

THE DUKE VISITS THE OUTPOSTS.

A shadow falls on the last stages of the Duke of Edinburgh's tour - Lieutenant-Commander Michael Parker, his friend and secretary, has resigned. Gough Island in the South Atlantic, which has a lonely weather station, is one of the last Commonwealth outposts on the homeward journey of the royal yacht Britannia. The island is just far enough south to have its quota of penguins. Commander Parker gets to know one of them personally.

This particular breed of penguin prefers the rocks of a running stream to the ice-floes of the Antarctic. Hence their local name - "Rock-hoppers".

But the Duke proves himself just as expert in getting round. During their tour of the Antarctic, the Duke and his party have nearly all grown beards, and the local population are clearly impressed. So are many people in Britain - half hoping that the Duke will keep his seamanlike "full set" when he arrives home. But the beards turn out to be for cruising only.

St. Helena - Napoleon's isle of banishment - is the next port of call. The Duke opens the Prince Philip Recreation Ground for children - at least one feature of which is the answer to any boy's dream. Even Napoleon might have been tempted!

Farther north still, to Ascension Island, where the whole of the population of 200 are on hand to welcome the Duke.

For the Duke and his friend, a long association draws to a close. The Duke is reluctant to accept Commander Parker's resignation - but the Commander flies back to London, his mind made up. Certain London papers have given front-page publicity to his family troubles, and he feels that in the circumstances he can no longer continue with his appointment. Many people share the Duke's regret, and are asking - in this day and age, was either the glaring publicity, or the Commander's resignation, really necessary?