



Lost Lion of Empire

Edward Paice

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A biography of Ewart Grogan, "the founding father of Kenya", imperial adventurer, and "the baddest and boldest of a bold bad gang" of early settlers. He is renowned for having walked 6000 miles from Cape Town to Cairo to win the hand of his bride, after his father-in-law-to-be challenged him to do "something worthwhile". By the time he was 25 he had completed his trek, defying cannibals along the way, had been elected the youngest ever member of the Alpine Club for his ascents of the Matterhorn and Mont Blanc, been sent down from Cambridge for tethering a ravenous billy goat in his tutor's rooms after a prolonged session in the Red Lion public house; and had walked out of the Slade, preferring to enlist as a trooper in the Second Matabele War rather than spend his days surrounded by "long-haired lizards". When asked in later life what his secret was, he replied "to smoke heavily, drink and eat very little and not take anything too seriously". Within a few years he became Kenya's largest landowner and foremost entrepreneur, founded the colony's timber industry, laid the foundations of the modern capital of Nairobi, and built the docks at Mombasa. Though dismissive of the Happy Valley set and though he loved his wife Gertrude, he managed to father at least two illegitimate daughters. He took up Parliamentary time for a week over his scandalous flogging of two Africans who had abused his sister-in-law, and, as "Kenya's Churchill" he was instrumental in averting a full-scale settler rebellion in the colony in the 1920s and in forcing the authorities to acknowledge the severity, and true causes, of the Mau Mau rebellion in the 1950s. For his audacity in two world wars, operating behind enemy lines in German East Africa, Grogan was awarded the DSO, the Order of Leopold and was mentioned three times in dispatches. He was a friend and confidant of Rhodes, Milner, Kitchener, Chamberlain, Smuts, Kenyatta and a host of others.

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