Tahiti by Tihoti(George Calderon)

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AUSTRALASIA AND PACIFIC ISLANDS

Tahiti.— **Tihoti (George Calderon).** London : Grant Richards, Ltd.
1921. Demy 8vo. Pp. 260. *Fifty Portrait Studies.* 25s. net.

No one who is familiar with other writings of the late George Calderon, or has gained some understanding of his poetic soul, will be disappointed on making acquaintance with this last remarkable product of his genius. Because he did not live to see it through the press, "the reader" (says his widow in the preface) "will understand how the book inevitably shows unevenness, save for the chapters which had received the author's finishing touch." But it is just one of those books in which spontaneity and vein constitute much of the charm, and where "finishing touches" are more apt to mar than to embellish. Continuity of theme is, in fact, scarcely material ; for whether in soliloquy, in converse, in narrative, or in description, the glamour of Tihoti's words never wanes. His sentences seem as if they had welled up within him without effort, without thought, inspired, as it were, by the stimulus of external influences of the moment without any act of volition on his part, and had merely overflowed incontinently from the author's pen. Yet behind this atmosphere of reverie lie enshrined the palpable features of the native's dreamy, irresponsible life, so garnished by the telling that the reader is halfway through the book before he awakens to the truth that he has been learning history (albeit not much geography) while he supposed that he was only reading romance. Tihoti, which is merely the Tahitian enunciation of "George," shared the natives' life for the time being, as many others have done ; but he knew when it was time to renounce his lotus diet, and lingered only for a moment from the call of duty and return to Europe, to which not all who have imbibed the nectar of Tahiti's spell have so soon responded.

When George Calderon comes to a sober relation of bygone history his writing appears to less advantage. The essence of the man was his originality of thought and expression, whereas information about the remote past must be quaffed from the fountains of legend and the written or printed records of olden time. It might have been better, for more than one reason, if § xl of this book had never been written, or if it had not been included in the volume. The same may be said of the philological effort at pp. 257-8, which contains notable errors. It is a pity, too, that the volume exhibits several typographical slips in Tahitian names and words—Punaauia is misspelled at least four times, and appears as "Puaia" in a fifth instance. The author's *u* and *n* seem to have perplexed the compositor : hence also *Tiuito* for *Tinito*, *Raugatira* for *Rangatira*, and *Thonars* for *Thouars*. Other errors of this class are *nui* for *niu* (p. 257), *ite* for *iti*, *Ta* for *Ia*. But Sir John Burrow for Sir John Barrow (twice) should not have escaped correction ; and one wonders why the author wrote Poumotu throughout for Paumotu (or preferably Tuamotu), and Mourea for Mo'orea. He is right in declaring that *pua'a toro* is unconnected with the French *taureau* ; but quite wrong in the derivation he ascribes to it. It is simply *pua'a toro* from the Peruvian bull introduced in 1774, at Tautira, by the Spanish frigate *el Aguila*, from Lima. Tihoti is unjustly bitter against the early missionaries at Tahiti, whom he stigmatizes as little better than idiots or criminals. He forgot that they acted in what they believed were the right interests, according to their lights, and that their lights were the lights of the times in which they had grown up, and of the Society's Directors who sent them out. It is their limitations rather than their faults, that we have to deplore, for they knew no better. Tihoti is no less violent in his language towards Captain Bishop and the crew of the *Nautilus* (p. 195), who were

neither pirates nor "blackbirders," but fur-traders; and a singular slip, which might have been set right by the editress, is the substitution of Captain Bligh for Captain Edwards, of H.M.S. *Pandora*, on p. 204. The statement on the first page (17) that Tahiti was discovered in 1606 by Queiros is contradicted at the head of p. 199, by the mention of Wallis; the latter is correct, the former is only an absurd conjecture which has been repeated in most works of reference to this day. Dogs existed in Tahiti long before Spaniards came there.

The book is adorned with a series of exquisite pencil studies of natives and *métisses*, every one of which is a speaking likeness, drawn by the true hand and eye of inherited genius and worthy of the highest praise. But while the artist seems to have formed an exaggerated idea of what he terms the "protruding lips" of Polynesians, it is rather singular that the more obvious feature of flat nose appears to have escaped his notice; and in several of his drawings the nasal bridge is distinctly aquiline. Nevertheless the book and its portraits are full of charm and will doubtless achieve much success. B. G. C.

THE MONTHLY RECORD

EUROPE

The Rainfall of Norway.

THE salient features of the distribution of rainfall in Norway are brought out by B. J. Birkeland in vol. 1, No. 3, of the *Geofysiske Publikationer* (Kristiania, 1920). Except where orographic factors provoke excessive condensation from the moist Atlantic winds, the mean annual values are rather low, as one would expect in so high a latitude. Thus, whereas places on the west coast like Bergen and Kristiansund get more than 80 inches, those in the interior of southern Norway, like Røros, as well as in the extreme north, like Alten, receive only between 10 and 20 inches. In Kristiania the amount is 26 inches. The seasonal course of the main rainfall is far from simple. In the interior of the southern part of the country, where the seasonal variation is rather large, summer is the wet season, as it is also in the other dry region in the far north, with a similar large variation. On the wet west coast, where the variation is small, autumn is the wet period, as it is also on the south coast, where the variation between the wettest and driest month is about the normal for the country as a whole. The driest period is everywhere some time in the spring.

In comparing the wet and mountainous west coast of Norway with the similar western coasts of the British Isles an interesting anomaly appears in the incidence of the wettest month of the year. Though in both regions the autumn and winter have each a heavy rainfall, on the west coast of Norway it is October which is the wettest month; whereas, along the western seaboard of Scotland and Ireland it is December or January. A comparison between the average wind and pressure charts of Northern Europe for October and January suggests that over Scandinavia there is a greater proportion of southerly winds in winter than in autumn, which would blow parallel with rather than perpendicular to the mountains of the west coast. It is probable that this, in part at least, affords a clue to the discrepancy.

Geographical Surnames in Italy.

A somewhat novel study in human geography has been made by Prof. O. Marinelli, who gives the results in the *Vie d'Italia*, the monthly organ of