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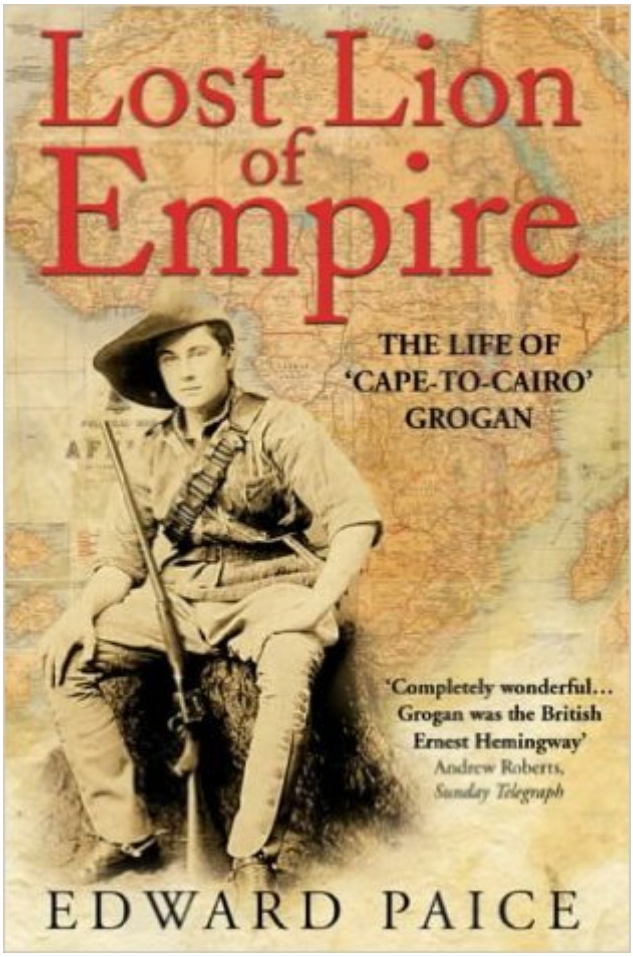
Lost Lion Of Empire: The Life Of 'Cape-to-Cairo' Grogan (Life Of Ewart Grogan Dso (1876-1976))



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Synopsis

An African Younghusband â “ the compelling life of a great adventurer.Ewart Grogan, ’the baddest and boldest of a bad bold gang’ of settlers in Kenya, was one of the most brilliant and controversial figures of African colonial history.When he proposed to a young heiress, Gertrude Coleman, he needed to prove himself a â ˆsomebodyâ ™ to her father in order to win her hand. He did so in inimitable style, announcing that he intended to accomplish the first south-to-north traverse of Africa. In 1900, after two years of illness and extreme hardship, he arrived triumphantly in Cairo.He became an instant celebrity, and, on returning to England, at last married Gertrude. Now with a considerable fortune at his disposal, after a short but successful spell in South Africa he arrived in British East Africa. He quickly became a leader among the settlers, and embarked on a lifetime of grand projects, forced through despite government inertia, enormous natural obstacles and the looming threat of bankruptcy. Time after time he proved the doubters wrong, as he pulled off the seemingly impossible. Despite this frenetic activity, and despite his love for Gertrude, he still managed to find the time to run two separate families and father numerous children by various mothers.The abrasive and glamorous Grogan, with Delamere, was one of the founding fathers of Kenya â “ â ˆLost Lion of Empireâ ™ is a brilliant and powerful account both of the life of an exceptional man and the birth of a country.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Parts of this book will appeal to many people. Taken as a whole, however, I’m not sure how many

people will find this to be a satisfying "read." The first part of the book deals with Grogan's trek from South Africa to Cairo, which was undertaken to explore the feasability of a transcontinental, albeit South-to-North, railroad route. This portion of the book is filled with lots of hunting, rivers full of crocodiles, cannibals, and tropical disease and fever. This is well-written and nicely paced and will appeal to "armchair adventurers" everywhere. The second part of the book, comprising about two-thirds of the total, deals with Grogan's attempts to turn Kenya into a "going concern" and productive outpost of the British Empire. Within this section, there's lots of political infighting between Grogan, his Kenyan detractors and British bureaucrats on the homefront. Grogan is depicted as farseeing and savvy, whilst his enemies- in and out of government- are depicted as jealous or narrowminded. Although I am not a scholar and, before reading this book, knew nothing of Grogan or the development of Kenya, my impression is that the author may be a bit too close to his subject. Grogan is portrayed as being a bit too perfect- even when he is "pulling a fast one" (my terminology) on his competitors, Mr. Paice can't help admiring his charm and gift for blarney. Even Grogan's penchant for womanizing (which included keeping a mistress in a separate household with their illegitimate child) is pretty much laughed off as the activity of a handsome man who was "over-engined." Grogan's wife, Gertrude, is given high marks for putting up with the shenanigans and maintaining a stiff upper lip.

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