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Place, gender and the making of natural history: Hannah im Thurn in British Guiana, 1895-1897

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ABSTRACT

In 1895, the forty-year old Hannah im Thurn (née Lorimer) embarked on a new life as a colonial wife in the tropics, having just married the explorer and administrator Everard im Thurn. She accompanied her husband on a two-year sojourn in British Guiana, where they lived in Morawahanna, a remote settlement near the Venezuelan frontier. This paper contributes to a broader historical geography of the field sciences by providing a glimpse into relations across the porous boundaries between the private and the public, the domestic and the official, that shaped the production of natural history knowledge in the colonial context. By piecing together evidence from family letters, photographs, drawings and sculptures produced in British Guiana, we seek to make Hannah's presence in the historical record – and in Everard's scientific and administrative life – more visible. In particular, the paper contributes to the increasing body of work on gender and science which has begun to unravel the entangled histories of personal partnerships that have shaped modern science.

Keywords: Colonial frontier; History of science; Gender; Botany; Sculpture; Anthropology

The Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew holds a unique set of historic photographs across its various collections, including the herbarium, economic botany collection and archives, most of which have never been catalogued, cited or reproduced. Amongst these, one photograph representing the palm genus *Euterpe* and dated 1897 is particularly poignant (Fig. 1). Mounted on card and framed in pen, the photograph is signed by the botanist G.S. Jenman, who was employed at the botanical gardens in Georgetown, British Guiana (now Guyana), between 1879 and 1902.¹ The image, with its minimal caption, was designed to illustrate a specimen of palm that, according to Jenman, was similar to *Oreodoxa regia*, one of two non-native species of palms introduced into British Guiana around 1800.²

To non-botanical eyes, however, the photograph contains evidence of another kind. Posed beneath the leaves of the palm, though still in the glare of the sun, stands an unidentified couple, accompanied by a small dog (Fig. 2). An upright, bearded gentleman in a suit, wearing a top hat and holding a cigar, looks directly into the camera, while his companion – a woman wearing a hat garlanded with flowers – stands awkwardly alongside, her head tilted downwards. Nothing is known about the occasion on which the photograph was taken, and in the context of Kew's plant illustration collection the couple remain anonymous, simply providing a measure of the scale of the specimen. It is only by comparing the image with other portraits that

¹ George Samuel Jenman was a British botanist and gardener born in Plymouth and trained at Kew between 1871 and 1873. See JSTOR Global Plants, Jenman, George Samuel (1845–1902), <http://plants.jstor.org/person/bm000004078> last accessed 21 February 2018.

² George Samuel Jenman to Sir William Thiselton-Dyer, 13 May 1897, Director's Correspondence 204/562, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew [hereafter RBG Kew], KLDC11788.

the figures can be identified as Everard im Thurn, explorer, colonial administrator, botanist and anthropologist, and his wife Hannah, whom he had married in Scotland two years earlier. A rare portrait of the im Thurns together in British Guiana, the photograph prompts questions about the intertwining of their personal and professional lives on the colonial frontier, and specifically about Hannah's role in relation to her husband's professional career and scientific work. In what follows, we are concerned with the ways in which a specific geographical location – in this case, a colonial site – shaped the gendering of scientific biographies and scientific practice in terms of roles, division of labour, and the actual products of that work. As David Livingstone suggests, 'greater sensitivity to the *spaces of a life*' has the potential to 'enrich our understanding of the mutual making of science and scientist'.³ In this paper we discuss not one life, but two, bringing Hannah im Thurn back into the frame of history alongside her more famous husband.

Everard im Thurn's contributions to exploration, science and colonial administration have been appraised in a number of biographical studies since his death in 1932.⁴ During his lifetime he achieved a degree of fame for his 1884 ascent of Mount Roraima in British Guiana, which secured him a place in the annals of geographical exploration.⁵ A keen collector of tropical plants and ethno-botanical artefacts, im

³ D.N. Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge*, Chicago, 2013, 183, emphasis in original.

⁴ See A. Aspinall, Sir Everard im Thurn: born 1852: died 7 October, 1932, *Man* 33 (1933) 36–37; R. Dalziell, Everard im Thurn in British Guiana and the Western Pacific, in: P. Hulme and R. McDougall (Eds), *Writing, Travel, and Empire: In the Margins of Anthropology*, New York, 2007, 97–118.

⁵ See R.R. Marett, Sir Everard im Thurn, K.C.M.G., K.B.E., C.B., in: R.R. Marett (Ed.), *Thoughts, Talks and Tramps: A Collection of Papers by Sir Everard im Thurn*, London, 1934; R. Dalziell, The curious case of Sir Everard im Thurn and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: exploration and the

Thurn also established a reputation as a discerning naturalist and received the support of successive directors of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.⁶ In more recent years, the ethnographic and bureaucratic aspects of his colonial career in British Guiana, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and Fiji have been given further attention by historians and geographers. For example, visual anthropologists have praised his 'advocacy of a new role for the camera in photography', which privileged a 'natural' approach that went against the grain of much anthropological photography of his time, exhibiting a certain 'cultural relativism'.⁷ As James Ryan has noted, im Thurn was a strong supporter of the Colonial Office Visual Instruction Committee (COVIC), which used photography and lantern-slide lectures to disseminate a geographical vision of the British Empire.⁸ Im Thurn's colonial policies, notably relating to land reforms in Fiji, have also attracted considerable attention, especially from Pacific

imperial adventure novel, *The Lost World*, *English Literature in Transition (1880–1920)* 45 (2002) 131–157.

⁶ E. im Thurn, The botany of the Roraima expedition of 1884: being notes on the plants observed (communicated by Sir J.D. Hooker), *The Transactions of the Linnean Society of London* 2 (1887) 249–270; Anonymous, New orchids: decades XLVIII-XLIX, *Bulletin of Miscellaneous Information (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew)* 2 (1921) 52–56; Anonymous, New orchids: decades XLVIII-XLIX, *Bulletin of Miscellaneous Information (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew)* 3 (1921) 131–135; C.H. Wright, Ferns collected in Fiji by Sir Everard im Thurn, K.C.M.G., *Bulletin of Miscellaneous Information (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew)* 8 (1930) 343–348; T.A. Sprague and N.Y. Sandwith, Contributions to the flora of tropical America: X, *Bulletin of Miscellaneous Information (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew)* 2 (1932) 81–93.

⁷ C. Pinney, The parallel histories of anthropology and photography, in: E. Edwards (Ed.), *Anthropology and Photography: 1860-1920*, New Haven, 1994, 78. See also L.M. Jones, The Everard im Thurn collection: views from among the Indians of Guiana, in: L.M. Jones, Local knowledge and indigenous agency in the history of exploration: studies from the RGS-IBG collections, unpublished PhD thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2010; T.D. Tayler, Very loveable human beings: the photography of Everard im Thurn, in: Edwards (Ed.), *Anthropology and Photography*, 187–192; A. Cox, Purifying bodies, translating race: the lantern slides of Sir Everard im Thurn, *History of Photography* 31 (2007) 348–364; C. Pinney, *Photography and Anthropology*, London, 2011, 35–37; D. Poole, An excess of description: ethnography, race and visual technologies, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 34 (2005) 159–179.

⁸ J.R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire*, London, 1997, 208.

historians.⁹ Throughout this growing body of literature, however, the role of im Thurn's wife Hannah has been barely acknowledged, and her contribution to his work has been all but ignored.¹⁰

This paper tells a more inclusive history. It draws upon a recent body of work on the historical geography of natural history and ethnography which has called for a more 'critical, contextual and biographical approach' that 'enables a more nuanced understanding of the individual and the discourses and networks in which they circulated'.¹¹ Here we are particularly interested in the way the focus on local elements of fieldwork has brought the personal, and questions of gender, back into the field sciences, revealing the field as a flexible space whose boundaries were porous.¹² As Isla Forsyth forcefully argues, 'The *where* of scientific practice at times was liberating, the colonies in particular affording women space for practising science'.¹³

⁹ R. Dalziell, 'A Tramp with Redskins': a British colonial administrator's cross-cultural encounters, in: R. Dalziell (Ed.), *Selves Crossing Cultures: Autobiography and Globalisation*, Melbourne, 2002, 89–103; T. Chappelle, Land and race in Fiji: the administration of Sir Everard im Thurn, unpublished PhD thesis, University of the South Pacific, 1976; S.H. Sohmer, Governors, politics and anthropology: the Fijian native lands question revisited, in: G. Blue, M.P. Bunton and R.C. Crozier (Eds), *Colonialism and the Modern World: Selected Studies*, Armonk, NY, 2002, 234–245.

¹⁰ For an exception, see S. Albuquerque, Watercolours of orchids native to British Guiana at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, attributed to Hannah Cassels im Thurn (1854–1947), *Archives of Natural History* 39 (2012) 344–347.

¹¹ N. Thomas and J. Hill, Explorations in the Libyan desert, in: S. Naylor and J.R. Ryan (Eds), *New Spaces of Exploration: Geographies of Discovery in the Twentieth Century*, London, 2010, 81; Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, 183; F. Driver, Editorial: field-work in geography, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 25 (2000) 267–268.

¹² H. Lorimer and N. Spedding, Locating field science: a geographical family expedition to Glen Roy, Scotland, *British Journal for the History of Science* 38 (2005) 13–33.

¹³ I. Forsyth, The more-than-human geographies of field-science, *Geography Compass* 7/8 (2013) 527–539, emphasis in original.

The role of women in relation to empire and colonial government during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has received much attention from historical geographers over the last two decades. Women's contributions to the making of British imperial culture have been the focus of a significant strand of research which has sought to expose the various ways, often hidden from the official record, that women sustained and sometimes challenged the assumptions and practices of colonial rule. Cheryl McEwan, for example, has argued that the role played by women in the production of knowledge about empire – as travellers and writers in their own right, and also as members of the governing class – has often been overlooked.¹⁴ The wives of colonial officials often found themselves managing domestic servants in extensive households, a role in which some of the worst aspects of colonialism – its snobbery and its racism – could find direct expression. Equally, however, research into the actuality of the lives of such women in the diverse contexts of empire can reveal what Helen Callaway and Dorothy Helly have described as 'the ambiguities and complexities of Western's women involvement in imperialism'.¹⁵

¹⁴ C. McEwan, *Gender, Geography and Empire*, London, 2000, 5; see also A. Maddrell, *Complex Locations: Women's Geographical Work in the UK 1850–1970*, Oxford, 2009; J.K. Guelke and K.M. Morin, Gender, nature, empire: women naturalists in nineteenth century British travel literature, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 26 (2001) 306–326; A. Blunt, Mapping authorship and authority: reading Mary Kingsley's landscape descriptions, in: A. Blunt and G. Rose (Eds), *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies*, New York, 1994, 51–72.

¹⁵ H. Callaway and D. Helly, Crusader for empire: Flora Shaw/Lady Lugard, in: N. Chaudhuri and M. Strobel (Eds), *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, Bloomington, 1992, 80.

Grasping the full extent of women's contribution to science requires going beyond women's role as published authors and piecing together other kinds of evidence, often in archival form. There has been a tendency in the feminist historiography of geography, as Nuala Johnson has argued, to focus on women writers as opposed to other geographical practitioners, including artists, illustrators and map-makers.¹⁶ Johnson uses the example of Charlotte Wheeler-Cuffe, the wife of a British engineer in the Indian Public Works Department, who travelled extensively in Burma in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, to argue that the contribution to natural history of such women has thus been consistently obscured. By drawing attention to the role of women in other aspects of the production of scientific knowledge in a colonial context, in this case plant hunting and botanical illustration, Johnson opens up an important field of inquiry for historical geographers seeking to find agency beyond the realms of authorship.¹⁷

In recent years, feminist work on gender and science has also begun to unravel the entangled histories of personal partnerships, especially those within the family, that have shaped modern science.¹⁸ As Pnina Abir-Am has argued, innovation in science

¹⁶ N.C. Johnson, On the colonial frontier: gender, exploration and plant-hunting on Mount Victoria in early 20th-century Burma, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 42 (2017) 417–431. On women as map-makers in wartime, see A. Maddrell, The 'Map Girls'. British women geographers' war work, shifting gender boundaries and reflections on the history of geography, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 33 (2008) 127–148.

¹⁷ N.C. Johnson, Global knowledge in a local world: Charlotte Wheeler Cuffe's encounters with Burma, 1901–1902, in: J.J. Wright and D.A. Finnegan (Eds), *Spaces of Global Knowledge: Exhibition, Encounter and Exchange in an Age of Empire*, London, 2015, 19–38.

¹⁸ For a comprehensive overview of this literature, see D.L. Opitz, A. Lykknes and B. Van Tiggelen, Introduction, in: D.L. Opitz, A. Lykknes and B. Van Tiggelen (Eds), *For Better or For Worse? Collaborative Couples in the Sciences*, Heidelberg, 2012, 16–30.

‘is as much a property of social relations as of individual talent’.¹⁹ This body of work has exposed ‘collaborative processes as dynamic, malleable constructs’ that produced diverse yet distinctive forms of partnership, paying particular attention to the ways in which ‘individuals negotiated their roles and shares of work in keeping with, or in opposition to, contemporaneous conventions’.²⁰ In the specific context of Victorian science, Donald Opitz reminds us that the exploration of collaboration between husbands and wives ‘requires moving behind the public façade of their respective social roles and piecing together – usually from limited documentary evidence – the patterns woven from their complex personal and work lives’.²¹ According to Opitz, British upper middle-class and aristocratic women within eminent scientific families shared a set of religious beliefs, often broadly evangelical in nature, that ‘attributed high moral value to gentlewomanly modesty in the families’ knowledge industries’, therefore actively contributing to the masking of their roles in the making of collaborative science.²²

In this paper we argue that the colonial frontier provided Hannah in Thurn with opportunities to develop her skills as an illustrator and sculptor with a degree of freedom that she had not experienced before. This argument involves piecing together some of the fragmentary traces of her life that survive in scattered archives

¹⁹ P.G. Abir-Am, Series foreword, in: H.M. Pycior, N.G. Slack and P.G. Abir-Am (Eds), *Creative Couples in the Sciences*, New Brunswick, 1996, x.

²⁰ Opitz, Lykknes and Van Tiggelen, Introduction, 17, 19.

²¹ D.L. Opitz, ‘Not merely wifely devotion’: collaborating in the construction of science at Terling Place, in: Opitz, Lykknes and Van Tiggelen (Eds), *For Better or For Worse?*, 47.

²² Opitz is drawing on R. Perry, Introduction, in: R. Perry and M.W. Brownley (Eds), *Mothering the Mind: Twelve Studies of Writers and Their Silent Partners*, New York, 1984, 5, and S. Lee-May Sheffield, *Revealing New Worlds: Three Victorian Naturalists*, New York, 2001, 195–217; Opitz, ‘Not merely wifely devotion’, 47.

and museum collections as well as within the memory of her descendants.²³ Having married relatively late, at the age of forty, Hannah was to spend the next thirty-seven years in partnership with Everard until his death in 1932. His professional trajectory as a colonial administrator, which took him initially to British Guiana, and later to Ceylon and Fiji, enabled Hannah to experience their shared life in remote overseas locations and to venture into spaces and situations that few other women of her class and nationality had access to. Drawing on a variety of different kinds of evidence – including family letters, newspaper articles, photographs, drawings and sculptures – we are able to explore her experience of colonial mobility and her contributions, through her drawing and her sculpture, to the scientific work of her husband. We will argue that Hannah’s aesthetic sensibilities and artistic training played an important part in her responses to the colonial environment, while her drawings and sculpture both contributed to and benefited from the work of her naturalist husband. In this context, her long-distance correspondence with her mother in Scotland provides valuable insights into her experiences of colonial life. The paper also seeks to shed light on the dynamics of the im Thurns’ collaborative partnership in the context of contemporary conventions governing the authorship and presentation of scientific work. In the process, we traverse the porous boundaries between the private and the public, the domestic and the official, that characterised the production of natural history in the colonial context.

EARLY LIVES

²³ Principally the National Library of Scotland, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, and the National Museum of Guyana, Georgetown.

Born on 7 December 1854, Hannah Cassels Lorimer was one of six children of Hannah Riddle and James Lorimer. Her father was a legal and political philosopher, Regius Professor of Public Law at the University of Edinburgh and one of the founders of the Institute of International Law in 1873.²⁴ As such Hannah was raised in an elite Edinburgh family with strong scholarly and artistic inclinations, ‘a Renaissance dynasty in a way’, according to art historian Martin Kemp.²⁵ Although women students could not yet study for a degree at the University of Edinburgh, in 1880 Hannah obtained its ‘Certificate in Art for Women: Moral Philosophy and Geology’, an achievement that testifies to her scientific interests.²⁶ An ‘all-round artist’, she exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy in 1875 and 1876, studying drawing and sculpting in Paris during the winter of 1891–1892.²⁷ Yet for all her academic and artistic accomplishments, Hannah never achieved the fame of her younger brothers John Henry Lorimer, a genre and portrait painter, and Sir Robert Stodart Lorimer, a celebrated architect.²⁸ In 1878 her father, who suffered from

²⁴ I. Gow, H. Horrocks and S. Williamson, *The National Trust for Scotland, Kellie Castle and Garden*, Edinburgh, 2008; Hannah C. im Thurn, Relational museum collector information, Pitt Rivers Museum, http://history.prm.ox.ac.uk/collector_3899.html last accessed 21 February 2018; J.W. Cairns, Lorimer, James (1818–1890), jurist, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 2004, online edition, May 2011, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17016> last accessed 21 February 2018.

²⁵ M. Kemp interview, in: C. Lorimer, *The art of family, Upward – Onward*, <http://www.upward-onward.com/the-art-of-family>, last accessed 21 February 2018.

²⁶ Hannah was one of the six female students who obtained the Certificate of Arts that year: Anonymous, Edinburgh University, *The Englishwoman’s Review* 85, 15 May 1880, 208; University of Edinburgh, Lorimer, Hannah C., Award to women students, 1876–1894, http://collections.ed.ac.uk/alumni/record/55288?highlight=*>* last accessed 21 February 2018.

²⁷ C.B. de Laperriere (Ed.), *The Royal Scottish Academy Exhibitors 1826-1990: A Dictionary of Artists and their Work in the Annual Exhibitions at the Royal Scottish Academy*, Calne, 1991, 71; M.C. Fenoulhet, John Henry Lorimer, Scottish artist, 1856-1936: a critical biography, volume 1, unpublished M. Litt. dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1990, 6 and 84.

²⁸ M. Kemp, Introduction. Tradition and creativity: the art of the Lorimers, in: *The Lorimers: A Family of the Arts in Fife*, St Andrews, [1983], 3–6.

recurrent asthma, leased Kellie Castle in Fife as a country residence.²⁹ The building works there are reputed to have stimulated her brother Robert's enthusiasm for architecture and craftsmanship (and Hannah's too, as we shall see).³⁰ It was while living at Kellie Castle that Hannah got married to Everard im Thurn on 15 August 1895.³¹

Although little is known about the circumstances in which Hannah and Everard first met, it is likely that their relationship arose from her family's existing connections with British Guiana. In 1878 Hannah's sister Alice had married Sir David Chalmers, who in that year became chief justice of the colony, a post he held until 1893.³² Hannah's acquaintance with Everard probably began in British Guiana, when she visited her sister in 1882–1883.³³ But her marriage to him, to judge from their correspondence, was companionate rather than romantic. Two years older than Hannah, Everard was the fifth of twelve children by Mary Catherine Ellen and Johann Conrad im Thurn, both descendants of the same family from Schaffhausen in Switzerland. Johann Conrad was a merchant banker settled in London, while Mary Catherine had been born in Bermuda – though her mother was of Scottish descent

²⁹ Cairns, Lorimer, James.

³⁰ D.M. Walker, Lorimer, Sir Robert Stodart (1864–1929), architect, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, online edition, May 2011, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34600> last accessed 21 February 2018.

³¹ Everard F. im Thurn to Sir William Thiselton-Dyer, 27 July 1895, Director's Correspondence 204/356, RBG Kew, KLDC11632.

³² Inventory: Esther B Chalmers, NLS, Acc8695; Anonymous, Sir David Patrick Chalmers, 1835-1899, *Gazetteer for Scotland*, <http://www.scottish-places.info/people/famousfirst4117.html> last accessed 23 February 2018; Marett, Sir Everard im Thurn, xxii.

³³ Fenoulhet, John Henry Lorimer, 47.

from Fife.³⁴ Everard im Thurn received a typical English education as a son of a prosperous family, attending Marlborough College, where he devoted much of his time to the study of local birds. Having graduated in science and classics from Exeter College, Oxford, in 1875, im Thurn's promising academic career was interrupted by his father's bankruptcy.³⁵

Looking for a job that provided him with opportunities to develop his interests in natural history, im Thurn wrote to Sir Joseph Hooker, director of Kew Gardens and a family friend, who recommended him for the position of curator of the Museum of the Royal Agricultural and Commercial Society of British Guiana.³⁶ By that time, Kew's role as the centre of a network of colonial botanic gardens that benefited the empire, while seeking to 'improve the lives of those at home and in the colonies', was already firmly established.³⁷ As a result, in 1877, im Thurn took up a two-year appointment in Georgetown, where he organised the museum and travelled to the interior of the colony to collect botanical specimens, which were later sent to Kew.³⁸ Resuming his studies at Oxford, he was awarded an M.A. in 1881.³⁹ In the same year he returned to British Guiana as a stipendiary magistrate in the Pomeroon,

³⁴ Everard and Hannah's wedding took place in the same year as Mary Catherine's death. See A. Aerni, Sir Everard im Thurn, *Schaffhauser Beiträge zur Geschichte* 58 (1981) 350; Marett, Sir Everard im Thurn, x.

³⁵ Aerni, Sir Everard im Thurn, 348, 350; Aspinal, Sir Everard im Thurn, 36–37.

³⁶ H.I. Perkins, Notes on a journey to Mount Roraima, British Guiana, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* 7 (1885) 522–534.

³⁷ N.C. Johnson, *Nature Displaced, Nature Displayed: Order and Beauty in Botanical Gardens*, London, 2011, 130. See also J. Endersby, *Imperial Nature: Joseph Hooker and the Practices of Victorian Science*, Chicago, 2008.

³⁸ Marett, Sir Everard im Thurn, xiii; E.F. im Thurn, Anthropological uses of the camera, *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 22 (1893) 184–203.

³⁹ Aerni, Sir Everard im Thurn, 351.

continuing his scientific observations in the field in his spare time.⁴⁰ In 1890 he was promoted to the post of government agent in the North-West District, a post he still held five years later when he was married to Hannah.⁴¹

During his fifteen years as a resident in British Guiana, im Thurn had been extremely active in both exploration and scholarship. He undertook a number of expeditions, including the successful ascent of Mount Roraima at the age of thirty-two, in the wake of his predecessor Robert Schomburgk. He also founded and edited the scientific journal *Timehri* and was a prolific travel writer.⁴² His publications include *Among the Indians of Guiana* (1883), an account of his travels in British Guiana and the anthropology of the region, and several articles on the Roraima expedition.⁴³ Arthur Conan Doyle, a regular attender at meetings of the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), may well have been inspired by im Thurn's lectures about his expedition to write his adventure novel, *The Lost World* (1912), as Rosamund Dalziell suggests.⁴⁴ Im Thurn also collected plant specimens (contributing to

⁴⁰ George Samuel Jenman to Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker, 23 December 1881, Director's Correspondence 204/429, RBG Kew, KLDC11668.

⁴¹ Aerni, Sir Everard im Thurn, 352.

⁴² Dalziell, The curious case of Sir Everard im Thurn and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, 136 notes that im Thurn understood "'Timehri" ... to be a Carib word for "painted" or "marked" ... which had come to mean a painted or engraved rock'. As she further remarks, the 'title is a clever act of colonial appropriation: the engraved stones of the Caribs became the sign of an active, writing colonial presence in their land'.

⁴³ E.F. im Thurn, *Among the Indians of Guiana: Being Sketches Chiefly Anthropologic from the Interior of British Guiana*, London, 1883; E.F. im Thurn, The ascent of Mount Roraima, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* 7 (1885) 497–521; E.F. im Thurn, Roraima, *Scottish Geographical Journal* 1 (1885) 548–553; Im Thurn, The botany of the Roraima expedition of 1884.

⁴⁴ Dalziell, The curious case of Sir Everard im Thurn and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, 134.

descriptions of around fifty-five new species) and ethnographic objects, and took photographs, many of which survive in various institutional collections.⁴⁵

After so many years devoted to working and travelling through the so-called 'unknown interior' of British Guiana, Everard evidently reached a stage in his life when he was seeking a more settled career and domestic companionship. Equally, the prospect of sharing a new life in British Guiana with such a successful and adventurous character evidently appealed to the well-travelled Hannah, now in her fortieth year.⁴⁶ While her decision to begin a new life as a colonial wife in the tropics would not have been taken lightly, the experience of her sister, Lady Chalmers, in British Guiana may have provided her family with some reassurance.

LIFE IN BRITISH GUIANA

Soon after their wedding in August 1895, Hannah and Everard sailed from England on the ship *Para*, destined for Demerara, arriving on 25 September of the same year.⁴⁷ In the late nineteenth century British Guiana was 'one of the most ethnically, racially, and religiously diverse places in the Western Hemisphere', where the native Amerindian population and British colonizers were joined by Portuguese, Chinese,

⁴⁵ E.F. im Thurn, Notes on the plants observed during the Roraima expedition 1884, *Timehri: The Journal of the Royal Agricultural & Commercial Society of British Guiana* 5 (1886) 145–223. The provenance of RGS photographs credited to im Thurn has recently been questioned: see Jones, The Everard im Thurn collection.

⁴⁶ Fenoulhet, John Henry Lorimer, 91.

⁴⁷ Findmypast, im Thurn, Passenger lists leaving UK 1890–1960, <http://www.findmypast.co.uk/passengerListBrowseVoyages.action?departureYear=1895&browseType=1> last accessed 27 February 2018.

Indian and African immigrants, most having arrived as indentured labourers following the abolition of slavery.⁴⁸ The settler population had long been concentrated in a narrow coastal strip of sugar plantations and smaller villages which also extended along the banks of rivers and creeks.⁴⁹ However, with the decline of the sugar industry in the 1890s, rice and other valuable natural resources from the interior – gold, balata and timber – became increasingly significant for the colony's economy.⁵⁰

When Everard im Thurn had first arrived to take up his post as government agent in the North-West District in 1890, he viewed the region as an unsettled tropical wilderness, though as he described it in an 1892 paper to the RGS it was 'being fast overrun by very successful gold-diggers'.⁵¹ He established an administrative post in the remote north of the colony, five miles from the border with Venezuela, accessible only by sea from Georgetown (Fig. 3). The new settlement was located at the point at which the Morawahanna River leaves the Barima, facilitating the riverine traffic into the interior, especially to the gold fields.⁵² Twenty years later, Mary Blair and William Beebe – American travellers who undertook ornithological expeditions to Venezuela and British Guiana – described Morawahanna as consisting 'of a

⁴⁸ S.G. Rabe, *U.S. Intervention in British Guiana: A Cold War History*, Chapel Hill, 2005, 18.

⁴⁹ E.F. im Thurn, The hinterland of British Guiana, in: Marett, *Thoughts, Talks and Tramps*, 166–181; J. de Barros, *Order and Place in a Colonial City: Patterns of Struggle and Resistance in Georgetown, British Guiana, 1889–1924*, Montreal, 2002, 27.

⁵⁰ Balata is the dried milky sap of a tropical American tree of the same name (*Manilkara bidentate*), a rubberlike gum used in belting and golf balls. See Barros, *Order and Place in a Colonial City*, 22–23.

⁵¹ E.F. im Thurn, British Guiana, the North-Western district, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* 14 (1892) 685.

⁵² Im Thurn, British Guiana, 685–686.

straggling line of thatched huts extending irregularly along the bank and inland between the marshy spots'.⁵³ It was in this isolated, low and marshy region, where there was 'absolutely nothing but Courida and Mangrove', that Hannah would spend her next two years.⁵⁴ The newly-wed couple took up residence in the government house which im Thurn himself had built – a 'very nice' one, according to im Thurn, while the Beebes referred to it as 'well built' (Fig. 4).⁵⁵ Located at the 'extreme southern end of a great island', the house was surrounded by a 'beautiful garden' planted by im Thurn, who took great pride in it.⁵⁶ Following the imperialist impulse to 'refashion the tropics to meet European wants and desires', in this private colonial botanic garden im Thurn experimented with the introduction of foreign species, as he had done previously when working in the Pomeroon district.⁵⁷ In 1884, he had exhibited photographs of his earlier horticultural work at the First International Forestry Exhibition in Edinburgh.⁵⁸

⁵³ M.B. Beebe and C.W. Beebe, *Our Search for a Wilderness: An Account of Two Ornithological Expeditions to Venezuela and to British Guiana*, New York, 1910, 135.

⁵⁴ D. Bayley, *Handbook of British Guiana, Comprising General and Statistical Information Concerning the Colony*, London, 1909, 212. Everard im Thurn returned to London with Hannah in 1897. His intimate knowledge of the region was put to use in the Venezuelan boundary dispute, see Anonymous, Great Britain and Venezuela, *The Times*, 13 December 1897, 5; Im Thurn, *The hinterland of British Guiana*, 174.

⁵⁵ Everard F. im Thurn to Sir William Thiselton-Dyer, 20 November 1890, Director's Correspondence 204/346, RBG Kew, KLDC11623; Beebe and Beebe, *Our Search for a Wilderness*, 142.

⁵⁶ Beebe and Beebe, *Our Search for a Wilderness*, 142; Bayley, *Handbook of British Guiana*, 212.

⁵⁷ D. Arnold, *The Problem of Nature: Environment, Culture and European Expansion*, Oxford, 1996, 168. On tropicality, see also N. Stepan, *Picturing Tropical Nature*, London, 2001; F. Driver and L. Martins (Eds), *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire*, Chicago, 2005.

⁵⁸ Everard F. im Thurn to Daniel Morris, 28 November 1892, Director's Correspondence 204/353, RBG Kew, KLDC11630; Everard F. im Thurn to Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker, 28 May 1884, Director's Correspondence 204/307, RBG Kew, KLDC11587.

While resident at Morawahanna, as she wrote home to her mother in Scotland, Hannah was separated from her husband for long periods of time while he was engaged in official work or on expeditions into the interior.⁵⁹ For Everard, these expeditions 'in the company of local Amerindian people constituted one of the most intensely felt pleasures of his life'.⁶⁰ For the most part, these journeys were not shared with his wife. Judging from her correspondence, Hannah's life in the colony revolved around a gendered domesticity, providing companionship to Everard when he was present.⁶¹ Her sense of cultural isolation must have been significantly heightened away from the relative cosmopolitanism of Georgetown. At Morawahanna she would have had scant contact with other Europeans, especially of her own class.⁶² Indeed, the immediate area was sparsely populated, even by Amerindians. The border dispute with Venezuela added further uncertainty to a life on the margins.⁶³

It seems from her letters to her mother that Hannah's supporting role provided that degree of 'companionship, the reduction of loneliness and the greater comfort of a home supervised by a woman', which was generally expected of a colonial wife.⁶⁴ Moreover, her presence at the frontiers of colonial government would have been a

⁵⁹ Hannah im Thurn to Hannah Riddle, 19 December 1896 and 2 January 1897, NLS, Acc8695/126(i).

⁶⁰ Dalziell, 'A Tramp with Redskins', 89.

⁶¹ Here Hanna's positioning contrasts with Charlotte Wheeler-Cuffe's, who regularly travelled with her husband on his expeditions. See Johnson, *Global knowledge in a local world*; Johnson, *On the colonial frontier*.

⁶² B. Gartrell, *Colonial wives: villains or victims?*, in: H. Callan and S. Ardener (Eds), *The Incorporated Wife*, London, 1984, 165–185.

⁶³ W.L.S., *Obituary: Sir Everard im Thurn*.

⁶⁴ Gartrell, *Colonial wives*, 168.

visible reminder of the values of British domestic culture, giving the rudimentary settlement what one historian has called 'a sense of stability and purpose'.⁶⁵ As Everard was devoting much of his time to journeys with Amerindians, it was left to Hannah to present the public face of colonial rule at a local level by maintaining the dignity of the 'civilized' home. Deprived of the daily support of family and the comforts of the familiar social round and cultural networks available to her in Scotland, Hannah maintained contact with her family through her letters from Morawahanna. In them she mused on her reading of literature and her sketches, and inquired about her brother's paintings.⁶⁶ She also described Everard's adventures in the interior, including expeditions near the Venezuelan border, repeatedly expressing her concerns for his safety.⁶⁷ Although she assured her family that he was well supported by his Amerindian companions during these trips, Hannah's correspondence also betrays her sense of anxiety. As she writes:

The Indians are marvellous about finding their way even in places they don't know and they have plenty of provisions and are or were quite well; still I can't help feeling anxious at the thought of their all wandering about in search of one another, having as I have just seen enough of tropical forest to feel one might be hopelessly lost 20 yards from home. That all the innumerable creeks and all the turns on them look first the same.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ J.N. Brownfoot, *Memsahibs in colonial Malaya: a study of European wives in a British colony and protectorate*, in: Callan and Ardener, *The Incorporated Wife*, 187.

⁶⁶ Im Thurn to Riddle, 19 December 1896, NLS, Acc8695/126(i).

⁶⁷ Im Thurn to Riddle, 26 March 1897, NLS, Acc8695/126(i).

⁶⁸ Im Thurn to Riddle, 26 March 1897, NLS, Acc8695/126(i).

Hannah's letters to her mother also make repeated reference to her concerns about her husband's health. On several occasions she sent news of Everard suffering with headaches and with his eyesight after returning from his arduous journeys through the forest.⁶⁹ Everard's problems with vision are also referred to in a letter to the director of Kew Gardens, William Thiselton-Dyer, in which Everard apologises for his 'scrawl', explaining that his eyes had been so affected that he could hardly see.⁷⁰ In the evenings when Everard was at home, Hannah would read to him. As she wrote to her mother: 'I am reading it [*Kate Carnegie*] to E. in the evening while he is sorting orchids and we are liking it very much'.⁷¹ Given Everard's poor eyesight, we can assume Hannah fulfilled an amanuensis role, so common in Victorian marriages, assisting with his correspondence and occasionally reading to him.

Hannah found various ways of overcoming her sense of solitude at Morawhanna while Everard was away. She took to looking after local children from time to time, as she explained to her mother in a letter written a week before Christmas 1896: 'My young companion is a sweet lass and very intelligent and very chatty and it makes it very much less lonesome to have her'.⁷² As well as the usual pursuits of reading or drawing available to colonial wives in her situation, Hannah used such opportunities for sociability to extend her knowledge of the place itself, making short journeys upriver with her 'young companions', and sketching along the way:

⁶⁹ Im Thurn to Riddle, 19 December 1896, NLS, Acc8695/126(i).

⁷⁰ Everard F. im Thurn to Sir William Thiselton-Dyer, 13 September 1896, Director's Correspondence 204/357, RBG Kew, KLDC11633.

⁷¹ Im Thurn to Riddle, 10 April 1897, NLS, Acc8695/126(i).

⁷² Im Thurn to Riddle, 19 December 1896, NLS, Acc8695/126(i).

We celebrated the day [Hannah's mother's birthday] by having a delightful outing, going a little way in the launch on its way to Amakura and then taking to a boat and going up a creek. Such a lovely one where we saw any quantity of wonderful birds, ... orchids and butterflies. We breakfasted sitting in the boat, the boys making a fire on shore, sketched a little and then paddled home.⁷³

Hannah went on walks with her husband, as well as with the children she looked after when he was away. As she wrote to her mother in May 1897:

Everard and I had a nice day It is good that there is still so much room in the world. We had a good long walk up hill and down dale on Indian track and I enjoyed much stretching my legs a bit and I didn't feel it particularly hot; but it was very hot'.⁷⁴

We can also readily imagine Everard imparting his botanical knowledge to Hannah while he was sorting the specimens, encouraging her to draw orchids to enrich his herbarium. In later letters to her mother, Hannah gives the scientific names of the orchids, presumably having learned them through her discussions with her husband.⁷⁵ As we have suggested elsewhere, Hannah's drawings are evidence of a fruitful exchange between husband and wife, resulting in at least sixteen

⁷³ Im Thurn to Riddle, 26 March 1897, NLS, Acc8695/126(i).

⁷⁴ Im Thurn to Riddle, 8 May 1897, NLS, Acc8695/126(i).

⁷⁵ Im Thurn to Riddle, 26 March 1897, NLS, Acc8695/126(i).

illustrations of orchids which are now housed at Kew (Fig. 5).⁷⁶ Although not signed by Hannah, it is clear that these botanical illustrations should be attributed primarily to her. They reveal a keen eye for detail and a command of the media (watercolour and bodycolour) unlikely to have been achieved by someone with poor eyesight and without any formal artistic training. Hannah's delight in documenting her observations is evident from her letters to her mother. As she noted in a letter from March 1897, 'I have been painting the splenddest orchid I have ever seen, Coryanthes macrantha very rare out here'.⁷⁷ But this acknowledgement of self-achievement was partial. In compensating for Everard's physical deficiencies while keeping her own authorship hidden from view, Hannah was also conforming to the conventional role of naturalist's wife allotted to her within Victorian scientific culture.⁷⁸

ETHNOGRAPHIC SCULPTURES

Although Hannah im Thurn's public role in many ways conforms to that of the conventional colonial wife, it is clear from the work that survives that her abilities as an artist were exceptional and relatively wide-ranging. Indeed, as well as being an accomplished draughtswoman and painter, she was also a talented sculptor, her work indicating familiarity with a variety of techniques. According to David Sladen, as a young woman she is said to have 'caught the trick of the beautiful moulded

⁷⁶ Albuquerque, Watercolours of orchids native to British Guiana at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

⁷⁷ Im Thurn to Riddle, 26 March 1897, NLS, Acc8695/126(i).

⁷⁸ Sheffield, *Revealing New Worlds*, 199.

plaster ceilings at Kellie [Castle], done by a wandering band of Italian artists in the seventeenth century', and on this basis was apparently entrusted to work on the execution of the moulded plaster ceilings of Lord Bute's house in Fife.⁷⁹ It is clear that this interest in sculpture endured as she devoted some of her time in Morawahanna to sculptural work. In a letter to her mother written in May 1897, she thanked 'Robbie' (her brother Robert) for 'doing about the plaster' for her, and wrote of her future plans:

I hope I shall make a good use of it. I have heaps of things in my head I want to do if only the time would hold a little more. My 68th study has made some way but is certainly far from being proved worth anything.⁸⁰

One of the sculptural works completed by Hannah at this time is a plaster cast 'bust of a Warrau boy from British Guiana' painted in bronze colour, which she donated to the Pitt Rivers Museum in 1898.⁸¹ The bust was originally displayed on the ground floor of the museum's Balfour Library, though later it was removed for building work, remaining in storage to this day.

⁷⁹ D. Sladen, *Twenty Years of My Life*, New York, 1914, 140.

⁸⁰ Im Thurn to Riddle, 8 May 1897, NLS, Acc8695/126(i).

⁸¹ Pitt Rivers Museum catalogue entry object 1898.52.1, <http://objects.prm.ox.ac.uk/pages/PRMUID26682.html> last accessed 22 September 2016. This information is no longer available online. As a Pitt Rivers Museum curator informed us, the object and photograph collections 'databases are currently undergoing a review to ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation, which will come into force on 25 May 2018. During this time only certain fields will be available to view online', Marina de Alarcón, personal communication, February 2018.

With a serene expression, eyelids nearly closed, one of the sculpture's distinctive features is its skin colour (Fig. 6), a topic of considerable interest to the im Thurns. A contemporary newspaper article on 'The American Aborigines', published in a series devoted to 'Science notes and gleanings', drew directly on Hannah's first-hand experience:

Mrs im Thurn, who has had special opportunities of observing them [Amerindians] describes the skin of the Indians of British Guiana as cinnamon red; and a bust of a Macusi boy, now in the British Museum, which was modelled and coloured by Mrs im Thurn, is of a bright clarety-red.⁸²

'Cinnamon red' was also how Everard described the skin colour of the Amerindians in *Among the Indians of Guiana*:

It is very difficult to describe the colour of the skin [of the Amerindians]. It is usually said to be 'copper-coloured', and the Indians themselves are sometimes called 'red-skins'. Both these expressions refer to the real appearance of the skin, for the colour is, as nearly as I can express it in words, very red cinnamon.⁸³

While the 'bust of a Macusi boy' has not been identified in the British Museum collection, there is a sculpture of a Warrau boy, part of the same series mentioned by

⁸² Anonymous, The American Aborigines, in: Science notes and gleanings, *The Isle of Wight Observer*, Ryde, England, 14 July 1900, 7.

⁸³ Im Thurn, *Among the Indians of Guiana*, 189.

Hannah in the letter to her mother, in the National Museum of Guyana (NMG) in Georgetown (Fig. 7).⁸⁴ Visibly damaged – whether as a result of the process of creating wax copies for casting from the plaster mould, or of several fires the institution has suffered over the years – the bust nonetheless displays Hannah’s sensitivity in depicting the boy’s expression, right hand pressed on his chest, eyes wide open, looking up at her. The boy’s gaze evokes not only a sense of his presence, but also that of the artist who is scrutinizing his features.

From the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, sculpture provided a privileged medium to represent racial difference through the display of bodies. Sculptures of racial ‘types’ were routinely displayed in museums, world’s fairs and universal expositions. Sculpture was particularly well suited to embrace popular anthropological and colonial hierarchies of colour and whiteness.⁸⁵ The polychromic busts of southern European, Middle Eastern and African subjects by Charles Cordier (1827–1905), using local materials to represent different ethnicities, provide a fitting example of the congruence of artistic skills with colonialist discourse.⁸⁶ While photography compensated for ‘the lack of the expression of the eye’ identified in plaster casts displayed in anthropological collections, Cordier’s sculptures, which were exhibited at the Muséum national d’Histoire naturelle in Paris, combined the three-dimensional facial measurements needed by anthropologists with the

⁸⁴ There is no record of this sculpture in the British Museum database.

⁸⁵ C.A. Nelson, *The Color of Stone: Sculpting the Black Female Subject in Nineteenth-Century America*, Minneapolis, 2007, xxx, 63–65.

⁸⁶ B. Larson, The artist as ethnographer: Charles Cordier and race in mid-nineteenth-century France, *Art Bulletin* 87 (2005) 714–722.

assembly of characteristics that, according to Cordier, formed particular racial types.⁸⁷

Given Everard im Thurn's advocacy of the use of photography to produce a 'characteristic' record of 'primitive folk in their natural condition', the act of fixing indigenous features in plaster, in particular of those he called the 'little known Redmen called Warraus', would have been a fitting subject for Hannah's artistic skills.⁸⁸ Photography and ethnographic sculpture made *in situ* both provided 'the particular blend of intense realism and widespread accessibility that typifies [nineteenth-century] modern media and their representational systems', which, according to Mark Sandberg, required that they were 'able to circulate widely and provide assurance to a secure path back to a genuine source', to the extent that they could be traced back to their referent.⁸⁹ Had Hannah persevered in the production of her ethnographic sculptures, she could have achieved the professional recognition of the likes of Herbert Ward or Malvina Hoffman, who established their reputation by producing three-dimensional representations of the non-European 'other'.⁹⁰ As

⁸⁷ C. Barthe, Models and norms: the relationship between ethnographic photographs and sculptures, in: L. de Margerie and E. Papet (Eds), *Facing the Other: Charles Cordier (1827-1905), Ethnographic Sculptor*, translated by L. Ammon, L. Hirsch and C. Palmieri, New York, 2004, 104; J. Smalls, Exquisite empty shells: sculpted slave portraits and the French ethnographic turn, in: A. Lugo-Ortiz and A. Rosenthal (Eds), *Slave Portraiture in the Atlantic Worlds*, Cambridge, 2013, 282–312; F. Driver, Face to face with Nain Singh: the Schlagintweit collections and their uses, in: A. MacGregor (Ed.), *Naturalists in the Field: Collecting, Recording and Preserving the Natural World from the Fifteenth to the Twentieth-First Century*, Leiden, 2018, 441–469.

⁸⁸ Im Thurn, Anthropological uses of the camera, 186, 198.

⁸⁹ M.B. Sandberg, *Living Pictures, Missing Persons: Mannequins, Museums, and Modernity*, Princeton, 2003, 47.

⁹⁰ On Herbert Ward (1863–1922), see H. Marles, Arrested development: race and evolution in the sculpture of Herbert Ward, *The Oxford Art Journal* 19 (1996) 16–28, and M.J. Arnoldi, A distorted mirror: the exhibition of the Herbert Ward collection of Africana, in: I. Karp, C.M. Kreamer and S.D. Lavine (Eds), *Museum and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*,

Linda Kim puts it, Hoffman capitalised on the public interest of a “‘woman sculptor” pitted against “primitive races””, by ‘weaving the role of woman traveller-explorer into the matrix of her artistic persona’, something far removed from Hannah’s ambitions.⁹¹

Indeed, Hannah’s correspondence provides evidence of her lack of confidence in her abilities as an artist. As she wrote to her mother in the excerpt quoted above, her plaster study ‘made some way’, but was ‘certainly far from being proved worth anything’.⁹² This insecurity about her own work was clearly exacerbated by the very public successes achieved by other members of her family, her brother J.H. Lorimer in particular.⁹³ In her correspondence she frequently asks her mother about J.H.’s work and also seeks his advice.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, unlike the orchid drawings that she never signed, there is at least some evidence that she acknowledged her authorship of the Warrau boy bust and recognised its ethnographic value in donating it to the Pitt Rivers Museum.

Washington DC, 1992, 428–453. On Malvina Hoffmann (1885–1966), see L. Kim, ‘A Woman Sculptor among the Primitive Races’: gender and sculpture in the 1930s, *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 35 (2004) 86–117, and M. Kinkel, *Races of Mankind: The Sculptures of Marina Hoffman*, Champaign IL, 2011. The Field Museum in Chicago presented a controversial exhibition of Hoffman’s ethnographic sculptures between 15 January 2016 and 1 January 2017. See J. Schluesser, ‘Races of Mankind’ sculptures, long exiled, return to display at Chicago’s Field Museum, *The New York Times*, 20 January 2016, and E. Rothstein, Looking at ourselves: rethinking the sculptures of Malvina Hoffman, *The Wall Street Journal*, 22 March 2016.

⁹¹ Kim, ‘A Woman Sculptor among the Primitive Races’, 92.

⁹² Im Thurn to Riddle, 8 May 1897, NLS, Acc8695/126(i).

⁹³ See A. Anderson, Lorimer, John Henry (1856–1936), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, online edition, May 2011, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/67596> last accessed 28 February 2018, and Walker, Lorimer, Sir Robert Stodart.

⁹⁴ Im Thurn to Riddle, 19 December 1896, NLS, Acc8695/126(i).

MARRIAGE PARTNERSHIP

On their return to Britain in 1897, the im Thurns settled in London, spending a short period in Paris in 1899, while he was dealing with the court of arbitration on the Venezuelan border.⁹⁵ Everard joined the staff of the Colonial Office in 1900, and the following year was appointed lieutenant governor of Ceylon, a post he held until 1904 when he was appointed as governor of Fiji and high commissioner for the Western Pacific Islands.⁹⁶ In 1910, with Everard's retirement from this post on the ground of ill health, he returned with Hannah to London.⁹⁷

In the years immediately following their return to London, Everard and Hannah remained active in social and scientific circles. They participated in the social round, including attendance at the Royal Society of Arts conversazione.⁹⁸ Some of Hannah's paintings of 'typical scenes of Fiji' were exhibited at the Royal Horticultural Society, as an accompaniment to a lecture by Everard on the flora of Fiji and the South Sea

⁹⁵ Everard F. im Thurn to Sir William Thiselton-Dyer, 17 September 1899, Director's Correspondence 208/125, RBG Kew, KLDC12794; Im Thurn to Thiselton-Dyer, 30 September 1899, RBG Kew, KLDC12796, 127; Im Thurn to Thiselton-Dyer, 22 September 1899, RBG Kew, KLDC12797, 128.

⁹⁶ W.L.S., Obituary, 557; National Museums Scotland hold a collection of around a hundred objects and five hundred glass lantern slides donated by Everard and Hannah im Thurn between 1925 and 1935, the largest proportion of which relating to the time they lived in Sri Lanka. See National Museums Scotland, Sir Everard and Lady Hannah im Thurn's Sri Lankan collection, <https://www.nms.ac.uk/explore-our-collections/stories/world-cultures/sir-everard-ferdinand-im-thurn/> last accessed 2 January 2018.

⁹⁷ Anonymous, New governor of Fiji, *The Scotsman*, 22 December 1910; Aerni, Sir Everard im Thurn, 354.

⁹⁸ Anonymous, Royal Society of Arts conversazione, *The Times*, 31 May 1911, 12.

Islands.⁹⁹ As well as supporting her husband in his public duties, Hannah pursued her own interests in education and the arts.¹⁰⁰ In November 1911, *The Times* reported her attendance at a dinner ‘in aid of the fund for the building and endowment of the new premises of Bedford College – the oldest University College for women’.¹⁰¹

In 1914 Everard was appointed president of the Anthropological Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS), travelling to Australia for the association’s international meeting, this time on his own.¹⁰² On receiving news of the outbreak of war in Europe, he returned immediately to London. Although retired, he continued to be active in public life, serving from 1919 to 1920 as president of the Royal Anthropological Institute. In the interests of his health, Hannah encouraged the idea of retirement to an even quieter life, and in 1920 the im Thurns moved to Cockenzie House, a Jacobean mansion in Prestonpans, a small town outside Edinburgh.¹⁰³ Everard nevertheless continued to be publicly active,

⁹⁹ Anonymous, Royal Horticultural Society shows, *The Times*, 7 February 1912, 4. There is also a record of the oil painting by Hannah entitled *View from the Governor’s Residence, Fiji*, 71.12cm x 149.86cm in Sotheby’s Catalogue, *Topographical paintings, watercolours and drawings*, 27 May 1988, <http://artsalesindex.artinfo.com/auctions/Hannah-Lorimer-1491351/View-from-the-Governor's-Residence,-Fiji-> last accessed 23 February 2018.

¹⁰⁰ Unlike her contemporary Alicia Amherst (1865-1941), wife of Evelyn Cecil, 1st Baron Rockley, who worked for the South African Colonisation Society and subsequently for the Society for Overseas Settlement of British Women, Hannah was never directly involved in the politics of empire and colonisation herself. See S. Minter, *The Well-Connected Gardener: A Biography of Alicia Amherst, founder of Garden History*, Brighton, 2010, 87.

¹⁰¹ Anonymous, Bedford College for women, *The Times*, 24 November 1911, 7.

¹⁰² Dalziell, Everard im Thurn in British Guiana and the Western Pacific, 103; Balfour Diaries 1914, Notebook 1: London–Sydney, Manuscript Collection, Pitt Rivers Museum.

¹⁰³ Aerni, Sir Everard im Thurn, 354, 355; Charles Douglas, steeped in history, *Scotland Magazine* 72, December 2013, <http://www.scotlandmag.com/magazine/issue72/12010815.html> last accessed 23 February 2018.

chairing the council of the Scottish Geographical Society from 1926 to 1930, and joining the Committee for the Preservation of Rural Scotland, created in 1929.¹⁰⁴ He died at Cockenzie House in 1932. There is evidence that Hannah continued to live there for some years, opening the house's gardens to the public on several occasions from 1933 to 1934.¹⁰⁵

Hannah's investment in her husband's career continued to be expressed in various forms after his death.¹⁰⁶ Most significantly, she was instrumental in the publication of a collection of his writings by Oxford University Press in 1934, under the title *Thoughts, Talks and Tramps: A Collection of Papers by Sir Everard im Thurn*.¹⁰⁷ 'It was a happy thought of Lady im Thurn to have arranged the publication of her distinguished husband's early papers', a sympathetic reviewer noted in *The Geographical Journal*, 'for many of them, especially those published in *Timehri*, are difficult to find in most libraries'.¹⁰⁸ In addition to suggesting the publication of the collection herself, Hannah's contribution to the book was acknowledged by the anthropologist Robert Marett, who was, nevertheless, given sole credit as editor of

¹⁰⁴ Dalziell, Everard im Thurn in British Guiana and Western Pacific, 101; T.C. Smout, *Exploring Environmental History: Selected Essays*, Edinburgh, 2009, 101, n. 71.

¹⁰⁵ Anonymous, Gardens open to the public, *The Times*, 6 May 1933, 8; Anonymous, Gardens open to the public, *The Times*, 28 April 1834–1934 NOT CLEAR WHAT THIS MEANS IN TERMS OF DATES, 7; Anonymous, Gardens open to the public, *The Times*, 5 May 1834–1934, 15.

¹⁰⁶ For example, Hannah presented a collection of Everard's books to the Scottish Geographical Society in 1936, see Proceedings of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, *Scottish Geographical Magazine* 52 (1936) 189.

¹⁰⁷ Marett, *Thoughts, Talks and Tramps*.

¹⁰⁸ W.L.C., Review of *Thoughts, Talks and Tramps*, *Geographical Journal* 84 (1934) 457–458. The reviewer was probably the naturalist William Lutley Sclater, who visited British Guiana in 1886. See Anonymous, Obituary notice: William Lutley Sclater, *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Africa* 31 (1948) xlvii-xlviii.

the book. As he noted, 'I have throughout been greatly helped by Lady im Thurn's advice, and have to thank her for a great deal of the information on which my brief memoir is based'.¹⁰⁹ Inside the front cover of a copy that Hannah presented to a friend in 1938 is pasted an original silver gelatin photograph of Everard, standing with a cockatoo in hand in the government house gardens in Fiji. On the opposite page is a dedication, signed by the frail hand of eighty-three-year-old Hannah (Fig. 8).¹¹⁰ Hannah might have attached the photograph as an extra token to her friend, to whom she dedicates the book 'in memory of her great kindness and helpfulness through a very trying and difficult time'.¹¹¹

Hannah's contributions to the career of her husband went well beyond that of a helpmeet or companion. In professional terms, the im Thurns' marriage can be seen as a partnership between science and art.¹¹² While Everard contributed his knowledge of natural history to the joint enterprise, his wife contributed her artistic abilities in the depiction of the forms of natural and cultural life. Hannah's orchid illustrations exquisitely documented the colour and shape of living plants, and details of their habitat, information which was lost in the dried herbarium specimens. Her ethnographic sculptures also benefited from her evident facility with

¹⁰⁹ Marett, Editor's note, in: Marett, *Thoughts, Talks and Tramps*. See also Aerni, Sir Everard im Thurn, 355.

¹¹⁰ The book is dedicated to Blanche Payne. It is possible that Payne was the American design historian who specialised in folk costume in Central Europe and the Balkans, and who travelled to Europe in 1930s to conduct research. See D. Ryesky, Blanche Payne, scholar and teacher: her career in costume history, *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 77 (1986) 21–31.

¹¹¹ Author's private collection.

¹¹² S. Le-May Sheffield, Gendered collaborations: marrying art and science, in: A.B. Shteir and B. Lightman (Eds), *Figuring it Out: Science, Gender and Visual Culture*, Hanover, 2006, 240–264.

naturalistic portraiture, as well as being designed to portray the skin colour of indigenous peoples, something difficult to discern in monochromatic photographs. In keeping with the gender norms of the day, however, this was by no means an equal partnership, for it was clearly Hannah's work that revolved around Everard's. Thus while Everard recognised that his wife's illustrations added considerable value to his collection of orchids, Hannah's work consistently went unrecognized or unacknowledged, even by herself.¹¹³ In this respect Everard was conforming to a well-worn tradition, evident in his book *Among the Indians of Guiana*, where he acknowledges the contribution of his male counterparts by naming them individually, but refers only in generalized terms to the 'lady friend' who 'drew two of the coloured plates and two of the smaller uncoloured illustrations'.¹¹⁴ Given that Hannah was in British Guiana visiting her sister when Everard was preparing his book – and following her brother John's advice to 'sketch a lot' – it is plausible that she was the 'lady friend' Everard refers to in his acknowledgements.¹¹⁵

The lack of explicit acknowledgement of Hannah im Thurn's contribution to her husband's scientific work is far from exceptional, especially in the world of natural history. For example, engraved illustrations based on the drawings of the talented artist Emily Gosse (1806–1857) were widely attributed to her husband, Philip Gosse.¹¹⁶ Similarly, Elizabeth Gould (1804–1841), the wife of ornithologist John

¹¹³ Everard F. im Thurn to Sir William Thiselton-Dyer, 26 September 1897, Director's Correspondence 204/361, RBG Kew, KLDC11637.

¹¹⁴ Im Thurn, *Among the Indians of Guiana*, vii.

¹¹⁵ Fenoulhet, John Henry Lorimer, 47.

¹¹⁶ B.T. Gates, Those who drew and those who wrote, in: Shteir and Lightman (Eds), *Figuring it Out*, 192–213.

Gould (1804–1881), supplied some of the accomplished drawings on which her husband based his plates of the birds and mammals of Australia, others being supplied by a team of artists.¹¹⁷ While Elizabeth participated actively in John’s work, her role as illustrator was often obscured. For example, John signed all the plates, ‘which disabled reviewers from discerning exactly who did what’.¹¹⁸ The Goulds had a more sustained marriage partnership than Everard and Hannah. However, this case has certain similarities with the im Thurns, not least because Elizabeth was also working behind-the-scenes for her husband’s success in the outposts of empire. The same might be said of many other women, whose contributions to the making of natural history have been recovered by feminist historians of science over the last three decades. In the field of botany, for example, the work of Anne Rudge (1763–1836), Maria Turner (1797–1872), Margaret Gatty (1809–1873), Frances Henslow (1825–1874), Edith Blake (1845–1926) and Charlotte Wheeler-Cuffe (1867–1967) have been duly unearthed.¹¹⁹ Although, as Suzanne Sheffield concludes, ‘Botanical art conducted within the context of marriage enabled women to make an important contribution to the scientific endeavour that they might not have made otherwise’, their contribution to the production of scientific knowledge remained poorly acknowledged.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ A. Datta, *John Gould in Australia*, Victoria, 1997, 168.

¹¹⁸ B.T. Gates, *Kindred Nature: Victorian and Edwardian Women Embrace the Living World*, Chicago, 1998, 74.

¹¹⁹ C. Ellwood and J.M.V. Harvey, The Lady Blake collection: catalogue of Lady Edith Blake’s collection of drawings of Jamaican Lepidoptera and plants, *Bulletin of the British Museum (Natural History)* 18 (1990) 145–202; Sheffield, *Gendered collaborations*; Sheffield, *Revealing New Worlds*; A.B. Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora’s Daughters and Botany in England, 1760–1860*, Baltimore, 1996; Johnson, *Global knowledge in a local world*; Johnson, *On the colonial frontier*.

¹²⁰ Sheffield, *Gendered collaborations*, 241.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have sought to extend the 'biographical turn' in historical geographical writing to a more explicit focus on partnership: in this case, a companionate marriage between a well-known naturalist and the woman who supported his efforts to gather new knowledge on the frontiers of empire.¹²¹ In the process, we have sought to bring Hannah im Thurn back into the frame of history by focussing on her own experience of colonial living and her hitherto barely-recognised contributions to the work of her husband. The making of scientific knowledge in the field has long depended on the contributions of many different kinds of people, not just those named as authors on scientific reports and papers.¹²² The collection of natural history specimens and cultural artefacts, their documentation and depiction, depended on the labour of a wide variety of actors, few of whom were actually acknowledged in the published works of eminent men of science. In this paper we have highlighted Hannah im Thurn's role in the presentation of botanical and ethnographic information. Her most important contributions were undoubtedly directed to the support of her husband Everard im Thurn. In this sense, she deserves some share in the credit for his successes,

¹²¹ S. Daniels and C. Nash, Lifepaths: geography and biography, *Journal of Historical Geography* 30 (2004) 449–458; N. Thomas, Exploring the boundaries of biography: the family and friendship networks of Lady Curzon, Vicereine of India 1898–1905, *Journal of Historical Geography* 30 (2004) 496–519; C. McGeachan, I. Forsyth and W. Hasty, Certain subjects? Working with biography and life-writing in historical geography, *Historical Geography* 40 (2012) 169–185; C. McGeachan, Historical geography II: traces remain, *Progress in Human Geography* 42 (2016) 134–147.

¹²² F. Driver and L. Jones, *Hidden Histories of Exploration: Researching the RGS-IBG Collections*, London, 2009.

including many of the recognitions he received for services to the British Empire during his career as a colonial official.¹²³

The research underlying this paper has necessarily gone beyond official narratives and received wisdoms concerning the career of a well-known naturalist and ethnographer, to consider a much wider and more disparate archival realm. We hope to have shown that working with such sources, fragmentary as they are, and combining them with a reading 'against the grain' of authorised sources can produce a new and different account of knowledge production in the field. Indeed, the more we pieced together scattered evidence concerning Hannah's married life the more powerful her presence in the making and presentation of Everard's reputation became. Certainly the glimpses of personal intimacy between husband and wife in the historical record, such as they are, indicate a significant level of shared intellectual, artistic and social interests. Above all, they direct our attention to the intricacies of affect in the production of scientific knowledge. As Sally Kohlstedt remarks:

The complex partnerships formed in the natural and social sciences reveal that science is a marketplace where investments of time and emotional energy as well as money are important. So, we should not be surprised to find that here, too, the invisible hand of markets depends upon the invisible heart of care.¹²⁴

¹²³ The honours conferred on Everard in Thurn include C.M.G. (1892), C.B. (1900), K.C.M.G. (1905) and K.B.E. (1918).

¹²⁴ S.G. Kohlstedt, Foreword: the material and personal value of care, in: Lykknes, Opitz, and Van Tiggelen, *For Better or for Worse?*, 6.

And Hannah, for her part, seems to have derived confidence and pleasure from her companionship with Everard. In a photograph of a social event dated 1908 (Fig. 9), she is centre-stage, her expression relaxed, directing a self-assured smile to Everard (on her left), who is sporting his top hat.¹²⁵ This is quite a different Hannah from the one portrayed eleven years earlier, a timid woman standing beneath a palm tree in British Guiana.

Hannah spent her last years in Edinburgh, where she died on 6 March 1947. Her obituary in *The Times*, in which she is defined almost completely by her relationships with her father and her husband, reads as follows:

Lady im Thurn, widow of Sir Everard im Thurn, K.C.M.G., K.B.E., C.B., died at her home in Edinburgh on Thursday at the age of 92. She was Hannah Cassels, daughter of Professor James Lorimer, Regius Professor of Public Law in the University of Edinburgh. Her marriage took place in 1895 and her husband died in 1932.¹²⁶

In this paper, we have drawn attention to aspects of Hannah im Thurn's role as an illustrator, a sculptor and a companion to her better-known husband that help to expand our understanding of the work of 'colonial wives' in the production of

¹²⁵ NOT CLEAR HOW THIS FOOTNOTE RELATES TO THE TEXT It is difficult to ascertain when and where this photograph was taken. Marett, Sir Everard im Thurn, xxi, asserts that im Thurn 'came home for a short holiday' from Fiji in 1909, but it is possible that it was during the Christmas holidays of 1908–1909.

¹²⁶ Anonymous, Obituary: Hannah im Thurn, *The Times*, 10 March 1947, 7.

natural history and ethnographic knowledge at the margins of empire. Everard's achievements as a naturalist, an anthropologist and a colonial official can no longer be understood without reference to the roles played by his wife during and after his lifetime. And Hannah's accomplishments as an artist surely deserve much wider recognition as we learn more about her unattributed and forgotten work in natural history drawing and ethnographic sculpture. More generally, through the use of a case study, this paper has highlighted some of the ways in which women could exploit the opportunities of colonial travel to develop their artistic and scientific skills in a way not readily available to them within the metropole. In the process, it has also exposed the contradictions between the relative freedom afforded to elite women in colonial frontier settings and the gendered conventions which continued to shape the public presentation of the work of science.

Figures

Fig. 1. Euterpe (the “Oreodoxa regia” of both the Indies). Photograph signed by G.S. Jenman and dated 1897, British Guiana. From the Palm Illustration Collection, Box: 187 PALMAE: Genus 90 © The Board of Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Fig. 2. Hannah and Everard im Thurn, 1897 (detail of Figure 1) © Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Fig. 3. British Guiana. The broken line represents the borders of British Guiana and Venezuela until 1899 and of British Guiana and Brazil until 1904, in Marett (Ed.), *Thoughts, Talks and Tramps*, reproduced with permission from a private collection.

Fig. 4. Sir Everard im Thurn’s House at Morawhanna, in Beebe and Beebe, *Our Search for a Wilderness*, 143.

Fig. 5. Example of one of the orchid illustrations with label attached, *Rodriguezia secunda* (synonym of *Rodriguezia lanceolata*) (c.n. 136) © The Board of Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Fig. 6. Bust of a Warrau boy made by Hannah im Thurn (1898.52.1), copyright Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.

Fig. 7. Warrau boy sculpture © National Museum of Guyana, Georgetown.

Fig. 8. Front endpaper, Marett (Ed.), *Thoughts, Talks and Tramps*, with photograph of Everard im Thurn and dedication by Hannah im Thurn, reproduced with permission from a private collection.

Fig. 9. At opening of a school in 1908 (Acc8695/154), reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland.

Royotonea



Enterpa
(The "Oreodouarjia" of both the Indies.)

Comm. G. Jernan, 7.5.8/97.

Figure 1



Figure 2

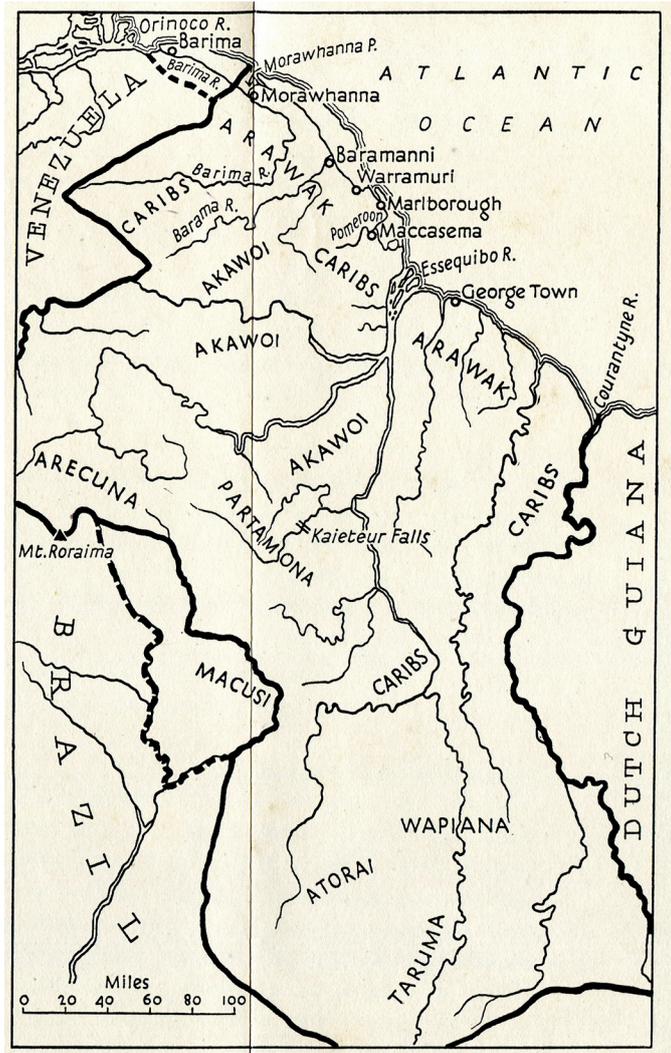


Figure 3

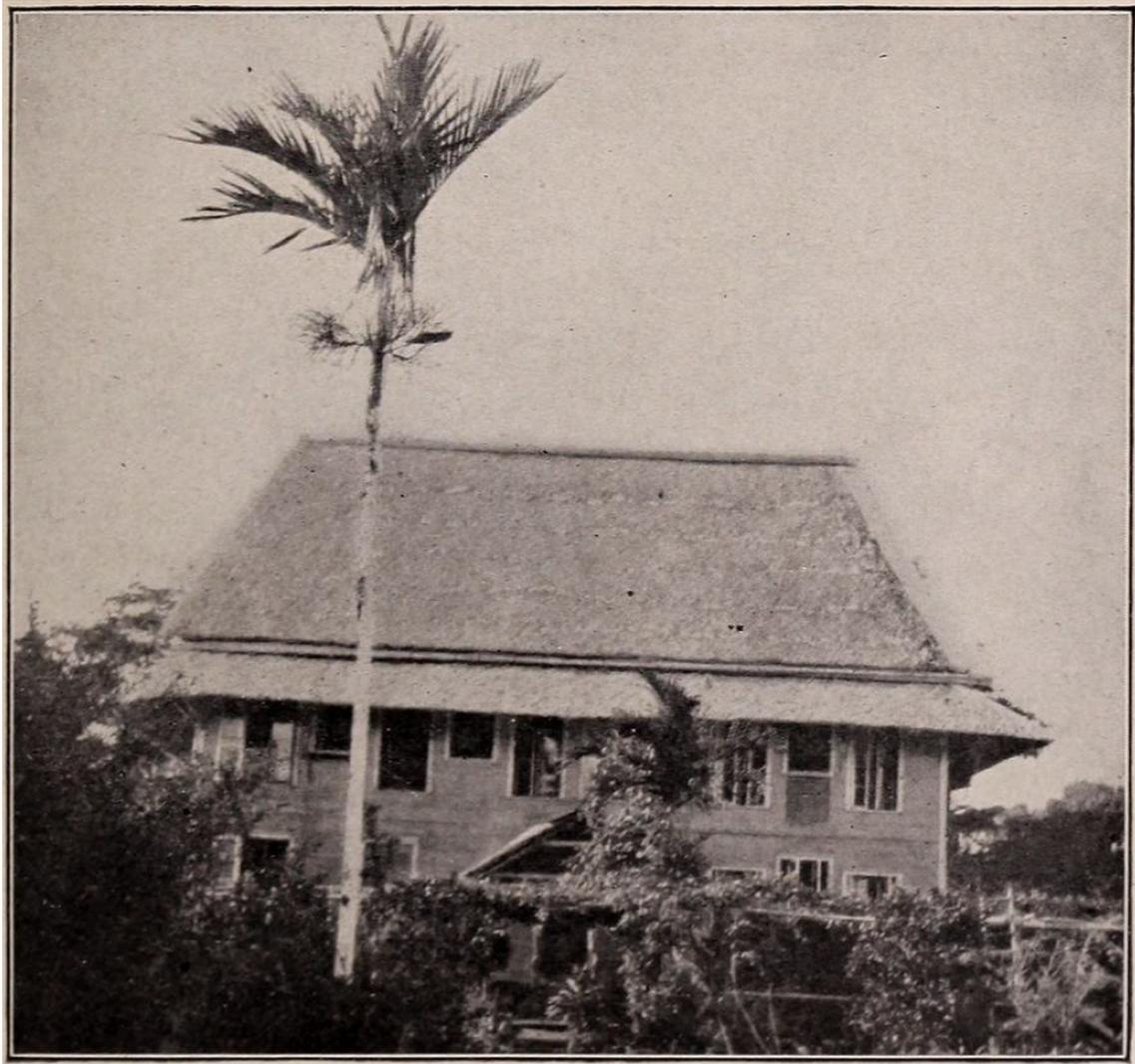


Figure 4



Rodriguezia Secunda
v. *sanguinea* of Schomburgk
C.M. 136

Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

Sir Everard im Shurn
with his Coeratoo.
in Government House. Fiji
Gardens.



To Blanche Payne in
memory of her great kindness & help
through a very long & difficult time
from H.C. in Thurn (Kadyn in Thurn)
March 11th 1938.

Figure 8



Figure 9

Acknowledgements

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