Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania

By Jane Ada Fletcher
LITTLE BROWN PICCANINNIES
OF TASMANIA

PREFACE

In the book here offered, the authoress has ventured into the past and has made live the daily experiences of the boys and girls of the happy, affectionate, dark-skinned people who dwelt in the pleasant land of Tasmania before the coming of our race.

Such an interesting book needs no preface, for it can very well stand on its own feet. The authoress' sensibility to the feelings of those of whom she writes, and her intimate knowledge of bush and seashore have produced a pleasant fragment of life, detached from things of the modern world. In this book our boys and girls may wander in imagination with their dark-skinned brethren in search of rowitta, or cower in fright at the sight of Tasman's vessels while the warning smoke signal rises above the tree-tops, or carry back to the camp the glad news that a mighty parraba has come ashore.

All who are fortunate enough to take this journey into the past are sure of enjoyment and, when the last page has been read, will put the book down with regret.

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Tasmania.
Far, far away, many centuries ago, a dark-skinned race came to the island that is now known as Tasmania. But Tasmania is not called after this race. No, it is called after a brave Dutch sailor, who sought to find lands of gold for his country.

Tasman saw no people. They lay hidden from his sight. He sailed away.

Two centuries slipped by. The island was forgotten. Then French ships anchored almost at the same spot where Tasman had. Their sailors met the natives. A quarrel arose over fresh water. The French ships sailed away. But a dark smudge lay on the beach. A smudge that had been a man—a hunter of wild game!

How came this brown-skinned people to Tasmania? And whence? No one knows. Only guesses can be made.

The people were not negroes. Their hair was curly, but in a different way from that of the negro. Nor were they black-skinned—rather a deep brown.

All the centuries these folk dwelt in Tasmania, they appear never to have advanced in knowledge beyond that of their distant forefathers.

They did know how to make fire by rubbing. That was not easy. The right kind of flint was absent. So, once a fire was going, they always tried to protect it—to keep the precious coals alive even when a tribe journeyed to fresh hunting grounds.

But these people never learnt to heat water; nor to make