

WHEN the first white settlers landed in Victoria, they were like the tip of a wedge which would shatter a way of life undisturbed for centuries. Several thousand Aborigines had enjoyed the rich land and their close-knit tribal traditions for over 7,000 years; a fact established by carbon-dating of artifacts and other remains. Within a couple of generations, they had been reduced to a few hundred derelicts. Sometimes this destruction came as the casual offshoot of white settlement, which robbed them of their hunting-grounds and banned them from their ceremonial places. Sometimes they were degraded by alcohol and prostitution, or killed off by European diseases to which they had no immunity. Those who resisted were hunted and slain like animals, or subjected to a cruel justice which was beyond their comprehension. Their passing was once of little concern, but now, before it is too late, Aldo Massola has discovered some of the sites which were once of supreme importance to the Aboriginal of Victoria, and traced the stories of what happened to those who once lived in or near them. Often this makes a bloody and disturbing tale, such as that of the crowd who fought for a closer view of the hanging of two Aborigines, and the whole narrative gives an enlightening picture of the attitude of the colonist towards the Aboriginal. In his epilogue, Mr. Massola says that the Aboriginal sites are Victorias only true historical ruins, and should be preserved as other countries cherish their antiquities. Many of them are known only to him, and in this book he describes their location, significance, and histories. The result is invaluable to those who would like to explore such places for themselves. For the general reader, it provides many colourful glimpses into a way of life which has long since disappeared, and another example of the Fatal Impact of the European upon the races of the New World.

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