

THREE PROPRIETARY ISLANDS.

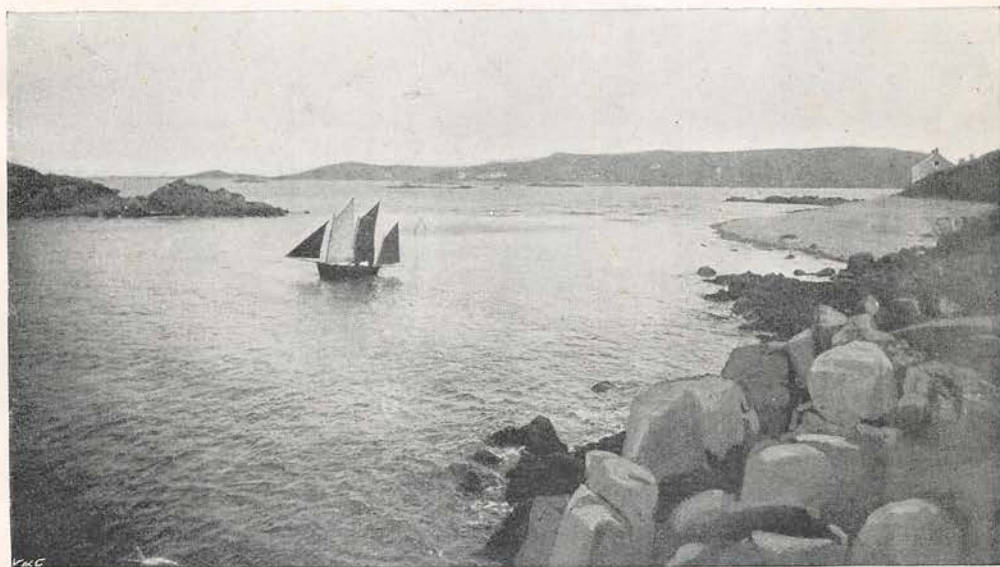
BY ARTHUR H. GIRDLESTONE.

Illustrated from Photographs.



RECENT legal decisions have somewhat tampered with the old-time doctrine that an Englishman's house is his castle. But it is gratifying to such of us as are not socialists to find that, England apart, there remain portions of the British dominions, where, if he so chooses, a man can still shut himself off from the madding crowd, not only in his own house, but in his own island. Nor are these favoured spots hidden away in

they are the property of the British Crown. But the average man's answer would be more cocksure than correct. For, in the first place, Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney and Sark, although the most important of the Channel Islands group, do not constitute the whole of it. The islands of Herm and Jethou must be added to make the list complete. And, secondly, though Jersey and Guernsey have remained direct Crown property since the days when the rights and privileges of an English monarch and a



From a photo by]

[Singleton, Guernsey.

THE ISLAND OF HERM, AS SEEN FROM JETHOU.

remote regions. You can reach them under any ordinary circumstances in less than a dozen hours from the Bank, and at a total expenditure, travelling first-class throughout, of about a couple of sovereigns, or, should you be content with the humble third, for a trifle over a pound.

If you ask the average man the names of the Channel Islands he will promptly reply, Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney and Sark. And, if you further question him as to whom the islands belong to, he will answer, with a condescending smile for your ignorance, that

Duke of Normandy were first united in a single and identical individual, Sark was granted—subject of course to a perpetual Crown lien—by Elizabeth, in 1563, to Helier de Carteret, of Jersey, as seigneur, who brought over with him forty Jersey families—the island being previously practically uninhabited—and has remained the property of a succession of seigneurs, either hereditary or by purchase, ever since.

Of the other two remaining proprietary islands, Herm and Jethou, the former, the larger of the two, is now—regrettably for

national sentiment—understood to be the property of a German banking firm, to whom it had previously been mortgaged, and from whom it is rented by Prince Blucher von Wahlstadt, a direct descendant, by the way, of the Blucher of Waterloo. Jethou, the smaller island, is the property of Mr. Austen Lee, the Secretary to the British Embassy in Paris, himself a Guernsese.

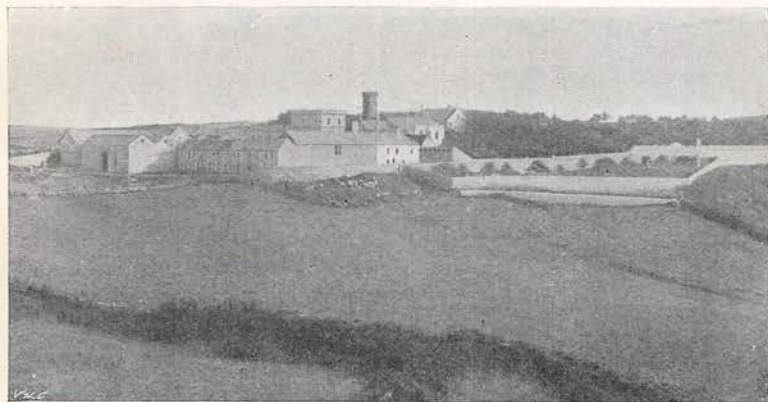
To these three proprietary islands the route is in each case *via* Guernsey. How to reach Guernsey most people by this time—for the Channel Islands traffic has increased enormously of late years—probably know. For those who do not care for the longer railway journey to Weymouth, the best way is by Southampton—indeed, from London this is the best route in any case.

Leaving Waterloo at a quarter to ten in the evening, you are on board one of those

emphasised by lofty railings, that tourists may only wander round the beach. And it may be remarked that the Prince, whose hobby is the breeding of the wallaby—the Australian kangaroo—(from below you can see them jumping madly about his domain) has not gained any special local popularity by this edict. It is still, however, possible to get, by the exercise of a little ingenuity, across to the north-eastern corner of the island, where is the famous "Shell Beach," on which can be picked up nearly every known variety of shell, and which at one time was a famous picnicking spot for the *élite* of Guernsey society. From the tourist's point of view it is certainly annoying that the Prince—whose tenancy, by the way, it is rumoured is not to last much longer—shuts himself off with walls and railings; but, seeing that he is practically the owner of the island, it is

obviously within his right to ensure that some of the privacy for which he pays should be privacy in fact, not merely in theory; and a good many of us, I fancy, would do exactly the same.

At any rate, the present fate of Herm is infinitely better than that which some few years since very nearly befell it. At that time a firm of Leith fish-curers



From a photo by]

PRINCE BLUCHER'S HOUSE AT HERM.

[Singleton, Guernsey.

excellent new South-Western steamers, the "Lydia," "Frederica," or "Stella," at midnight, and, with ordinary luck, alongside the quay at St. Peter Port shortly after six next morning. From Guernsey a small steamer runs most days in the summer for trips to Herm, or, for that matter, you can hire your own boat and sail across—it is but three miles. But don't try the passage without a local boatman to accompany you—the currents round the Channel Islands are mysterious, furious and fast, and you can hear plenty of stories of soldiers of the Guernsey garrison who, fresh to those island seas, have rowed merrily out never to return. Before Prince Blucher came into possession, you might wander at your own sweet will about this little island, a mile and a half long and half a mile broad, but now from his house at the top has gone forth the edict,

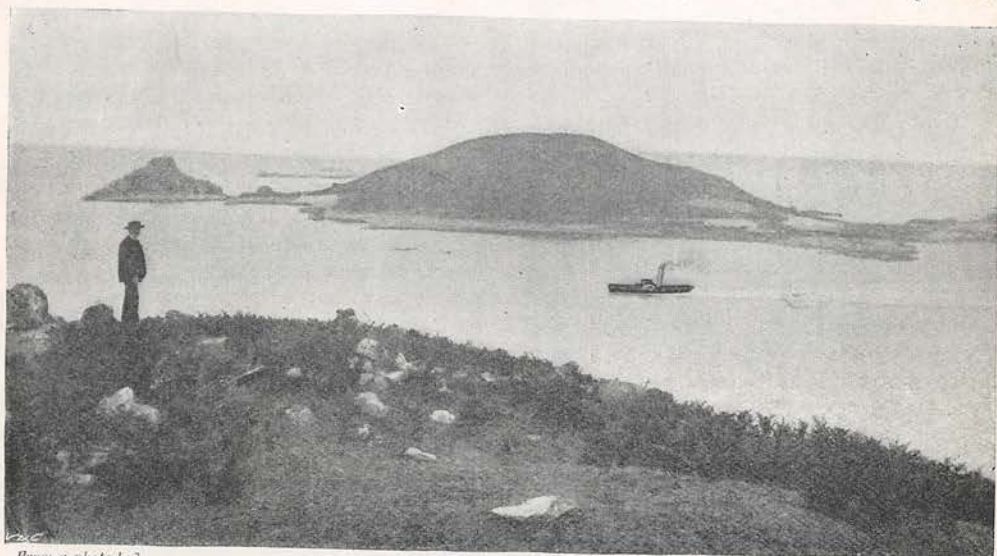
contemplated buying the island to turn it into a big fish-curing establishment, but, fortunately for the local sense of odours, the negotiations fell through. Not so very many years ago, too, one of the French monastic orders had a big monastery at Herm. The monastery was eventually summarily closed, in accordance with peremptory instructions from France, and the buildings occupied by the monks are now transformed into a farmhouse. Accommodation can, I believe, be obtained there, and there is a small inn close to the steamer-jetty, but save for occasional summer lodgers from amongst the natives of Guernsey, who have somewhat of a fancy for taking their holidays in one of the neighbouring islands, and who largely help to swell the population of Sark during June, July and August, the inn depends upon the people of Herm—some forty in

number — and the day visitors, for its custom.

Jethou, half a mile to the south-west of Herm, contains about forty-four acres and half a dozen inhabitants. It can be reached by boat from Herm, but the steamer from Guernsey to Sark takes the course between Herm and Jethou at high tide, and gives you an excellent idea of the island. Jethou contains some agricultural land, but most of it is rough. Mr. Austen Lee, when over in the Channel Islands, puts in some rabbit-shooting here. In fact, the last time I saw him, our steamer from Sark stopped off Jethou to pick up its owner and the Duke of St. Albans, who had been over for an afternoon's shooting in company—the Duke's

pictures of Mr. John Brett, A.R.A., who has made the Sark seas a special study.

Besides the two hotels, lodgings at reasonable rates may also be had at several of the cottages. From Guernsey communication with Sark is, during the summer, carried on by a daily, or even bi-daily service of steamers, which take about an hour to do the distance—eight and a half miles. Nor, as now in Herm, is the visitor confined to a perambulation of the beach and foreshore by a stern proprietor. The present proprietor or seigneur even allows the tourist to stroll at will, on two days in the week, through the beautiful gardens and grounds of his own house, the "Seigneurie," and over the rest of the island you can walk where you will



From a photo by]

THE ISLAND OF JETHOU, AS SEEN FROM HERM.

[Singleton, Guernsey.

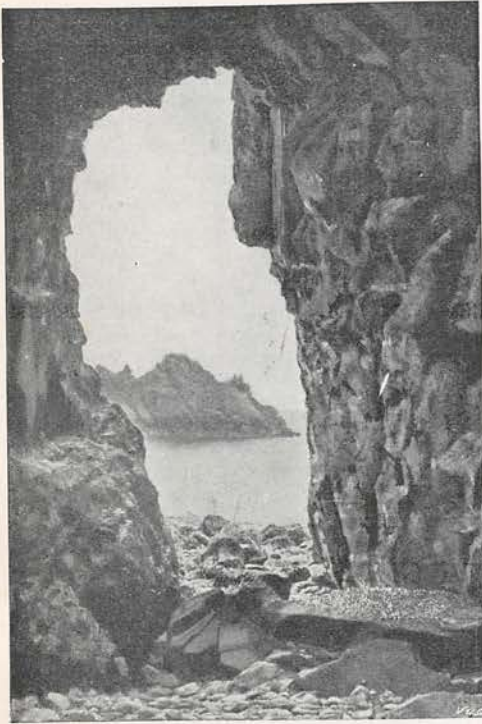
yacht, *Ceres*, is a frequent visitor to Guernsey waters—and who seemed to have made an excellent bag.

While for most people a day will be sufficient to acquaint themselves with the attractions of Herm and Jethou, to devote only that time to Sark, as too many visitors do, is merely to whet the appetite and leave it wholly unsatisfied. Although the island is but three and a half miles long by some one and a half broad, and owns a population of a mere six hundred souls, its attractions in the way of coast scenery are astonishingly varied and grand. Of all the Channel Islands group, Sark is the richest in the wild splendour of its cliffs, in the exquisitely beautiful colouring of its surrounding sea, some idea of which may be got from the

at any time. The present seigneur is Mr. William Collings, a member of one of the best-known Guernsey families, to whom the island passed by inheritance, some fifteen years since, from the previous seigneur, his father.

From the little rock-bound Creux or harbour on the east side of the island, where at high tide your steamer lands you on the quay, or at low water discharges you into boats, you look up at the towering cliffs rising perpendicularly a few yards in front of you and wonder whether your ascent to the top of the island is to be made by means of a rope and basket or some other equally perilous method. The carriages and carts that await the steamer disabuse you, however, of the rope and basket theory. As they are not

there merely to be looked at, it is obvious that they must have come down from the top by some civilised method, and presently,



THE CREUX DERRIBLE, SARK.

at the far end of the harbour, you see a tunnel cut through the solid rock. Through the tunnel a well-made but steep road conducts to the tableland of which, like most of the Channel Islands, Sark consists. Except through this tunnel, the tableland from the harbour is inaccessible. But last summer a guileless tourist, arriving on the steamer with his bicycle, and finding that the road was too stiff for riding up, announced his intention, to the huge amusement of the natives, of going round and coming up from the other side! History does not relate how, or where, or if he succeeded.

However well you think you may know

your Sark, you will always be discovering fresh beauties. For myself, I must have been to Sark some thirty odd times, and I have stayed there as long as a month at a stretch, but I am never sorry for the chance of going there again. The air, unlike that of Jersey and much of Guernsey, is splendidly bracing, the scenery is extraordinarily picturesque, the views of and across the sea are magnificent, the food, if homely, is good. What more do you want?

To my own mind, the chief beauty of Sark lies in such things as cannot accurately be catalogued and defined. A sudden peep down into the sea beneath as you come round a corner; the sun glinting on to a rock-edged bay where the water is by turn gold and green and azure and purple; the yellow gorse, if you be there early enough in the season, that riots luxuriously on every cliff. But for the sightseer who would have his fill of definite sights there is enough and to spare. There is the awe-inspiring Creux Derrible, which yawns before you suddenly from the cliff slope, dropping down a sheer 180 feet to the level of the sea beneath, and a full 80 feet of blackness from edge to edge; there are the famous Gouliot caves, hewn by the roaring sea beneath the western cliffs, with walls decorated by clinging zoophytes of every imaginable kind; there is the Coupée, the strip of cliff the width of a carriage road, which joins Great to Little Sark, and from which, on each side, you look straight down a couple of hundred feet or more to the eastern and western sea. Anent this same Coupée, the story locally told is worth repeating. Just before reaching



THE COUPÉE, SARK.

it on the way from either of the hotels, you notice an old cannon lying dismounted by the side of the road. The local tale runs that in the days when the carriage-road, now made, was but a footpath, a farmer came across the Coupée nightly from his farm in Little Sark to cheer himself with the liquor of the inn the other side. Frequently he imbibed not wisely but too well; and returning on these occasions, he decided whether he should venture back across the narrow Coupée passage in the light of this cannon. If he could walk along the cannon without tumbling off, the Coupée had no terrors for him; if he failed, he lay down alongside the cannon till such time as he could accomplish the feat in triumph, and then, fortified by the knowledge that his footsteps were steady enough, ventured across the Coupée itself.

Not far from the Coupée, on the western side of the island, you look down on the Havre Gosselin, where the fishermen, mooring their boats in the bay, have to scale the cliffs to their cottages on top by dint of iron rings and ladders fixed in the rock. Near to the Coupée, too, are the shafts and chimneys of the abandoned silver mines, for Sark too has had its mad dream of wealth, though, alas! the enterprise ruined more than one adventurous speculator, the silver being indeed present, but not in profitable quantities.

Of the remainder of the wild natural beauties of this wildly beautiful island, space forbids to speak. Let those who read haste thither and find them. But it would be out of place to close these brief notes without a reference to the home of Sark's proprietor. The Seigneurie, the grounds of which run gently down from the high ground to the sea, towards the north-west corner of the island, is an exceedingly handsome stone building, with a tower in the centre. It was enlarged and almost rebuilt by the present seigneur's father, who died in 1882. To the

right of the house is the old-time chapel of the Seigneurie; at the back, on a grass-plot, the battery, one of the cannon—which have long become more ornamental than useful—bearing the inscription, "Don de Sa Majeste la Roynne Elizabeth au Seigneur de Sereq., A.D. 1572."

Here Mr. Collings, his wife and children, are to be found the greater part of the year; or here, at least, the seigneur nightly returns, for he is a passionate yachtsman, and knows the treacherous Channel Islands seas like his own drawing-room. Invariably, when sailing, he is his own skipper and crew combined, and his little boat is well known round



From a photo by]

[Singleton, Guernsey.]

THE SEIGNEURIE, SARK.
(The residence of Mr. W. Collings.)

the neighbouring coasts. The tourist owes him a debt of gratitude for throwing open the Seigneurie grounds weekly to the visitor's gaze, and in the public interest it is to be hoped the permission will not be revoked. But Mr. Collings is often severely tried. As he good-humouredly said to me once, "It's bad enough to have empty bottles and paper thrown about your place, but when you get people coming up to your window and asking for ginger-beer, as I can assure you they sometimes do, I think it's a little bit too much." It is a pity that all tourists cannot understand a favour, instead of abusing it.