

**LOLÓMA, OR TWO YEARS
IN CANNIBAL-LAND: A
STORY OF OLD FIJI**

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Lolóma, or Two Years in Cannibal-Land: A Story of Old Fiji by Henry Britton

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HENRY BRITTON

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LOLÓMA,

OR

Two Years in Cannibal-land:

A STORY OF OLD FIJI.

BY

HENRY BRITTON,

Author of "Fiji in 1870."



MELBOURNE:

SAMUEL MULLEN.

LONDON: 48, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1884.

NCW



THIS STORY

IS

Respectfully Dedicated

TO THE HON. J. B. THURSTON, C.M.G.,

AN OLD SETTLER,

AND

THE FIRST COLONIAL SECRETARY OF FIJI,

In Memory of

PLEASANT RECOLLECTIONS OF OLD TIMES.

PREFACE.

THE object of this romance is to preserve in a readable form some record of the ancient manners and customs, traditions and superstitions of the Fijians, the most numerous and the most interesting race of savages in the South Pacific, who are rapidly disappearing before the terrible push and civilisation of the white man. The opportunity of acquiring information on these subjects is fast slipping away with the older aboriginal inhabitants, and if not now seized upon it will be gone for ever. I have endeavoured to bring before the reader a picture of life in Fiji as it was before that portion of the New World "stretched its dusk hand to the Old." To be of any value to the ethnologist, it is the first requisite of such a work that its details, so far as they relate to the country and its people, should be strictly accurate. In this respect the sources from which I derived my information render the book, I believe, thoroughly trustworthy. I desire to acknowledge my obligations to the Rev. Jesse Carey, for many years a missionary in the Fiji Islands, for his valuable assistance in translating legends and songs, and in placing at my disposal a quantity of other important material. Hearing of the progress of the story, Mr Carey furnished me with a bundle of manuscript, accompanied by the following remarks:—

With a view to the more intelligent discharge of my daily duties in Fiji, I added to other necessary studies the antiquities of that country. The more I examined the subject, the more I was assured that it was one of greater extent and interest than had been supposed. This belief led me to issue circular letters, addressed to the most intelligent native men in the islands. These letters put forth a long list of questions bearing on Fiji's

Evans 17
July 1943

PREFACE.

past, and concluded with an offer of prizes for the three best works thereon by native authors. Twelve months afterwards this call was nobly responded to by fifty competitors, and the result was as many essays, some of which were remarkably able and exhaustive, besides a large number of papers from non-competing writers. I now forward to you the pith of this cannibal literature, a literature which it was possible to secure only while the oldest inhabitants were still on this side of the spirit world.

In the construction of this tale I have made use of the interesting manuscript here referred to, though of course a very large portion of it was not suited to my purposes. For the rest I have relied upon my own acquaintance with the scenery of the country, and my own recollections of the manners and customs of its people, which I had opportunities of observing during my residence among them.

Some portions of the first half of this book have appeared in the "*Australasian*" in the form of short stories.

YORICK CLUB,

Melbourne, 30th November, 1883.



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INTRODUCTION.

IT has often occurred to me that I ought to write the story of my adventures in Fiji in the old times, when, to the great bulk of the inhabitants, the white man was little more than a myth; when the people were as yet uncontaminated by contact with civilized races, many of whose vices they have since acquired; when they were dutifully following their long established customs, and faithfully adhering to the religions of their fathers. My acquaintance with kings, chiefs, priests, poets, ambassadors, soldiers, artisans, turtle-fishermen, and other classes of Fijians, made me familiar with many legends in prose and verse, containing ideas and pictures which must vanish for ever if not now preserved, for they belong to times which have long since faded into the thick darkness of the past.

If, in my old age, I can place on record some facts which may be received as a historical memento of the most numerous and interesting race of men in the South Pacific—a race which is rapidly disappearing under the dominion of the white man—I may not only afford some food for the speculation of ethnologists, but even amuse the present generation. To look into the mind and heart of the cannibal as that mind and heart thought and beat within him—while he lived his tropical life in his own land, climbing his own hills, sailing his own canoes, fighting his own battles with his own weapons, building and planting, courting and marrying in his own way, training up his children to tread in his own steps, and, finally, after a few dreamy yet not inactive years, passing away by the blue light of his own religion to his own Heaven—shall be the object of these reminiscences of a strange experience in my life, which seems to me now, as the events crowd upon me, like a dream; but not a half-forgotten one; for in early life the mind is highly receptive, and there are no impressions so deep and lasting as those of our youth.