They are owned by a family of sturdy Scots called Ross, who have put the story of Robinson Crusoe into the shade.

'TIS the merest jest that supposes a Scot to be seated on the top of the North Pole. And yet in sober fact you find the Scot in the most out-of-the-way corners of the British Empire. You know that Defoe based his invention of Robinson Crusoe on the strange story of Alexander Selkirk, a Largo man, who lived alone on Juan Fernandez for four years (1704-8). But for the fact of the intervention of America, a semi-Scot might one day have been Queen of Hawaii, for the pretty Princess Kaiulani is the daughter of an Edinburgh man, Mr. A. S. Cleg-horn, who married Princess Likelike, sister of the dethroned Queen, Liliuokalani. Similarly, Mr. Robert Gillespie Reid, whose big railway concession has practically made him King of Newfoundland, is a native of Coupar Angus.

But even more interesting than any of

these is the adventurous family of Clunies Ross, who own the Cocos-Keeling and Christmas Islands, in the Indian Ocean, over which the British flag flies; for



Photo. by London Stereoscopic Co.

MR. GEORGE CLUNIES ROSS, WHO OWNS THE COCOS-KEELING ISLANDS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

although they might have been Russian or Dutch, the Clunies Rosses chose Victoria as their ultimate Sovereign; and when the head of the house, Mr. George Clunies Ross, was in London the other week, the Colonial Office had seen no more interesting client for many a year. Indeed, the story of the Cocos-Keeling Isles and their monarch is more wonderful than many a comic opera, and but for the fact that a solemn Blue-Book attests its reality, might

be thought to belong to the region of fantasy.

But where are these Happy Isles, you ask? Christmas Island lies serene in the Indian Ocean, about a hundred and ninety miles south of Java, while the Cocos-Keeling group (numbering twenty islands

in all) are three days farther off, if you go by steamer. The latter group was discovered by William Keeling, "General for the then East India Adventurers," who died at Carisbrooke, in the Isle of Wight, in 1819. Thus the Queen can never forget her subjects in those dim and distant isles, for whenever she visits Carisbrooke Church she cannot but see the painted wooden tablet which commemorates the courageous Keeling in the lines—

Fortie and two years in this vessel frail,
On the rough seas of life did Keeling saile,
A merchant fortunate, a captain bould,
A courtier gracious, yet, alas! not old.
Such wealth, experience, honour, and high praise
Few winne in twice as many daies.

The discovery of Captain Keeling might have been forgotten but for the adventurous spirit of a Scotch sailor called Ross, who landed (in 1825) on the islands, which were then unoccupied. He came of the powerful Ross-shire family of Ross,

for whom the cause of Bonnie Prince Charlie had spelt ruin. Having failed to create a new King of Scots, Ross resolved to be a king himself. So he hurried back to Scotland to tell his kinsmen of the good tidings of those Happy Isles beyond the sea, returning there in 1827. Meantime, however, an English adventurer called Alexander Hare had settled on the islands, having come in the *Melpomene*, a ship commanded by Ross's own brother. Hare and Ross did not get on, however. Hare was an eccentric person, and all his followers, whom he had originally brought from Malacca (at the tail end of the Malay Peninsula), ultimately left him and went over to Ross. Finally Hare left the islands and died at Singapore.

Ross died in 1854, and was succeeded by

his son, J. G. Clunies Ross. The latter died in 1871, and was followed by his son, the present King of Cocos, Mr. George Clunies Ross, who was born in 1841, was educated in Guernsey, and married a Cocos maid who does not speak English. His second brother, Charles, who takes charge of Cocos in his absence, was educated at St. Andrews University—those Scots are so insistent on education. A third brother graduated in a bank at Batavia. The youngest of all is a farmer in New Zealand, while one ran the family schooner *J. G. C. Ross* (ferty tons), in which two of the brothers once sailed round the world.

The Cocos-Keeling group are coral islands, forming a broken circle like a horse-shoe, and they are connected by the hard cement rock on which they rest. Some of them are from one to seven miles in length; others are only about a hundred yards. If you know your Darwin well—and his theory of coral reefs is one of the

Our family descended of an old
Scottish family wrecked in the in the
troubulous times of 1745 - of the Associated
Chau Chattan who took up arms for James
the son of James the second. We derived our
origin from the Rosshere Ross
"Trans Atlantic". Sensational "Treasure
trove" It is an island in the Pacific
Ocean not my Islands
Yours Sincerely
J. Clunies Ross

PART OF A LETTER IN MR. CLUNIEN ROSS'S HAND-WRITING.

most fascinating subjects that the science of the reign has concocted—you will have some idea of the character of this strange kingdom rising in the Indian Ocean, and you will be prepared to hear that the land is rising, and may yet form a circular island, surrounded by a crater-like edge, the whole resembling a giant crater.

Since 1857, when H.M.S. *Juno* visited them, the British flag has flown over Cocos-Keeling Islands, and on Aug. 24, 1886, Mr. A. P. Talbot, Assistant Colonial Secretary of the Straits Settlements, who had arrived on H.M.S. *Zephyr*, annexed the islands to that colony, Mr. George Clunies Ross still remaining in charge of the group. He is, indeed, king of the islands in almost every sense, protecting the interests of his 600 subjects—of whom 400



WHERE THE SANTA CLAUS OF CHRISTMAS ISLAND (MR. ANDREW CLUNIES ROSS) LIVES.

Photographs by Mr. James Fuller.



NATIVE HUT ON THE KEELING COCOS.

are Cocos born and zoo are imported from Bantam to help in the work of the place—as a father. Mr. Ross has stood out against a metallic currency, holding that it

the auspices of Sir John Murray, of *Challenger* fame. Meantime, however, a Santa Claus had come to Christmas Island in the person of Mr. Andrew Clunies



THE WAVING PALM TREES.

would breed gambling and other vices. The one export from the island is copra, the annual output being from 500 to 600 tons, but it is all of the highest quality.

Christmas Island has a long history, with very few incidents, however. The island, which is about twelve miles long by seven broad, is surrounded by seas of enormous depth. It seems to have been discovered by a Dutchman called Goos, who noted it in a map of 1666. Dampier was there in 1688, and got some wood from it to make a canoe with. But it was not till 1857 that any attempt was made to explore the island. This failed, however, and thirty years passed when the surveying vessel, the *Flying Fish*, circumnavigated the place. Ten more years elapsed, and then Mr. Charles W. Andrews, of our Natural History Museum, went out under

Ross, the brother of the Cocos King, for he and thirteen persons were landed at Flying-Fish Cove in November 1888, and now the population numbers about forty.

The climate during the greater part of the year resembles a very hot English summer tempered with sea breezes. For a time the only meat of the settlers was provided by the birds which swarm all over the island, and are extraordinarily tame. A Government official from the Straits Settlement who visited Christmas Island in 1891 declares that he caught a little thrush with a butterfly-net, and "shot ten pigeons on one tree, one after the other, without one of them attempting to fly away." Coffee can be cultivated with profit on the island. Mr. Andrew Clunies Ross, who is just forty-one, was educated at the Edinburgh

Institution, and, as noticed, used to command the family schooner, the *J. G. C. Ross*.

A high point of civilisation has been reached among Mr. Ross's subjects, although it is not quite British, for English is not taught in the one school that is situated in the Cocos - Keeling group, and conducted by a native islander who was trained at Singapore. Indeed, some members of the Ross family themselves speak little or no English. Yet vaccination is carried on, while the great disease-scurge of the islands, called "beri-beri," has greatly diminished in recent years. On the other hand, the rats of Western civilisation are a great pest. They were once landed from a ship, and the cats that were imported to

But the islands are happy in a series of negatives. There is No Jail, No Policemen, No Opium, No Chinamen. The Rosses themselves do all sorts of work; they are excellent mechanics and carpenters, and made their little schooner, the *J. G. C. Ross*, years ago. Like the two Gondolier Kings of Mr. Gilbert's whimsical fancy, they might be said to "rise early in the morning and proceed to light the fire."

The islands are cut off very much from the outside world. The present writer, for instance, communicated with Mr. Ross one November, and did not get a reply until the following September, the letter then bearing the postmark of Batavia, and, of course, a Dutch stamp. Ships may pass in the night, but they seldom call at the



A GROUP OF NATIVES ON THE TRAMWAY TRACK AT COCOS.

kill them have overrun the islands and become a perfect nuisance themselves by killing birds, most of which were brought to the islands to destroy the cocoanut-beetle.

Cocos Keeling, although, as the Blue-Book attests, they would receive a hearty welcome from those sturdy Scots in the far-off Indian Ocean. It sounds like a fairy tale, yet the story of Ross Rex is quite real.