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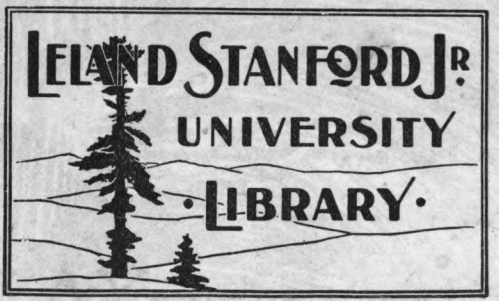
THE ABORIGINES OF VICTORIA & RIVERINA

P. BEVERIDGE.



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THE

ABORIGINES

OF

VICTORIA AND RIVERINA,

AS SEEN BY

PETER BEVERIDGE.

Melbourne:
M. L. HUTCHINSON,
GLASGOW BOOK WAREHOUSE, 330 COLLINS STREET.

1889.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

A twofold reason may be advanced for the publication of this little volume. The first is that the Widow of the Author seeks thereby to pay a tribute of respect to the memory of her late Husband, in carrying out what had long been his cherished intention. In thus putting into a permanent form the results of his labours, she has furnished an appropriate "memento" which cannot fail to be highly prized by the wide circle of his relatives and friends.

But in so far as it may find its way into the hands of the general public it must be judged on altogether different grounds, and must stand or fall on its own intrinsic merits; and as a reliable record of Aboriginal life we think it of unique value. Most of the information on this subject that is met with has been gleaned at second-hand, and wears about it a somewhat legendary aspect. Here, however, everything has been learned at first-hand, and is the result of the Author's personal observation. For a period of twenty-three years—from 1845 to 1868—he enjoyed the very best opportunities of making himself acquainted with the manners and the customs of those numerous tribes that then occupied the Lower Murray and Riverina Districts—and that too at a time when the Natives had been but little influenced by contact with European Settlers. Such a record cannot fail to become increasingly valuable as one of the Headwaters of Australian History—the publication of which is all the more a necessity that now it would be absolutely impossible to collect the information contained therein from the few Aborigines that remain.

With reference to Mr. Peter Beveridge, it may not be out of place to say a word or two. He was born in Dunfermline, Scotland, in the year 1829, and ten years later his family landed in Victoria, and commenced pastoral pursuits near the Township of Beveridge, to which they gave their name, and eventually settled down at Woodburn, near Kilmore, where the Mother of the Author still lives at the ripe old age of eighty-five.

In 1845 Mr. Peter Beveridge, accompanied by his brother Andrew, set out northwards to take up new country, taking with them 1000 head of cattle, a sufficient number of teams and servants, and provisions enough to last for a year. This they were induced to do through the representations of Mr. MacDougal—afterwards widely known as a successful breeder of cattle—who had already visited the Lower Murray, and who undertook to guide Mr. Beveridge into suitable country. The spot on which they settled was called *Tyntyndyer*, about ten miles below where the Town of Swan Hill now stands, and

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at that time about thirty or forty miles beyond the most outlying settlers. Here the natives were very numerous, and at first were perfectly harmless. The effect, however, of intercourse with the station employees, many of whom were ex-convicts, speedily generated a hostile feeling against the white man. To this Mr. Andrew Beveridge fell an innocent victim—thereby cutting short what promised to be a noble and useful career. Before joining his family in the colony, he had completed his studies in the University of Edinburgh, and had taken the Degree of Master of Arts, and in accompanying his brother northward it was his intention not only to help forward the undertaking, but also, as far as possible, to sow among the natives the Precious Seed of the Gospel.

As a matter of course, situated as he then was, Mr. Peter Beveridge was brought into daily contact with the Tribes that frequented his neighbourhood; and gradually acquiring their language, he gained their confidence to such an extent that he was permitted to learn at the very fountain head, much that was accessible to perhaps no other white man. Even the discovery of the goldfields in 1851, and the disorganization that it entailed but ministered the more fully to what had now become Mr. Beveridge's favourite study—for being compelled to utilise native labour in order to carry on the work of the station, he had full and frequent opportunity of observing all the phases of Aboriginal life. By 1883 he had amassed a large amount of information, which he put into the form of a Paper, which was read before the Royal Society of New South Wales, and printed among their proceedings. This paper may be regarded as the skeleton of the volume which is now given to the public.

In 1868 he removed from the Murray, and some time thereafter settled in French Island. It was there that he prepared for the press this little work, the manuscript being found amongst his papers after his death, and it is now issued just as it came from his hands.

As a man, Mr. Beveridge was frank, genial, and companionable. His clear intelligence and force of character rendered him a conversationalist of no mean order, his remarks frequently lit up with the gleam of humour and the sparkle of wit – altogether a man for whose loss the world feels poorer.

For some time before his death, he suffered from a painful internal ailment, which he bore to the end with Christian fortitude and patience. Hoping for some benefit from the change he came to Woodburn, but the malady refused to quit its hold. And thus, in the home of his family, tended by the loving hands of wife and mother, he died on October 4th, 1885.

J. STEELE, M.A.

The Manse, Kilmore.

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THE ABORIGINES OF VICTORIA.

By P. Beveridge.

Chapter I.

INTRODUCTORY.

In this age of enlightened progression and scientific explorations, it is singular that ethnologists have permitted such a fruitful field for research as the colony of Victoria offers, to remain so long unutilised. In this, as in all the other settled sections of Australia, the aborigines are rapidly vanishing from off the face of the land, and although little more than fifty years have passed since the waters of the Yarra were first stirred from their normal placidity by the white man's oar, there is scarcely a single primitive inhabitant, or the descendant of one, to be met with, near any of the metropolitan centres; and ere another cycle has been added to the one now passing away, this primitive race will be extinct, as is that of the Moa—that is to say, unless some prompt remedial measures be adopted, other than those which have hitherto been obtained for their conservation.

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From the earliest days of our Victorian colonisation, in fact, long before Australia Felix had attained to the rank of a State, when it was merely Port Phillip, a small appanage of the elder colony of New South Wales, there have been so-called Black Protectorates. The Moravians, too, have had missions to the heathen in various portions of the colony; and in Melbourne there is, and has been for years, a Board, designated the Central Board for the Protection of the Aborigines. Notwithstanding, however, the combined efforts of these bodies, the records of each year show a sad diminution in the numbers of the natives upon those of preceding years. There are many reasons to account for the abortiveness of the attempts to ameliorate the condition, and conserve generally the dwindled remnants of these people, the principal one being found in themselves —viz., entire lack of self-restraint, when any one of their animal instincts chances to be in the ascendant. If it is frequently found, even amongst civilised races, that vice is preferred to virtue, is it wonderful that in most cases these poor savages desire that which we tell them is vicious, instead of that which is good ?

Vice and virtue, as a matter of course, are only used here in a conventional sense, the aborigines not having any such arbitrary distinctions. Whatever pleases the preponderating propensity, for the time being, is deemed good, and that which fails to do so is evil according to their ethics. As, for example, most natives would sooner work hard a whole day for a bottle of bad rum, and be half starved as to food, than attend to the teachings of a missionary, though with little labour, and abundance of provisions.

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To this, it will doubtless be said, that rum-drinking is the white man's vice, and that he has no manner of right to imbue the unsophisticated native with it. We freely admit the truthfulness of this fact, but in doing so, contend that wherever the white man puts his foot there will intoxicating drink be found, and the poor ignorant savage has only to taste of the "fire water" a few times to become a confirmed drunkard, which he makes patent enough on every favourable opportunity. White men, Christians though they be, will not forego their wonted stimulant, though so destructive to the savage races. We have seen yearly reports from time to time eminating from various of the protectorate bodies, some of which we knew, from actual contact with both the teachers and the taught, to be—well, unreliable. Consequently, judging by analogy, our faith in the flowery progress reports, as given to the public, is of the smallest.

The profligacy of their women is another fell source from whence much destruction to life proceeds; they contract disease, which spreads from them to the males, and being ignorant of its fatal character when unchecked, it is allowed to run its course, resulting speedily in a general prostration of the whole system, and finally in death. Did it cease then, however, it would not be so bad, but unfortunately it does not, as it is reproduced in the progeny to a frightful extent; and those of them who struggle on to the age of puberty transmit it again through their children, until at last the whole population eventually become tainted with the foul malady, and are therefore constitutionally unable to throw off the attacks of comparatively trivial ailments. Hence the numberless cases of consumption, or

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decline, together with almost countless disarrangements of a pulmonary character; whilst yet another phase of this fell disease is the wasting away of the tissues, until the frame becomes attenuation personified.

Another potent cause of increased mortality since the advent of Europeans is due to the unwise habit they have of dressing and living as white men do, for months together; then, all at once, just as the freak takes them, they discard the clothes and the regular living to which they have become accustomed, don their opossum cloak or blanket, and betake themselves to their tribes, to their primitive *loondthals**, and hard fare, in a fit condition to contract any epidemic that may chance to be hovering about the camp, certain at least to have their joints racked by rheumatism, if they escape inflammation of the lungs. This last runs a very short course with the aborigines—a few days' violent cough, then hipitization, after which a brief day or two brings the end.

By comparison with the small remnant now exisiting the population was numerous, prior to European colonisation; but even at that time it was but a modicum of what the colony could easily have sustained without having recourse to other than the primitive methods then in force for gaining a livelihood; but their endless tribal feuds kept the increase of population continually in check. Thus it was, to use a colonialism, that the country was never at any time peopled up to its carrying capacity. These feuds never by any chance took the shape of battles; cowardice, and self-preservation, being too largely developed in the aboriginal character for that; but massacres, with their attendant horrors, were

*Loondthal, native hut.

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perpetrated at midnight or early dawn, when neither sex nor age expected, nor received quarter, when all were destroyed, save those only who had cunning and quickness enough to elude the vigilance of their bloodthirsty foemen in the darkness. These sanguinary raids were continually in progress, as every tribe, if not planning an onslaught, was recovering from one, and gathering strength in some fastness, from which they would sally forth to retaliate; when they would watch with superhuman patience, prowling about for months and months, with no thoughts in their minds but vengeance dire, until their opportunity was found; then, of course, mercy being unknown, such retribution was dealt out as only the brains of such bloodthirsty and ruthless savages could hatch, dismembering their quivering victims atrociously, and carrying away such portions of the reeking carcases as their individual appetites deemed most tooth-come.

The exultant bearing of these murderous savages as they return to the camp, where their women and the weak ones of the tribe had been left, is a sight once seen never to be forgotten. Their brawny and muscular frames swollen out with exultation as they flourish aloft the gory results of their successful expedition, triumphant peans rise from the women and children in shrillest treble, whilst the hoary-headed savages, upon whom time has laid a heavy finger, grunt forth their joy in deepest bass to see the feats of their long-passed youth repeated by their descendants.

Their innate improvidence also militates vastly against their well-being. When food is plentiful they feast and riot to the top of their savage heart, gorging themselves (as

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certainly none of the brute creation do) until their abdominal regions become so distended as to be decidedly uncomfortable. Not being so learned in medicine as Heliogabolus was, they do not avail themselves of the relief offered by emetics. To remove their discomfort, however, they lay themselves prone on the ground, face downwards, and then get *lyoores** suffering less from repletion than themselves to run up and down on their bodies until the desired end is gained, either by expulsion or extension. When this happy result is successfully achieved, they commence to gorge again, and continue doing so, until the rolling process is once more found necessary to animal comfort, and this continues just so long as the feast lasts.

When the food has come to an end, those who have come out of the feasting ordeal without paying the penalty which outraged nature usually imposes have to turn out to hunt for game to replenish the savage larder, whilst those who have been less fortunate lie in their *loondthals*†, and groan until old doctor sees fit to step in to their aid.

When they have a superabundance of food they never try to preserve any for future use, but allow everything which they cannot stuff into themselves to go to waste.

Amongt the Murray tribes tons upon tons of fat, delicious fish are permitted every summer to go to decay. To such an extent does this improvidence prevail at times, that the air, becomes so tainted with the effluvium as to be unbearable even to an aborigine, and his olfactories are none of the most sensitive. When the air becomes thus permeated they merely pick up their belongings, and take themselves off to

*Lyoores, women. †Loondthals, huts.

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some purer atmosphere, where they camp, until again compelled by reason of vitiated air to remove further afield.

During the winter months they suffer extreme privations. They are too indolent to make themselves good weatherproof huts, so when it rains heavily they are thoroughly drenched, together with all their belongings, even to their bedding, and at such times they will not stir out to look for food, consequently they have to suffer the gnawing pangs of hunger, along with the miseries arising from their bad huts and severe weather. During these purgatorial times all ages, sexes, and relations huddle up together over a little fire for warmth; they are too lazy even to keep a good fire on at these times. One thinks somebody else should go for firewood, and tells him to do so; he tells another, and so on; consequently the wood is not brought at all. So they lie cold enough, snarling at each other like a pack of discontented dogs. But this is merely an illustration of the axiom which says, "What is everybody's business is nobody's business," applied to aboriginal domestic life. However, it is not a state of things conducive either to health or morality; accordingly they suffer in both cases most perniciously.

At these periods of feasting and privation the seeds of nearly all the diseases to which they ultimately become victims are engendered. The severe wet and cold give rise to affections of the throat and lungs, the latter of which has nearly always a fatal termination. In fact, it is merely a question of time.

Their over-feeding, too, has many ill effects, though perhaps not so many, or so fatal, as those arising from

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exposure to wet and cold; but chronic dysentry, indigestion, and their innumerable congeners are left behind to tell the tale of indiscriminate gluttony.

It is during the seasons of plenty that the venereal disease is sown broadcast through the native tribes. At those times the friendly tribes muster together in great force. It is no unusual thing to see two or three hundred banded together in one camp, and as intercouse is quite unrestricted between the sexes, it can very easily be imagined how this foul malady runs riot, and spreads, during such gatherings. Another patent effect of this promiscious intercourse between the sexes is the prevalence of sterility amongst the women. Few children are born in comparison to the numbers of women in each tribe of a child-bearing age. It is only such natives as are in the habit of living with their wives much apart from their respective tribes who have anything like families. In each tribe there are usually a few of this kind, and it is principally due to them that the race has not come to an end long since.

The foregoing are amongst the principal causes of the paucity of our aborigines, and it is a moot point, and one which will now remain so, whether these causes would not have had the effect of bringing our native tribes to an end, even although European settlement had never reached these shores. It is true that a longer period might have elapsed before the end came, as without doubt the vices which have been engrafted upon their own corrupt nature by the advent of civilisation are materially hastening the final end, and it is extremely problematical whether the means adopted by the Government and the clergy will tend

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towards the staying of their downward progress, or in any way conserve the remnant of this fast-disappearing people, whose utter annihilation at present seems so imminent.

CHAPTER II.

CHIEFTAINSHIP. MALES PREPONDERATE IN NUMBERS OVER FEMALES; THE REASONS THEREOF. DISEASE. FOOD.

Unlike other savage races, these people have not any hereditary, or elected chiefs, or rulers of any kind, to whom they can appeal or rely on in times of difficulty or calamity, or who may lead them to battle. This latter, however, is not of much moment, as they are by far too cowardly to fight in an open, straightforward manner, foe to foe, in daylight. Amongst higher races cowardice is held in thorough contempt, but being innate in the character of these people, it may not be so reprehensible after all, consequently should rather be viewed as a peculiarity of race than otherwise, and so be deemed a physical imperfection only, which it doubtless is, else there would be exceptions, and to this rule there is not one even to prove it. The oldest man in a tribe is, to some small extent, looked up to beyond his fellows, but this quasi respect is only apportioned him because of his being able to recount incidents, legends, and thrilling adventures (of which he is invariably the hero) that are beyond the ken of the others, and more than probable only had birth in his own fertile imagination. He, however, carefully dates the period of their occurrence far

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enough back to preclude the possibility of his being taxed with either plagiarism or romance.

In the long, bright, starry nights these old fellows are to be seen in perfection; it is then that they shine in all their self-glorification, which may almost be seen exuding from their pores, if their audience be attentive and numerous.

When there chances to be a dozen or two of one tribe camped together, one of these old fellows will get up, nude as he came into the world, with the exception of his waist-belt, which is of the narrowest, place his back to the fire, and with a flourish of his *womera** (which he holds in his hand in readiness to emphasise his flowing periods) to attract the attention of his audience, who, nothing loth, subside into silence, and so remain for hours together (with perhaps an occasional ejaculation of wonder), listening with mouths and ears agape to the savage stories of the ancient narrator, who never seems at a loss for matter, and it is only when tired nature asserts herself, that these savage *seances* come to a conclusion.

These legends and histories, and in fact all their knowledge, is kept alive and handed down from one generation to another in this manner; therefore, whatever cannot be woven into an entertaining garb for winter's evening amusement is entirely lost and forgotten. This, therefore, quite accounts for their scarcity of historical lore, and the entire absence of anything like reliable testimony as to their antecedents—that is to say, if we endeavour to trace them back for several generations. Of course, any telling incident, such as a sanguinary midnight conflict, may not be

*Womera: Throwing stick. This instrument is used for propelling the lighter spears. It is also invariably employed by aboriginal orators whilst speaking, to give effect to their eloquence.

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altogether forgotten, even after a lapse of twenty-five years or so, and they will speak freely enough about it in a general way; but it is utterly impossible to get them to individualise or particularise upon the subject, as from the moment of a man's death (no matter how he may have come to an end) his name is never again spoken, and should there be another in the tribe bearing the same name, as frequently there chances to be, he immediately adopts another name.

Thus, much that would have been valuable information but for this superstitious foible, is totally lost. From this it will be seen that the aborigines are merely a people of the day, that it is their persistent endeavour to forget—unlike other races, whose whole aim, indeed whose every effort, is a straining to remember.

In all the tribes the males preponderate to a very considerable extent; this is not because fewer female children are born, as at birth the sexes are about equal. The mortality amongst the females after the age of puberty is attained, however, is far greater than it is amongst the males, and for this excess there are numerous very cogent reasons, amongst which the fact of their early maternity is not one of the least. We, ourselves, have known frequent instances of girls becoming mothers at the ages of eleven and twelve years, and child-bearing at these tender years entails future infirmities, which carry them off ere they have come to proper maturity; then, again, their husbands convert them into perfect beasts of burden, making them carry loads, sufficient almost to break down a horse, much more a weak woman. Besides that, they ill-use them in a most brutal manner, often, yes, very often, killing them outright

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in their ungovernable periods of passion. When an accident of this kind happens (we call it accident for mildness, but it is murder, none the less), the other members of the tribe do not pay the least heed to it; it is only a *lyoore** and a husband has a perfect right to chastise his wife even unto death; the loss is not a tribal one; at least, it is not considered so, as it only effects the individual, and he soon discovers that it does so, for when his fire requires replenishing, or his *coolamen*† requires filling, he has to do them himself, or go cold and thirsty.

Wanton profligacy is another fertile source of disease and death amongst the women. We know that in general it is supposed that the venereal disease amongst the aborigines is entirely due to the Europeans, but a greater error than this never had promulgation, for long before the advent of the white man it was one of the greatest scourges this primitive people had to bear. The probabilities are that the trepang-hunting Malays and Chinese first introduced it on the Northern coast centuries ago, from whence it spread from one tribe to another, until the disease became a national calamity. The women being constitutionally weaker than the men, therefore less able to run away and hide during the frequent midnight massacres, are more liable to fall into the clutches of their relentless foes than the men; besides, at those times of extreme peril, they become perfectly paralysed with terror, and thus fall an easy prey to the ruthless assassins. The victims, therefore, of these slaughters are most frequently females, and children of tender years, or old, bed-ridden men. Such a thing as a chivalrous protection during these panics, or indeed at

*Lyoore : Woman. †Coolamen : Water vessel.

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any other time, is quite unknown; in fact, it would be deemed derogatory to manhood to run the slighest personal risk for any such quixotic purpose; but then in all phases of aborignal life self-preservation is the only law. Everything they do, in short, is done instinctively; they never by any chance arrive at a conclusion by sheer force of logical reasoning.

There seems to be a perfect absence of diseases having a contagious nature, such as fevers, &c. With the exception of occasional visits from influenza, which seldom has a fatal termination, they are altogether exempt. During winter, 'tis true, they are very much subject to a kind of scurvy, which, from its prevalence, might be deemed contagious; but we are inclined to imagine that it partakes more of a venereal character, and each break out is due to lack of nutritious food, combined with cold, wet lodgings. As the mild spring advances, and food becomes plentiful, this distemper gradually leaves them, and by summer their skins have returned to their normal sleekness, with a glossiness truly wonderful, considering the quantity of blotches with which they were marred during winter.

All the very old men in the colony show distinct small-pox traces. In speaking of this scourge, they say that it came with the waters—that is, it flowed down the rivers in the early flood season, laying its death-clutch on every tribe in its progress, until the whole country became perfectly decimated by the fell disease. During the earlier stages of its ravages the natives gave proper sepulture to its victims, but at last the death-rate became so heavy, and the panic so great, that burying the bodies was no longer at-

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tempted. The survivors merely moved their camps daily, leaving the sick behind to die, and the dead to fester in the sun, or as food for the wild dogs, and carrion loving birds to fatten upon, until in a short time the whole atmosphere became impregnated with the fœtid odours arising from the decomposing carcases. The poor creatures began to think that not one would escape death, and had altogether arrived at such a profound depth of misery through this foul destroyer as to feel indifferent whether they lived or died.

From what we have been able to glean from the natives on the subject of this disease, we are inclined to think that it must have come from Sydney, and if about forty or fifty years since the inhabitants of that city underwent the ordeal of this plague, there cannot be any doubt remaining on the subject. When the bright, torrid summer displaced the moister spring, the disease gradually died out, or had run its course, leaving but a sorry remnant of the aborigines behind, and it was years before the panic then caused was even partially forgotten. To this day the old men speak of it shudderingly, and with such an amount of loathing horror, as it is impossible for any other evil to elicit from their inherent stolidity.

This small-pox infliction seems to be the only occasion (of which they have any knowledge) upon which great numbers died together, from one cause. It is therefore not to be wondered at if the survivors do look back upon the scourge with feelings of profound dread.

The natives attributed this pestilence to the malign and magical machinations of tribes with whom they were not on

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terms of amity ; that, however, is only a matter of course, since they ascribe all the ills with which Nature smites them to the same source.

Their food consists of fish principally, and of which for about eight months in the year they have abundance ; so large, indeed, is their supply during those months, they cannot nearly consume it, consequently quite a moiety is allowed to go to waste.*

To supplement the fish, they have kangaroo, emu, opossum, and wallaby, and besides these nearly every kind of aquatic bird is found in the greatest profusion on the lakes and lagoons. The latter they capture in immense numbers by the aid of nets, manufactured for that purpose only, and during the breeding season they get eggs by the thousand. The canoes arriving at the camps at that time are literally laden down to the water's edge with eggs only ; they are heaped up at both ends until there is barely room for the native to stand and paddle. It is of but small moment to them whether the eggs have birds in them or not ; they are consumed with a relish all the same, be they fresh or stale.

A species of flag, having a farinaceous root, called by the natives *kumpung*, grows in abundance by the margin of all the great rivers and lakes ; it makes a very palatable and nutritious food, of which the natives are justly fond. It can be procured in abundance, but as it requires considerable labour to dig, much less of it is procured than its manifold merits warrant. The flower stem of this flag is

*This is only applicable to the aborigines who inhabit the Northern frontier of the colony. With the exception of the too bountiful supply of fish, however, the food of the natives all over the colony is pretty much of the same character.

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also eaten when young; a foot or eighteen inches long is the best size. It is very insipid to European palates, and we fancy it contains but a small modicum indeed of nutritious matter; however, the natives are extremely partial to it, and therefore consume it in vast quantities. In this green stage it is termed by the aborigines *ioonty*. The common small flowered yellow water-lily, which so plentifully fringes most of the colonial lakes and lagoons, is another source from whence they derive a desirable addition to their diet. The roots of this plant are formed of many tubers of about an inch and a half long by half an inch in diameter. The root of one plant will frequently yield as many tubers as a half-pint measure will contain. They are baked before being eaten, and are of a sweet mawkish taste, very gluey in appearance, not unlike what is termed a waxey potato. They are called *lahoor* by the natives.

The sow thistle, dandelion yam, and a trefoil which grows on country which at times is inundated during their respective seasons are consumed in vast quantity. To see the *lyoores** approaching the camp in the evenings, with each a great bundle of these green forage plants on her head, a stranger to their customs would imagine that they were providing the nightly fodder for a dairy of cows. They eat these herbs in a raw state by way of salad; the *ioonty* is also eaten uncooked.

Besides these they eat the larvæ of several kinds of ants, some of which are tree-inhabiting insects, others are mound-raising ground ants. An immense grub also they consume in large quantities; it is two or three inches in length, and is found deep in the wood of the gum-tree. The natives are

*Lyoore: Woman.

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very expert in finding the trees in which these grubs are; in fact, they never err; yet to a casual observer, or even one with some acuteness, there is not the slightest difference in the appearance of a tree containing numberless grubs and one without any. These grubs are eaten with great relish, either cooked or raw.

During winter they are not in the least choice as to their food; anything having life, no matter how repulsive to European notions it may be, is most acceptable. At that time frogs are deemed good, snakes* most toothsome, and the abominable fetid wild dog is esteemed a luxury of the highest order.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE MARRIAGE RELATIONS AND POLYGAMY; LACK OF CHASTITY AND ITS CAUSES; OF WIDOWS AND THEIR DISPOSAL; CHILDREN AND THEIR TRAINING; OF THE RED OCHRE, WITH WHICH THEY PAINT THEMSELVES, AND HOW OBTAINED; THE WATER-YIELDING ROOT, WHEN AND HOW UTILISED; OF DRESS AND ORNAMENT; PRACTICES ON ATTAINING THE AGE OF PUBERTY, AND PRIOR THERETO; PHYSICAL CAPACITY.

Their marriage relations are of the most primitive and simple character, the noun love being entirely absent from their vocabulary. Nothing in the shape of courting or company-keeping is practised by the prospective bridegroom

*It may seem an anachronism to speak of snakes as an article of food in the winter time, but it is not so, as the aborigine with his savage cunning knows when and where to catch the reptile napping during the season of hybernation.

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and bride. The bridegroom and father, or guardian, as the case may be, of the intended bride, come to a proper understanding, and the latter simply desires the *mooroongoor** to pick up her belongings, and take herself off to the *loondthal* of her future lord and master. Should she demur, as is not infrequent, the coercion of a waddy is resorted to, and it seldom fails to have the desired effect. There are not any ceremonies connected with this tie; it is merely a matter of mating, still it is binding enough, at least, so far as the woman is concerned. The man at any time, however, can cut the knot, and send the woman back to her people, by whom she is received readily enough, and there is not any trouble or bother about it. There may perhaps be a slight coolness displayed by the father or other guardian of the girl, towards her sometime husband for a few days, but further than this there is no dispute or quarrel on the subject of the slight. The fact that their language is altogether guiltless of a synonym for that noun, may account for their calmness under the circumstances. The girl, of course, is again ready to be disposed of to the first eligible aspirant who may offer, even although her first matrimonial venture had resulted in the production of an infant. Her new lord has to take the encumbrance, which he does, and feels proud, too, of what will in the future be deemed his putative paternity. Polygamy is allowed to any extent, and the rule is generally taken advantage of by those who chance to be rich in sisters, or female wards, to give in exchange for wives. No man can get a wife unless he be the possessor of a sister or ward, whom he can give in exchange. Fathers of grown-up sons frequently

*Mooroongoor : Girl.

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exchange their daughters for wives to themselves, even although they had two or three before, instead of allowing their sons to do so. Cases of this kind are very hard indeed, but, being aboriginal law, they cannot be controverted, nor will the elders of a tribe permit the young men to go off to other tribes to steal wives for themselves, as such measures would be the certain means of entailing endless feuds, and much bloodshed in the attempts that would surely be made with the view of recapturing the abducted women. Young men, therefore, not having any female relatives under their control must necessarily live all their lives in single blessedness, unless they choose to take up with withered old hags whom nobody owns, merely to have their fires cared for, their water-vessels filled, and their baggage carried from camp to camp. This ill-assorted kind of engagement, however, is not of very frequent occurrence, as the young men are too much afraid of the ridicule which their more fortunate fellows would surely shower upon their uxorious heads.

In their matrimonial alliances great deference is paid to consanguinity, the very slightest blood relationship being a definite barrier to that connexion. In their sexual intercourse, however, they are not in the least bit particular, consequently incest of every grade is continually being perpetrated. Chastity is quite unknown amongst them, and it is a hopeless task endeavouring to make them understand the value of that virtue. In speaking to them on this not very choice subject, they point to all the animals in nature, and say, "These are not restricted in any way, why then should we be?" They say all such trammels and pro-

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hibitions may be quite correct as regards white men, but not being in accordance with aboriginal ethics, and never having been practised by any of their progenitors, they cannot see why they should (merely because a white man bids them) ignore that which their forefathers deemed good from the very earliest times, and which they themselves feel to be innate. Of course, to arguments of this kind, and so put, especially when your opponent is an untaught and nearly unteachable savage, there is no possibility of reply. We can therefore only shrug our shoulders and pity the poor, ignorant child of nature.

Much of this absence of chastity is due to the promiscuous manner they have of huddling up together in their *loondthals*, and to the coarse, obscene, and lewd character of the stories in listening to which they spend so much of their time round the camp fires at night. All their facetiæ, too, are of the same broad, gross nature. Were they not so they would fail to meet with the appreciative audiences which silently sit for hours together, with mouths agape, drinking in the foul pruriency of the savage story-teller. When we consider that all these descriptions of lewd tales, and their accompanying gross facetiæ are retailed in the presence of the children, it can scarcely be matter for wonder that they should grow up into men and women possessing but hazy notions concerning chastity and its many beauties. It frequently happens that two brothers-in-law fall out and quarrel. If the difference becomes serious, the first thing they do is—each sends off his wife to her brother, thus getting back their respective sisters.* The fact of their each

*As wives are always obtained by exchange, the relationship of brother-in-law and sister-in-law is usually double.

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having babies does not in any way militate against the custom; of course the children in these cases go with their mothers. Quarrels very often result in these summary denouements, against which the poor women dare not say one word, however much may be their aversion to the change. This law is one of the rights inherent in aboriginal manhood which cannot be controverted. As a natural consequence the right is often exercised because of the most trivial reasons. Sometimes, however, regret will supervene, when the wives are returned to their original partners. This is, of course, very laudable, but, being so, seldom occurs. When a woman becomes a widow she falls back to her father, brother, or guardian, as the case may be. In no instance does she go to her late husband's relations. If she is not too old she is again exchanged away, her children, if any, going with her. If, on the other hand, she should be too old to tempt the owners of marriageable girls, she becomes a waif and drudge in the tribe, unless some one of of the enforced bachelors* should deem her fitted to attend to his wants; if so, he has only to make his wishes known, when the sable widow gladly accepts his protection.

These numberless choppings and changes makes it almost impossible to tell the true paternity of many of the children, but as there is not any property depending upon heirship, legitimacy or the contrary is of very little consequence, and a bar sinister in their genealogical trees is not deemed derogatory in any way. The children do not receive any schooling. When old enough to run about they do just whatever pleases them, without the slightest reference to

*Enforced bachelors: Those men not having any sisters or wards to give in exchange for wives.

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any one. Their parents never by any chance endeavour to guide them aright; in short, they do not possess the very remotest control over their actions. It is true that sometimes in a burst of passion a father will lend his child a clout with a waddy, which will well nigh brain the little savage. This, however, only induces a wild fit of bellowing, together with a period of sulks, more or less long, according to the evanescense or the contrary of the pain inflicted.

They are altogether lacking in any system calculated to inculcate patience, endurance of pain or privation, into the youthful character. Therefore both adults and children are woefully deficient in the exhibition of these virtues, which are so essential to the well-being of mankind, be they heathen or so-called Christians.

Unlike children of other races, these have no sports or pastimes relating to the years of childhood alone, their youthful amusements being merely the occupations of their riper years in miniature. Thus, it may be said, that there is not any period of boyhood and girlhood amongst them, boys and girls being men and women from the time they can run alone, only of a lesser growth.

Infanticide prevails amongst all the tribes to a very considerable extent, and in too many instances the poor little victims are eaten. Mothers frequently sustain nature by making food of their own offspring. This latter horrible practice occurs generally when the tribes are making long journeys. At such times carrying the children becomes burdensome to the mothers. That, in conjunction with being short of provisions (which is of no unusual occurrence when large numbers travel in a body through an inhospitable

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region such as the Mallee Scrub), is to a great extent the cause of this unnatural crime. In the winter time they make a common habit of trailing through the Mallee Scrub for hundreds of miles. They are extremely partial to these rambles, as they can be done with the utmost impunity—that is, they have no fear of meeting with hostile tribes during such journeyings, and even although they have difficulty enough at these times in procuring a sufficiency of food, still they like the vast and arid desert, because of the immunity they enjoy there from the everlasting bodily terror which continually preys upon their spirits in less remote districts, keeping them awake at night, or colouring their dreams with no pleasant lines, when "tired nature's sweet restorer" weighs down their eyelids. In the very barrenest portion of the barren Mallee Scrub there is a considerable depression or dry lake, distant from the Murray River about eight miles. The bottom of this lake is composed of a bright red ochre, which the natives use in large quantities in the ornamentation of their own bodies, and decorating their opossum cloaks as well. To procure this paint the tribes nearest thereto make yearly journeys to the lake, and in doing so frequently undergo serious privations by reason of the scarcity of food and water on the way. They take a supply of water with them in bags formed of wallaby skins, but as it takes them ten days or more to make the journey both ways and prepare the paint, their water supply usually runs short long before they return to their starting point. When this occurs they resort to the root of a peculiar kind of mallee, which they call *weir*, from whence they obtain a supply of sweet and limpid water,

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even in the warmest weather. The roots of this tree grow near the surface, and run laterally, sometimes for thirty or forty feet, without any appreciable difference in diameter. These roots they tear up and break into short lengths, which pieces are placed on end in an improvised *coolamen*. In half-an-hour the roots will be drained quite dry. From half-a-dozen such roots—that is, twenty or thirty feet long—as much as three or four gallons of water will be procured. The water is very nice and cool, having the very faintest sub-acid flavour, which makes it a most delicious, as well as refreshing beverage for hot and thirsty travellers.

Food, however, is not so easily obtained, by reason of the aridity of the land. The scrub is not large enough to contain opossum, and the distance from water makes creatures of the reptile class very scarce. Thus they are compelled to look for grubs in the roots of the smaller kinds of shrubs. These root grubs, though, are so small it takes a considerable amount of bush grubbing to procure a satisfactory meal. During these meagre days infanticide and anthropophagy are of frequent occurrence. They have sense enough to feel a certain amount of shame because of this horrible practice; at least, when chance induces someone to ask of the whereabouts of a certain child which has been made food of, they give some evasive answer, whilst hanging their heads in a very guilt-stricken manner. In dress there is not the least difference between that of the male and the female. The opossum rug is the only covering of both sexes, and in both it is worn in exactly the same manner—that is, somewhat after the fashion (as seen in paintings) of the Roman Toga, across the shoulder, with one

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arm free. On the very old men and the young women it is an exeeedingly graceful garment, and infinitely more becoming to them than the conventional garb of civilised life is to those belonging to that higher order of humanity. The men wear a belt round the loins under the cloak, whilst the women wear a band round the same portion of the person, said band having a thick fringe all round it of about a foot in depth. The fringe is made of innumerable strips of opossum or wallaby skin. Of course neither of these bands or belts are seen unless the rugs are thrown off. Both sexes wear armlets made of opossum skin on the upper portion of both arms, and a netted band about an inch and a half wide round the brow. This band is coloured red by means of ochre mixed with fat. Round the neck both sexes wear strings of reeds cut into sections of an inch long, which, when carefully dried, are of a clear pale straw colour, admirably calculated to form an agreeable contrast to their glossy, ebon-hued necks and shoulders. They also make necklets from the autennæ of the lobster, which, when the fishes have been cooked, are of a bright red. These, with a kangaroo tooth or two dangling from their hair by the sides of the head, and a bone or short section of reed through the middle cartilage of the nose make up all the ornaments with which they feel proud to decorate themselves. These ornaments are not donned on great occasions, such as high days and holidays (not having any such festive periods in their calendar), but merely as the whim takes them, or for want of other occupation.

The only distinctive mark whereby there can be no mistake made as to the sex is that all the men have the two

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upper front teeth knocked out. This operation is performed when the boys arrive at the age of puberty. For three months after this torturing ordeal the youths are not permitted to look upon a woman young or old, as the sight of one during this probation would be the means of entailing countless misfortunes, such as the withering of the limbs, loss of eyesight, and in fact general decrepitude.

Youths, prior to the extraction of the teeth, dare not eat of emu flesh, wild turkey, swan, geese, or black duck, or of the eggs of any of these birds. Did they infringe this law in the slightest possible manner, their hair would become prematurely grey, and the flesh of their limbs would waste away and shrivel up. Any members of their tribes having malformations of limb or body are pointed out as living examples of the dire fate of those who knowingly commit a breach of this aboriginal law. These cripples that are thus put forth as living illustrations have had it impressed upon their minds from their earliest youth that their respective infirmities are entirely due to such indiscretions, and this has been impressed upon their minds so persistently, they have not a doubt on the subject, therefore give implicit credence to the story.

Having such dread penalties continually placed before them, the various kinds of tabooed food are carefully avoided by the aboriginal youth ; thus the full-grown men and women of the tribe come in for many of the good things, which they would not, but for this wise decree. Nevertheless, the makers of this law were wise in their day and generation, and thereby conferred a grand benefit upon

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themselves and their descendants, which is perceptible even to the present day.

As a rule the aborigines have not any great capacity for physical exertion; at least, they cannot compete with average white men, when violent and long drawn out fatigue chances to be the order of the day; they have thews and sinews enough, too; in fact, usually their whole physique is unexceptionable, but they lack what is commonly termed pluck; therefore, it takes but a small matter beyond common to make them give in. They, however, always evince a certain amount of shame at those times, as is evidenced by their invariably attributing their apparent want of stamina to the fact of their having a sore finger, or some equally trivial ailment.

They can bear the pangs of hunger, however, wonderfully well; a whole week's starvation is not by any means an uncommon occurrence with them. At those times, they will not stir out of their camps; indeed, they will scarcely turn themselves round, unless perhaps when they think it will lessen their discomfort somewhat if they give their waist-belts an extra twist, thereby contracting the vacuum which lack of food has made so painfully apparent.

CHAPTER IV.

BLACKFELLOWS' OVENS, HOW FORMED; MOURNING FOR THE DEAD, SIGNS THEREOF; OF SEPULTURE, AND THE CEREMONIES CONNECTED THEREWITH.

Blackfellows' ovens, or cooking places, have been a fertile source of argument for many years, some holding that they

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are not cooking places at all, but a description of Tumuli, left by some race long since passed away, and quite forgotten; still, so far as the general public are aware, none of the writers on the point have had sufficient curiosity to dig into the mounds, and so set it at rest once and for all.

Blackfellows' ovens are not misnomers, but to all intents and purposes are genuine cooking places*, and the following is the manner of their formation:—

A family, or perhaps several families, as the case may be, select a site for their camp, where abundance of game and other sources of food exist, and are procurable with the least expenditure of time and trouble. Towards the middle of the afternoon the hunters drop into camp, with the result of the day's industry, consisting, in all probability, of all sorts and sizes; for our present purpose, however, we will imagine the game to consist of opossums only.

As soon as the hunters have seated themselves comfortably, they set to work skinning the opossums, whilst several of the *lyoores*† go off with their yamsticks. When they reach the spot which they had before selected for the purpose, they begin with a will to excavate a hole three feet in diameter and eighteen inches deep. During the digging of the hole, any pieces of clay of about the size of cricket balls which are turned out are carefully placed on one side. When the hole has been dug sufficiently deep, it is swept or brushed out with some boughs, or a bunch of grass; it is then filled to the top with firewood (which the *lyoores* had previously collected for that purpose), upon which the

*They are of precisely the same character as the "kitchen midden" of prehistoric man, found on the Danish coast, and in some portions of the American Continent.

†Lyoores—Women.

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selected pieces of clay are carefully placed. The wood is then ignited, and by the time it is all burned the clay nodules have become baked, until they are exactly similar to irregular sections of well-burnt brick; of course, they are red hot. When this result has been properly achieved, the hot clay is removed from the hole; for this purpose they use two pieces of stick, about eight inches long, holding them both in one hand, and working them deftly, even as a cook-maid uses a pair of tongs. The natives now term these sticks tongs. Prior to the advent of white men, they had no name for them, other than *kulky**. The use of these tongs is an accomplishment possessed by old and young alike. This dexterity almost seems an aboriginal gift, as few, if any, white men have ever attained to any degree of proficiency in their use.

After the hot clay is removed from the hole, the ashes are carefully swept out, and a thin layer of grass slightly moistened, placed over the bottom, and round the sides, upon which the prepared opossums are nicely packed, and then covered over with more damp grass. The hot clay nodules are then spread equally over the top of the grass, when the whole oven is then closed with the finer earth which originally came out of the excavation. Should this covering be too thin to keep the steam from escaping, it is supplemented by earth, dug in immediate proximity (this supplemented soil accounts fully for the depressions always found about the bases of these ovens). Ashes are never employed for the outside covering, because, being fine, they would percolate through the interlining both of the grass and clay nodules, thereby adding an amount of grit which

*Kulky—any piece of wood, great or small, thick or thin.

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would not improve the flavour or appearance of the food. Before the heat in the clay nodules, and the bottom of the hole has become exhausted, the opossums are beautifully cooked, as perfectly so indeed as though the operation had been performed in the most improved kitchen range extant.

When the cooking has been completed the covering is scraped off, and this debris, consisting of calcined clay, ashes, and burnt earth, becomes the nucleus of a black-fellow's oven. This process being repeated at short intervals, over a series of years, perhaps indeed for centuries, results in the mounds, which are in reality blacks' ovens, although frequently termed (most improperly so) tumuli.

As long as the camp remains in one place, the same hole is used for baking their food in, and when it is understood that at least a barrowful of fresh clay is required every time the oven is heated to replace the unavoidable waste by crumbling, which is by no means inconsiderable, in consequence of the clay being used in an unwrought state, it will readily be seen how these mounds gradually, but surely increase. Bones, too, of the animals which they use for food, besides charcoal, etc., tend materially to hasten their growth.

As a general rule the natives do not erect their *loondthals*, on these cooking mounds. An exception to this exists, however, on the extensive reedy plains of the Lower Murray, which are annually inundated, and remain so for at least five months out of the twelve.

On these wide-spreading reed-beds the blackfellows' ovens are of a larger size, and more numerous, than they are in

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any other portion of Australia, thus plainly denoting the at one time denseness of the population in that locality, as well as the abundance of food pertaining thereto. When the mild rains of spring dissolve the snows on the alps, the liberated waters rush down the innumerable tributaries of the Murray, until the volume becomes greater than the capacity of the river's bed; therefore, on reaching the vast expanse of the lower river, they have perforce to spread themselves out on each side, until many hundreds of square miles are submerged.

All over the submerged country, cooking mounds stand up out of the flood, perfect little islands, looking bright, green, and refreshing to the eye, by reason of the great growth of succulent saltbush, *dillines**, and giant mallow with which they are prettily dressed. These oven islands the natives utilise in the flood season for their village sites, conveying their firewood and other requirements over miles of water from the main land in their canoes. A village, or native encampment, will often times remain on one of these tiny islands for a whole month, feasting upon the oleaginous codfish and his congeners, taking ample toll from the great Murray lobster, as well as from his more delicate, though pigmy brother, the crawfish. Aquatic birds, too, of many species, together with their eggs, have to contribute pretty heavily to the aboriginal *cuisine*, and by way of salad they have the watery *ionty*, and the bitter sow thistle, which, all combined, go a long way towards forming a delectable

*Dillines—Edible berries of a yellow or red colour, as large as cranberries, having a stone in the heart; they grow on green, prickly bushes, and attain the height of three feet. It is a species of salvola. The natives are extremely fond of these berries, and to this fondness may be attributed the fact of their prevalence on the cooking mounds.

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melange, such as even a diciple of the famed Epicurus could scarcely cavil at.

It will thus be seen that everything used by the dwellers in these island villages has to be brought there from outside places, and the daily refuse therefrom aids very materially towards the growth of these mounds. So long as the game and fish continue plentiful, the natives never think of moving to fresh quarters—that is to say, unless the tiny spot becomes too offensive for even aboriginal olfactories to bear with any degree of pleasure. When it does so, they shift away to another mound, leaving natural agencies to purify the contaminated atmosphere round about the abandoned spot.

Aboriginal skeletons are frequently discovered in the cooking mounds, hence the idea which generally prevails of their being tumuli. This fact can, however, be accounted for in a very simple manner. For example, a death takes place on one of these isolated spots, when their happens to be only a small section of a tribe located thereon; and as grave-digging is very arduous when hands are few, and the implements merely yamsticks, the easiest method, therefore, of covering up the dead from their sight is at once adopted, and that is done by scraping a hole in the friable soil of the mound, in which the body is placed and covered up. Immediately after one of these hurried burials, the mound is vacated, and ere much time has passed, the defunct subject is entirely forgotten. Be it understood that this description of sepulture is only given to old women, or those who had been invalids of long standing, and who had become troublesome thereby to their unwilling attendants.

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We once had occasion to remove the whole of a black-fellows' oven; it contained fully three thousand cubic yards of soil. During its removal we exhumed twenty-eight skeletons This large number was a matter of considerable surprise to us, but on making due inquiry amongst the very old natives, we discovered that they were the remains of some of the smallpox victims who had died during the earlier stages of the epidemic, when sepulture was yet being given to those who succumbed to the loathsome plague.

When men of consequence and consideration, or young people, die, there is much mourning and grief in the tribe, and amongst those related by blood to the deceased. The mourning takes the shape of very violent physical suffering. At those times these (the relatives) score their backs and arms (even their faces do not always escape) with red hot brands, until they become hideous with ulcers. These ulcers stand them in good stead, however, in this way: if their grief is not sufficiently acute to induce a genuine cry, they have only to come against the ulcers roughishly, when they will have cause enough for any quantity of lachrymosity. At sunrise and sundown the one who is principally bereaved begins to cry, or howl, in a long, monotonous kind of yodling tone, which is taken up by old and young. At first it is begun very low, but gradually swells into such volumes of uncouth, excruciating sound, as is heard under no other circumstances, and, we think, amongst no other people. The mourning cries at a good large wake are considerable, and not by any means pleasing, to the generality of mankind; still, they are as music of the spheres, when compared to the hellish din created by a camp full of mourners.

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Each period of daily mourning lasts for about an hour; the rest of the twenty-four hours the mourners, to all appearance, are as free from grief and trouble as though no such evils had being. Of course, every member of the tribe has his or her head plastered over with a white pigment, which is made by burning gypsum, and then mixing it with water, until it reaches the desired consistancy. The face is also painted with the same stuff in such designs as best pleases each individual savage. When the whole tribe are so decorated they give as perfect a representation of a host of demons as the most imaginative in demonology could well pourtray, and a stranger, unacquainted with the aborigine and his customs, coming suddenly on an encampment, where all the members thereof chanced to be figged out in this guise, could scarcely be blamed if a thrill of real terror did imbue his every nerve.

They prepare their dead for burial by wrapping them up tightly in the opossum cloaks which they wore during life, winding numberless plies of cord round the body to keep the cloak in its place. This operation is performed as soon as the body has become rigid, and when completed the body is borne to the grave at once. The graves are usually about four feet deep, and always bearing east and west. In the bottom of the grave a sheet of bark is placed, or, if bark is not to be had, it is thickly strewn with grass; the body is then let down, with the feet towards the east. All the property, such as weapons, bags, etc., belonging to the deceased are laid beside the body, then sticks are placed across the grave, the ends of which rest on ledges a few inches above the body; over these, and crossing them at right angles,

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sticks the length of the grave are arranged; then bark, or a good thick covering of grass, hides the body from view, and prevents the earth (which is now filled in) from coming in contact therewith. When all this is properly completed, the relatives of the deceased fling themselves prone upon the grave—howling, tearing their hair out by handfuls, and rubbing earth in quantity over their heads and bodies; ripping up the unhealed ulcers in the most loathsome fashion, until with blood and grime they become a hideous and ghastly spectacle. There is about an hour of this performance before the ceremony comes to an end. After it is finished, the mourners trudge back to the camp in twos and threes. On their arrival there, they sit down silently and stolidly for perhaps an hour more, after which they seem again to wake up into life; their grief thenceforth is forgotten (unless at the morning and evening intervals of mourning), although the self-inflicted sores remain long unhealed, and should, consequently, have the effect of keeping their bereavement fresh and green in their memories.

Should the person buried have been esteemed of consideration in the tribe prior to death, a neat hut is erected over the grave; the covering thereof being generally thatch, made of a hard knotty grass, having many joints, therefore probably akin to *Polygonum*. This thatch is firmly secured to the frame by means of cord, many hundred yards of which are used in the process. Upon some occasions a net is made, having meshes four inches square, with which the whole hut is securely enveloped.

These mausoleums cover the graves entirely; they are five feet high, and are of an oval shape. A small opening

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or doorway is left at the eastern end. These openings are never more than two feet high; in fact, they are only just large enough to allow of a full-grown man to get in by creeping on hands and knees. The tops of the graves, or floors, are covered with thin layers of grass, which is renewed from time to time, as it becomes withered.

The tombs are enclosed with brush fences; the forms of the enclosures always take the shape of a diamond, the tomb being the centre thereof. All the grass inside of the fence is neatly shaved off, and the ground is swept quite clean. It is kept in this tidy condition for two or three years. After the lapse of that time, however, the whole arrangement is permitted to dwindle to decay, and after a few more years the very site of it is forgotton.

When a first-born child dies, should it be a son (if a daughter it is hidden out of sight as soon as possible), and under two years of age, instead of being buried in the usual manner, the body is tightly swaddled in an opossum cloak, and well fastened round with cords, until the body assumes the appearance of a long narrow bundle; not, however, showing the outline of the figure, as is the case with a body prepared for burial, but looking exactly similar to a bale of skins ready for despatch to market. This bundle the mother carries with her wherever she goes, and at night sleeps with it by her side; and this she continues persistantly to do for six months, until from decay nothing but bones remain. After this, they (the bones) are put in the ground and forgotten.

These decomposing atoms of mortality do not tend to make the atmosphere in the vicinity of the camp either

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pleasant or healthful. These savages, however, bear with the offensive effluvium without the slightest murmur, deeming it doubtless the correct thing to do, more especially as it was a custom which had been handed down to them by their progenitors from ages long since forgotten.

When very old women die, or wittols of long standing (of whom there are generally a few in each tribe), a shallow hole is merely scraped in the most convenient spot, both with regard to proximity and softness of soil, wherein the body is thrown without any preparation or ceremony, and covered slightly up, is so left, and forgotten; unless, indeed, the shallow grave chances to be scraped out by the dogs—which frequently happens—and the poor remains of humanity are voraciously devoured by the ghoul like brutes. Instead of the natives viewing such desecrations with horror, they actually make merry thereon, and bandy obscene facetiæ with each other on the subject, deeming such occasions fit in every way for the display of their vile and prurient wit.

CHAPTER V.

ATHLETIC SPORTS; WRESTLING; BALL PLAYING; WOTCHWIE RACING; SPEARING AT THE RUNNING TARGET; THROWING THE BOOMERANG; THE SKIPPING ROPE.

In the matter of sports, games, and pastimes, the aborigines have no great diversity, but such as they have are enjoyed to the fullest. Indeed they frequently continue some of their rude play until fatigue culminates in exhaustion.

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If they only displayed one half the zeal in procuring and conserving food for consumption during the cold wet months of winter that their various games call forth, there would not be a tithe of the misery in their midst that now prevails, and which is principally due to the many privations of that inclement season. The conserving of food for hard times should be a duty of the highest moment to them, but being deemed an irksome task, it is consequently distasteful; whereas playing their games, however hard they may work in doing so, is merely recreation, and not at all imperative. Play is, therefore, held in high esteem, and enjoyed accordingly.

During summer, when food of all kinds is abundant, and procured with little labour, the friendly tribes have great gatherings together, at which wrestling and other games are the business of the season.

The natives are great wrestlers, and enter into the exercise with every zest. Their method is different from that which obtains in the wrestling counties of England, or as far as we know, in any other country where the exercise is indulged.

Their system is as follows:—A stalwart native goes out quietly from the camp, to the ground which has been carefully prepared, by the removal of all the inequalities, such as stumps, tufts of grass, etc. In short, the ground is made quite smooth and flat. He is perfectly nude, with the exception of his waist-belt and opossum skin armlets. When he reaches the arena, he walks round it after the fashion of a race horse getting his preliminary canter. During this walk or march, there is abundant opportunity for examin-

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ing his finely-developed figure; the muscles down his back stand out as distinctly and hard as though they had been fashioned from straight clean saplings, and the biceps of his legs and arms looking like knotted ropes stretched to their fullest tension.

When he has satisfied himself as to the arena, he stalks majestically into its centre, gives one defiant shout, stoops forward, places his hands on his thighs just above the knees, and in that position remains perfectly still, as though he were merely a bronze statue, instead of a muscular savage full of life, with the excited blood coursing exultantly through his throbbing veins.

His patience is not tested very severely, however, as his challenge of defiance has scarcely ceased, when an equally muscular competitor starts out from the camp at a smart run, which he continues, until within about two yards of his opponent, when he stops as suddenly as though his progress had been stayed by a bullet. The position he assumes when he thus stops, is precisely similar to that of his adversary. For a few moments they remain in this statuesque attitude; then they begin to sway from side to side, glaring at each other the while, as though they were veritable enemies about to begin an encounter which could only terminate in the death of one or both. All at once, and without any signal, they make a simultaneous spring at each other, coiling their sinewy arms and legs round each other as opportunity offers, endeavouring by every ruse to gain the advantage in the first of the struggle. When closed in the struggle, they twist and screw their oily bodies into all kinds of contortions, raising each other from the ground.

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as opportunity offers by sheer force of muscle; the raised one, however, generally managing to get his legs firmly twisted round the body of his friendly competitor, and when in that position, no powers of muscle, however exerted, will put him to the ground; that is to say, unless his opponent goes with him, and then of course it is a drawn match, and this result they always endeavour to avoid, as defeat even is not greeted with so much derision as a climax of this nature.

The struggle continues with very equal success for a considerable time, neither gaining any perceptable advantage. A casual observer would be inclined to think it an interminable affair at first sight, but this idea would only be of limited duration, for as the struggle advances, the wind of one begins to fail more rapidly than that of the other; the end soon becomes apparent; the short-winded one is raised from the ground for the last time; he is not quick enough to grapple his weary legs round the body of his opponent, so with a huge and final effort, he is flung into the air, and comes down with a thud of sufficient force to shake the ground. The victor walks quietly to a little distance, and squats himself down in silence. The spectators, however, are more demonstrative, consequently the sleeping echoes are awakened with exultant shouts.

After a fairish interval has elapsed, the victor, nothing loth, shakes himself once more together, gives his waist-belt an extra twist, walks into the arena, and round it as before; only in this instance, he gesticulates violently with his arms, whilst he challenges another to meet him in the wrestle, letting it be well known at the same time, that if any man has

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the temerity to attempt his proved prowess, it would not be advantageous to that man's welfare. With this flourish of trumpets, he again pauses in the middle of the arena, with his hands on his thighs as before. And so the fun goes on, the victor meeting rival after rival, until he disposes of all who are courageous enough to try conclusions with him, or he himself is brought to grief by some one abler or fresher.

These muscular encounters generally end in many bruises, and not infrequently collar bones are broken, and shoulder joints dislocated. Still, these mishaps do not deter them from repetitions of the play whenever opportunity offers; said opportunities being comprised in a goodly muster of tribes, warm weather, and abundance of easily-procured food.

Ball playing is another game to which they are exceedingly partial. They make it much more boisterous and noisy than are the wrestling bouts, although it results in much fewer serious mishaps. The women participate in this game as well as the men. We have seen as many as two hundred—including sexes—engaged in it at one time.

The ball is composed of old opossum skins, tightly rolled up, and covered over with a fresh and strong piece of skin, nicely and firmly sewn together with opossum tail sinews. Before they begin to play they arrange sides, each side having a captain, whose place it is to guide his often times unruly squad.

When all is in order, a *Lyoore* starts off with the ball in her hand. She walks a little way out from her own side, and towards that of her opponents, drops the ball with seeming carelessness, but ere it has time to reach the ground,

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she gives a dexterous, and by no means gentle kick, which being correctly aimed, sends the ball spinning high into the air. Thereupon the fun begins in downright earnest. Such screaming, jumping, and frothing at the mouth, we are certain was never seen at any other game outside the walls of Bedlam; and then again such intermingling of bronze limbs, nude and glossy; or such *outre* groupings was never yet beheld under any circumstances other than those attendant upon an aboriginal ball match. They have not any goal to which the ball has to be driven, the whole of the play is merely to keep the ball in motion, and to prevent its coming to the ground; whilst the struggles of the game consist in trying which side can retain the ball longest in possession. Those holding the ball throw it from one to another, and it is during such flights that the opposing side vigorously run and jump with the view to its capture. As the eyes of the players are never by any chance bent on the ground, tumbles during a game are numerous, and in many cases indecorous enough, more especially when one goes down, and so becoming a stumbling block, over which a dozen or more come toppling in a heap. These incidents, however, add mirth to the game, without creating the least ill temper.

These games are frequently kept up from noon until dark, and even at that late hour they are given up with reluctance.

The many laughable incidents which occur during these games, provide ample matter for consideration round the camp fire, besides affording abundant opportunity for boasting, to which they are addicted pretty much, old and young. In fact it is a trait characteristic of the people.

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Another of their games at which they spend considerable time is *Wotchwie*; that being both the name of the game and the toy with which it is played.

The toy is made of an elongated oval piece of wood; its extreme length being five inches, and its greatest diameter an inch and a half to one of the long points. A slender wand two feet and a half long, made tough by means of fire, is firmly attached by gum and twine, and the toy is complete.

The game can be played by any number above one. Both sexes, from eight years of age and upwards, join in it. When they start from their camps to commence the game, they select a stretch of three or four hundred yards of flat smooth ground, at one end of which a mark is made by way of a start point. Then the game begins after this fashion:—One takes a short run up to the starting mark, throws his *Wotchwie* from him, so that it strikes the ground in a particular manner (an awkward cast is certain to result in a broken toy), when the tiny thing bounds away very quickly, the long tail-like wand being visible all the time that the momentum continues, twirling and twining above the grass like the tail of a kangaroo mouse* when running away in a hurry. These toys sometimes go as much as four hundred yards in their eccentric running bounds. The game merely consists in each striving to make his *Wotchwie* pass that of his fellows. As the breakages during the progress of a game are numerous, each player supplies himself with several of the toys before the game commences.

No doubt but what this *Wotchwie* racing seems a simple enough kind of pastime when thus described on paper, still

* Kangaroo mouse. Serboa.

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we have seen as much excited enthusiasm engendered by watching the fluctuating of the tiny hoppers as ere a rink of curling gave rise to on a well-frozen Scottish loch.

Spear-throwing also induces much good-natured rivalry whenever the tribal chivalry may chance to meet for pastime. All the males, from those on the confines of pubescence, up to the hoaryest sage in the tribe, put forth their skill on these occasions, and proud is the victor who walks off the triumphant master of the field after one of those friendly spear-throwing tournaments. These matches are conducted as follows:—A thickish disc of gum bark is procured, a foot or so in diameter, which is taken by a stalwart youth forty or fifty paces from where the competitors are drawn up in line, with their spears all ready shipped*. He stands with the disc in his hand opposite the extreme right-hand man in the line, and at the word of command (which is usually given by one of the old men who is not competing) he hurls the disc from him, giving it at the same time sufficient impetus to make it roll swiftly from one end of the line to the other, and it is during this rapid progression that the competitors launch their spears at it as it passes their respective line of vision. By the time the disc ceases rolling it presents the appearance of a gigantic shuttlecock, the spears sticking therein representing the feathers, and the bark the cork. When one makes a bull's eye (as riflemen have it) he is greeted with loud applause, and it is farcical to see how modest he endeavours to appear under the praise, as though the performance were a very commonplace result;

*Spears all ready shipped: That is having the hook of the Womerra (throwing stick) placed in the small cavity made for that purpose in the end of the spear, with both raised in readiness for launching at the object.

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therefore not worth boasting of, although, perhaps, he never came even near doing such a thing in his life before.

Throwing the *boomerang** is another of their amusements. They do not, however, compete in this exercise, nor have they any object or mark at which to throw. It is merely thrown because of the whizzing noise it makes, and to witness its eccentric gyrations during flight, and notwithstanding the seemingly aimlessness of the pastime, many hours at a time are spent in the exercise.

Another favourite amusement of theirs is the skipping-rope—not the tiny clothes-line affair, with two handles of wood, which schoolgirls so much affect. No, indeed, their skipping-rope is from twenty to thirty feet long. It is usually made of a long duck net loosely twisted. It is worked by two young men, one at each end, and just far enough apart to allow of the rope to touch the ground. As it is being swung round and round the skippers jump in one after another, until there will be as many as a dozen skipping away at once. As they get tired they jump out, but the vacancies thus caused are always filled up as soon as made by fresh muscle and wind, abundance of which are generally waiting, in the shape of stalwart young men and vigorous girls. Thus the rope is kept going until those swinging it become tired, when two fresh hands take their

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* *Boomerang:* A thin piece of wood, having the shape of a parabola, about eighteen inches or two feet long from point to point, the curve being on the thin side. Of the broad sides of the missile one is slightly convex, the other is flat. The thin sides are worked down finely to blunt edges. The peculiar curve of the missile gives it the property of returning to the feet of the thrower. It is a dangerous instrument in a melee. Of course the wood from which it is made is highly seasoned by fire. It is therefore nearly as hard as flint.

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places, and so the fun continues, until they are one and all pretty well fatigued by the violent though pleasing exercise.

They do not award any trophies for superiority in their various trials of skill. Even the historical "pickle parsley for their pains" is not given; therefore the victors must content themselves with a consciousness of their own superior skill, and doubtless this sense of premiership lends considerable self-importance to the deportment of the successful ones during these tribal gatherings as we have frequently seen demonstrated; yes, even to the very verge of the ludicrous.

CHAPTER VI.

BREVITY OF ABORIGINAL LIFE; THE SICK AND HOW ATTENDED; BLEEDING AND OTHER MODES OF CURE; THE LAST DRAUGHT; SNAKE-BITE AND ITS TREATMENT; OBSTETRICAL.

As a rule longevity is not a feature which pertains to these people. Old age seems to set in ere thirty-five years have been attained; in fact, long before these few years have been passed they are quite grey, and often bald. About that time, too, their muscular development begins to tend towards attenuation. Few of the women reach even those years, being mostly worn out by drudgery and disease together before they are well past their teens.

Unless in the cases of old worn-out women or bedridden subjects of long standing (who are grudged the very slightest attention), the sick are attended carefully enough. Not being subject to infectious diseases, they have not any cause to fear infection; in fact, they are quite ignorant of the

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nature either of contagion or infection, and are consequently not aware that disease can be propagated readily by those means.

Phlebotomy is practised to a very considerable extent for many of their ailments. It is performed upon the cupping principle merely, their surgical knowledge being too limited to allow of their understanding the efficacy of opening one of the larger veins when blood-letting is desirable. Their cupping operation is effected in the following manner:— They scarify the part from which they wish to draw the blood by means of a sharpened mussel-shell, and when this has been sufficiently done the operator sucks the wound with his mouth, spitting out the blood from time to time, until he imagines sufficient has been extracted. Much relief is afforded by this practice to those suffering from headache, inflammation of the bowels, and opthalmic sore eyes, all of which ills prevail amongst the natives to an unenviable extent.

For pulmonary affections and rheumatic fever (both of which diseases are very common and very fatal with the aborigines) they make use of the vapour bath, from which much relief is obtained. The bath is constructed in a very similar manner to their cooking ovens, the only real difference being simply that the hole for the bath is made sufficiently large to contain the body of the patient, and the glowing bottom of the hole is covered to the depth of a foot and a half with green boughs which had previously been made damp, instead of a thin sprinkling of moist grass, as is the case when cooking. When the hole has been sufficiently heated the ashes, etc., are scraped out, and the damp green

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boughs nicely spread, upon which the patient is carefully placed. He is then covered all over by an opossum cloak, with the exception of his face, which is left bare. Then all over the cloak earth is spread of a thickness capable of retaining the steam without weighing too heavily upon the patient. To attain the former and obviate the latter the finest earth that can be procured is used—that is, in the absence of sand, sand in all cases being preferred when obtainable. During the progress of the bath the perspiration exudes from the face in great globules, and the hair becomes quite wet from the same cause. A female attendant is seated by the side of the patient, and it is her duty to wipe off the perspiration as occasion requires, the napkin used for this purpose being a soft piece of the ever-useful opossum skin.

When the *banyal*,* or wise man of the tribe, thinks that the patient has been baked enough he is removed from the pit, carefully and expeditiously rubbed dry, after which he is closely rolled up in cloaks and laid so that a breath of wind cannot reach him.

Although the aborigines are perfectly well aware of the vast benefit which patients suffering from many complaints derive from the use of these baths, it is but seldom that their efficacy is tested, simply because the preparation of them entails more labour than they care about expending, unless, indeed, in extreme cases, or when the patient is held in high estimation by the tribe; then, of course, no degree of trouble is deemed burdensome.

When the bleeding operation has not resulted as was expected and desired, and even the vapour bath has failed to

* Banyal: Doctor.

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yield the relief usually accruing therefrom, and when the disease has progressed until the patient has become moribund they adopt a last and most disgusting remedy, which is deemed infallible in the most extreme cases.

Mulierem ob juventutem firmitatemque corporis lectam sex vel plures viri in locum hand procul a castris remotum deducunt. Ibique omnes deinceps in illa libidinem explent. Tum mulier ad pedas surgere jubetur, quo facilius, id quod maribus excepit, effluere possit. Quod in vase collectum ægrotanti ebibendum praebent.

The aborigines have unbounded faith in this truly horrible dose, and enumerate many, many instances wherein it has effected marvellous cures. We, however, have known of its having been administered in several cases without the remotest revivifying result. It may be that this fluid is (in fact, some *savants* positively assert that it is so) the very essence of life, as well as containing the germs thereof, and that administering a draught of it to a patient slowly but surely dying from sheer exhaustion, consequent upon a long fit of illness (the illness itself having died out or been cured) might have the wonderful effect detailed so positively by the natives, but this is purely a question for physicians to consider.

They are singularly successful in the cure of snake poisoning. A native dying from snake-bite is an unknown occurrence, although there are great numbers of them bitten from time to time by these reptiles.

Their method of extracting the poison is by severely pinching the bitten part between the thumbs, after which they suck the wound for five minutes, or until a piece of

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opossum skin which is being heated is deemed sufficiently warm for their purpose. When it is so they cease sucking, and place the heated opossum skin on the wound, holding it tightly pressed against the bitten part with the palm of the hand. When the skin becomes comparatively cool sucking is again had resource to and continued until the skin is again heated to the required degree, when sucking is again discontinued, and the warm skin applied, and so on until the patient is deemed out of danger.

A sting from a deaf adder, however, is considered by them a hopeless case; therefore they never attempt the extraction of the deadly virus injected by that reptile's horny tail spur; in fact, they have not time to try a cure, for the victim rarely lives twenty minutes after being wounded.

These reptiles are the most dreaded, as well as the most dangerous, of the snake kind, not only because of the superior virulency of their poison, but for the reason that nothing will induce them to move from the position in which they are found. If one is touched by a foot, or even a stick, he does not crawl away as quickly as possible, as it is the habit of the other reptiles to do; no, indeed, he merely raises his head and tail simultaneously with the rapidity of thought, and seizes the disturbing object with his mouth, holding firmly thereby whilst he drives his tail spur into it repeatedly.

We once saw a native bitten on the shin by a black snake. When it accurred we were shooting ducks on a Murray lagoon. The blackfellow, after being bitten, got a stick and killed the snake. He then squatted on the ground, and pinched the bitten part very hard between his thumb nails.

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The blood, as a matter of course under this treatment, oozed from the punctures pretty freely, and as long as the slightest indication of blood was visible, so long did the native continue the pinching. However, the whole operation did not occupy more than ten minutes. After that lapse of time the blackfellow got up, said it was all right, and there was an end of the matter. On another occasion we knew of a native being bitten on the great toe, also by a black snake. He was walking to the camp from the fishing ground after sunset when it happened, and as he had still two miles to go after the accident the poison had ample time to get into the circulation. In this case the poison could not be pinched out, as the punctures were in the horny* part of the toe. On reaching the camp he was attended to at once, but the poison had been too long in the system to allow of a perfect cure. Certainly, his life was saved, but he could not move out of the camp for two years afterwards without assistance, and the whole of these two years of enforced confinement he was continually breaking out in boils and blotches, which in all cases left very incurable sores and ulcers behind. All the sole of the bitten foot suppurated and came away piecemeal, leaving the bones and tendons of the foot quite bare. He never regained his wonted strength, or even a semblance of it. Although he could walk about a little, it was quite an effort to do so. He wasted and dwindled quietly away without the least pain for a few years more, when he died. At the time of his death he was the veriest skeleton we ever

*The under portion, as well as a good distance up the sides of the feet and toes of the aborigines, the skin is nearly as hard as a horse's hoof. This merely applies, as, in fact, the whole of this book does, to the unsophisticated aborigines.

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saw, and so light that he could easily have been raised from the ground by one hand.

In their obstetric practice they are very primitive indeed; but then, to be sure, scientific assistance is rarely required by them during the periods of parturition, their unconventional manner of living, together with the simplicity of their dress, making Dame Nature's assistance ample on nearly all occasions. It does happen sometimes that a woman about to become a mother will be accompanied by one of her own sex into that part of the bush selected for the interesting event, but this is merely for company's sake, and not with the view of rendering assistance. As the mothers in all cases have their wits so well about them during those seasons, they even fasten the umbilical chord themselves. As soon as the dark mite of aboriginal humanity is brought forth the mother picks it up and carries it straight to the nearest available water, when she washes it clean, and that, too, without taking the chill off the water. When this essential has been satisfactorily concluded she rolls it up in her cloak, and walks off to the camp with the utmost composure. When she arrives there neither her appearance nor that of her new production elicits the least wonder or surprise. The putative father even sits calmly by, and pays no particular heed.

It frequently happens that a woman will be taken with the pains of labour during a trail from one place of encampment to another. When this occurs she merely drops out of the line of march, and under the shelter of some convenient bush brings forth her young, after which she picks up the trail again, and walks on to the new place of encampment,

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carrying her latest progeny with her in the most *nonchalant* manner imaginable, as though the penalty incurred by Eve had not descended to her aboriginal sisterhood.

During our very long experience of the aborigines, we have only known of one instance of death due to child-bearing, and in that solitary case the woman, in our opinion, was physically incapacitated for the ordeal of maternity, even although it is such a simple matter from an aboriginal point of view, she being the veriest pigmy we ever saw; besides, she gave birth to twins on the occasion, which may have had something to do with it. Most singular, too, as far as we have been able to learn, this was the first and only instance of twins being born (and these were by a white father), known to the aborigines.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MAKING OF THEIR WEAPONS, HOW USED, AND FOR WHAT PURPOSES. THEIR CANOES, AND HOW FASHIONED.

In the matter of arts and sciences, as we understand these industries, they have not any. The mere fabrication of their weapons, although displaying some small ingenuity, can scarcely be reckoned an art, nor do we think that the making of nets and opossum cloaks can be classed under either of the heads.

As we said above, there is certainly an amount of skill displayed in the construction of their weapons, and the same can be said of their nets; but really, neither the one nor the other has the smallest scintilla of science bestowed upon its manufacture. Even the far-famed angle of the

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boomerang is merely a matter of accident, therefore out of five hundred made, there will perhaps not be half-a-dozen possessing the true or scientific curve necessary to ensure the retrograde motion of the missile after it has been propelled to a certain distance. From an aboriginal point of view, however, the lack of the power of retrogression in the missile is not objected to, but quite the contrary, inasmuch as this quality, so much admired by Europeans, renders it altogether useless, either in their daily hunting excursions or in their puny warfare. What they require in this weapon is a capacity for great velocity, with but a minimum expenditure of propulsive power; and any piece of wood of a handy size, flattened on one side, and very slightly convex on the other, having the shape of a parabola, possesses the required merit.

The reason why any two *boomerangs* are never seen with precisely the same curve is simple enough. These missiles are always made from branches, or roots having natural curves, and there are never two curves in nature exactly alike. When the instrument is finished, the grain of the wood follows round the curve, or rather, the curve follows round the grain of the wood, thereby giving the missile strength, which it would altogether lack were it made from a straight-grained piece of timber.

The whirligig toys, with which the natives who frequent the centres of population, amuse the "whitefellow," are perfectly useless in the pursuit of game, or for any other purpose, save that of amusement; in short, they resemble the historical razors in a most remarkable manner. The timbers principally used for making these missiles

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are sheoak (casuarina), myall (acacia hornalophylla), and the stunted box (eucalyptus dumosa), of the great northern plains.

They have not any very great variety of spears; the few kinds they have, however, are ample for all their requirements, and each description is set apart for its own particular purpose.

These immense jagged spears, so elaborately fashioned, and over which long days of tedious labour have been bestowed, are never by any chance used in the pursuit of game; they are merely kept for the adornment of the fronts of their *loondthals*. It does, however, sometimes occur that in fits of ungovernable passion they will seize one of these ornamental weapons, and transfix whatever may have given rise to the rage, be it man or beast.

These spears are principally made from a tall-growing box (one of the eucalypti), which often attains to an altitude of over a hundred feet; it is indigenous to the north-western portion of the colony, and to Riverina; it has a fine wavy grain, consequently easily worked when in a green state. When well seasoned, however, it is nearly as hard as ebony. This weapon in general is nine feet long, barbed on two sides for fourteen inches up from the point. The barbs are shaped exactly after the fashion of those on the arrow heads, which have been discovered in Central France, being the handiwork of primitive man who flourished in the post pliocene period.

The aborigines imagine that these spears have so great an affinity to lightning that if exposed during the progress of a thunderstorm they would surely attract the electric fluid,

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which would demolish their camps, and perhaps destroy much life; therefore, upon the first premonitions of an approaching thunderstorm, they hide these weapons carefully away amongst the grass or shrubs until the storm has abated or passed over. This proceeding on the part of the natives displays a considerable amount of observation, as we have found the box tree (from the wood of which these spears are made) more frequently destroyed by lightning than any other species of tree in the bush. In the debris remaining after a quantity of this box timber has been consumed by fire, there are large masses found resembling the clinkers from a forge, the principal component of which is decidedly iron; this perhaps may account for the attractive properties of the tree. These spears, about ten inches from the point, are an inch and a-half in diameter, from whence they taper gradually to the end, which is only half an inch thick.

The natives make a commoner sort of spear, of the same size as the last, for everyday use. This spear is made from mallee* saplings; the barbs thereof are not nearly so well formed as those in the show spear previously described, although the shape is exactly similar.

It would be a sad waste of time fashioning these useful weapons elaborately, as they nearly always get broken when successfully cast; they are only used for killing the larger kinds of game, such as kangaroo and emu, and when once fixed securely in the hunted creature, the barbs prevent their falling out; therefore, in the final struggle breakages

*Mallee—A kind of Eucalyptus which covers the barren wastes of the north-western portion of the colony; other kinds of saplings are used in the manufacture of these spears should mallee be unobtainable.

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are a certain consequence. These spears are not propelled by means of a throwing stick, but are hurled from the hand javelinwise. The natives can make pretty sure of striking with these spears at a distance of twenty or twenty-five yards—that is to say, if the game be in motion. At stationary objects they are exceedingly inexpert; therefore, like true sportsmen, they invariably start the game before making a cast; however, the motive is not the same in both cases, as the natives are the most confirmed pothunters in existence, and merely set the game running to make more certain of their aim, whereas sportsmen do it so as to give the animals they are in pursuit of a certain amount of law, or, in other words, a chance for their lives.

The reed spear is the missile most generally used in their daily foragings; this spear can be thrown with great precision fifty or sixty yards; it is propelled by means of the throwing stick. They kill all the smaller game, such as wallaby, duck, geese, swans, pigeons, &c., with this weapon, and as the spear is remarkably fragile, and easily broken, they commonly carry a bundle of them on their diurnal excursions. This spear is seven feet long, five feet of its length being reed, and the other two feet wood, hardened by fire. These wooden points are fixed into the reed shafts by means of gum, which they procure from various trees*, and prepare by baking for that purpose. The baking process which the gum undergoes renders it tough, doing away with much

*Nearly all the Eucalyptus species exude gum, which the natives utilise in the fabrication of their various weapons, as Europeans do glue. The myall and mimosa also exude gum; these the natives prefer before all other kinds when obtainable, they being less brittle and more adhesive than any of the others.

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of its brittleness, which is its natural characteristic when in a dried state.

The *womara*, or throwing stick, is made of some light, tough wood, two feet in length. The handhold is round, and rather more than an inch in thickness. Immediately above the handle the instrument bulges out to the width of three inches, tapering from thence to the point, where it terminates in a hook. The broad portion of the instrument on the side the hook is, is slightly concave, the opposite side being correspondingly convex. The instrument is held in the hollow of the hand, and the hook is inserted in the end of the spear, which, of course, makes the spear rest in the concavity, where it is held by the forefinger and thumb. As it stretches along the *womara* the arm is raised, and drawn back in readiness for the propulsion. When that force is being applied the finger and thumb release the spear, and the missile shoots forth like an arrow on its mission.

They have another light spear, which is also used for killing game at long distances; it is made altogether of wood, and is made of the same length as the reed spear. It is not quite half an inch in thickness, the thickest part being a few inches from the point. The end of this spear is terminated by a section of light, pithy wood, six inches long. This wood possesses the least specific gravity of any known timber; it is produced by the grass tree, or, more properly speaking, it is the flower stem of that plant from which it is procured. The pith of this grass-tree section is picked out to the depth of an inch, and the end of the spear is fixed into the hollow so made. When it is firmly secured by gum, this addition on the end of the spear serves

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the same purpose as feathers do on arrows. This spear is also made of mallee saplings; it is also propelled by the aid of the throwing stick.

The spear set aside entirely for killing fish, down in the depths of rivers and lakes, when the water is pellucid as crystal (as it becomes during the absence of rains in the summer months), is only five feet long, and an inch thick; it is perfectly smooth throughout the entire length. This spear is never thrown, but always used lance fashion; further on the method of using it will be found in every detail.

The canoe stick (it can scarcely be termed a paddle, as it has not any blade) is about twelve feet long and two and a half inches thick; it is round. At one end it has three grains affixed; the outer one being half an inch shorter than the outer ones. The latter have barbs just above the points, whilst the centre one is smooth. The outside grains are made of wood, hardened by fire, the centre one being of bone; the pole is made of pine wood*. This implement has a twofold use, that of propelling the canoe being one, and transfixing fish with the grains being the other.

When bent upon harpooning fish with this grained canoe stick, they select a stretch of shallow water, full of reeds and other aquatic plants, over which the wary fisherman propels his canoe, using the plain end of the stick for the purpose. Every now and then he thrusts the stick sharply to the bottom, thereby disturbing the feeding fish. As a matter of course they rush away from the disturbance, shaking the plants in their hurry, which at once tells the keen-eyed fisherman the position of his prey. After the

*When pine is not available any other light and tough wood is substituted.

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plants have ceased shaking, the wily savage pushes his canoe gently up to within striking distance of the plants which were last in motion, he knowing right well that at the foot thereof his game is resting. Poising his grained weapon for but a short space, he launches it with precision, and seldom fails to bring his scaley victim, quivering and glittering to the surface.

When sailing over deep water, both ends of the stick are used; it is held by the middle then, and each end is dipped into the water alternately. They have a wonderful knack in their management of canoes, driving them along with amazing velocity, and a directness of bearing that would delight the very heart of a pilot, whose pride it is to con a ship successfully.

Their canoes are made from the bark of the redgum tree; bark of other trees is also used, but merely for temporary use, as none but the former will stand the weather without curling up or splitting. They are made in all cases from a single sheet, without tie or join. In making these vessels, trees with natural bends are chosen, as curves so obtained precludes the necessity of having to use fire to give the required rise, stem and stern.

When the bark for a canoe is cut, stretchers are placed across it at intervals of three feet to prevent it from curling up. Short props are also placed under the bows and stern to keep them from becoming depressed by reason of their own weight. If at this stage the canoe should not have the exact shape desired by the maker, he places heavy billets of wood inside at those parts which require pressing outwards, and the bark being green, the pressure effects the end aimed

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at. After this, and whilst the weights are still in the canoe, and the props outside, a coat of well-puddled clay is spread all over the interior, which effectually hinders sun cracks. In this condition they are left in the sun to season. After ten or fifteen days' exposure, the bark has become so hard as to be able to retain the shape ever after, no matter how roughly it may be handled. It is, therefore, launched without ceremony upon the waters, where it is destined to float for the few brief years of its existence. After the lapse of two years the bark becomes heavy and sodden, therefore correspondingly unwieldy; so the owner in his rambles keeps his eyes about him, with the view of discovering a suitable tree from which he can take a canoe, wherewith to replace his now frail craft.

According to the size of the canoe required, so is the tree selected from which to take the bark. Heads of families generally have vessels large enough to convey all their families and requirements at once. Bachelors, however, having a fewer *impedimenta*, usually content themselves with vessels of much less capacity, finding such more suited for pursuing acquatic birds during the moulting season, thousands of which they capture in their then helpless condition. In harpooning fish too, the small canoe is found most managable.

The natives inhabiting districts where large rivers or lakes abound, hold their canoes in higher estimation than they do any other of their possessions.

Of shields they have two kinds, one for serious conflicts and the other for display merely. The former is triangular, and two feet six inches in length; in the centre of the angle

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a hole four inches long is pierced for the hand ; the flat side opposite the handle is five inches wide, from whence it narrows down to a point at each end. The instrument is perfectly solid, therefore very heavy, as well as being strong. The handle is padded with opossum skin to save the knuckles during action. They are exceedingly dexterous in the use of this instrument ; so much so indeed that nearly any aborigine will make a target of himself for any other aborigine to spear at, if only he be provided with one of these shields. This instrument is made of the stunted box tree (Eucalyptus Dumosa), the inlocked grain of which is almost unsplitable, therefore the very thing to receive hard knocks with the least possible injury.

The ornamental shield is the same length as the one described above ; this, however, being the only similarity, as this one is ten inches wide at the centre, tapering from thence to a point at each end. It is made of a thin shell of wood never exceeding a quarter of an inch in thickness. Two holes are pierced in the centre, four inches apart, through which a tough piece of wand is bent for a handle ; it is slightly convex on the outer side, and most elaborately carved. These carvings though are not after any design, but are simply rude irregular lines, running sometimes across, and at other times up and down the instrument. Usually these irregular lines are painted alternately red and white, which has rather a novel effect, when rapidly and artistically flourished ; in which performance, the aboriginal warrior whilst playing at fighting, takes abundant pride.

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CHAPTER VIII.

OF WADDIES (BLUDGEONS) THEIR SHAPES AND USES; THE STONE AXE AND HOW FITTED TO THE HANDLE; FIBRE PLANTS AND HOW UTILISED; EMU NETS AND THE MANNER OF THEIR APPLICATION IN THE ENMESHING OF THESE GIGANTIC BIRDS.

Of waddies (bludgeons) the natives have an infinite assortment, only a very few of which, however, possess distinctive characters. Those which do not, are fashioned according to the existing whim of the maker, or the nature of the roots from which they are made; the root-end of small saplings being always chosen for the purpose. Of those possessing—we might almost say—a national character, the shapes of which seem to have come down generation after generation, from the remotest period, the *Leawill* is the most deadly-looking weapon. It is usually three feet long, and two inches and a half thick, having a pointed head, very similar both in shape and size to a miner's driving pick; in most cases sheoak (*Casuarina*) is used in the manufacture of this weapon; it is used in close quarters only, and is a most deadly instrument in the hands of a ruthless foe, or in a general melee such as a midnight onslaught.

The *Nulla Nulla* is another bludgeon which bears a distinctive character, and is found in common with the preceeding one in all the tribes of the colony. It is more general, however, than the other, because it requires less ingenuity and trouble to fabricate. It is merely a round piece of wood, three feet long and two inches and a half

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thick, brought to a blunt point at the end. The mallee is the wood from which it is generally made. There is a lesser *Nulla Nulla* which may, with more propriety, be termed a cudgel, common to all the tribes. It is two feet long, one inch thick, with a small nob at the end; a few inches from the nob it has a slight curve. This instrument is used as a missile in hunting. Being thrown at the game it is hurled with amazing rapidity, and if the object aimed at be within anything like a reasonable distance and moving, it is pretty sure of being successful. None of these bludgeons are carved in any way, the handhold is merely slightly roughened, to obviate accidental slipping.

The stone axes of these aborigines are precisely similar to those found in the ossiferous caves of Central France. Seeing two of those implements together, one taken from the caves above mentioned, and the other from these natives, it would be quite impossible to determine which was of European, and pre-historic origin, and which of Australian, and, consequently, recent manufacture.*

In putting one of these axes into a handle (it will be observed that the accepted order of things is reversed in this instance, usually the handle being put into the axe), a section of a tough sapling, three feet long by an inch and a half thick, is procured; the wood preferred being a species of acacia. This piece of sapling is split down the middle, one half only being required for the handle; this half is made pliant by a process of steaming, which is achieved by

* We merely mention this similarity, in conjunction with the fact of the perfect resemblance of the barbs on the pre-historic arrow-heads, to those on the spears made by these aborigines, as showing rather more than a seeming connection between the primitive races long since passed away, and existing primitive man, as at present found in Australia.

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judiciously mixing hot ashes with damp earth, wherein the wood is manipulated until it becomes sufficiently supple for the required purpose. It is then bent round the axe head until the two flat sides meet, when they are firmly lashed together by cord, combined with a good plaster of prepared gum. Although this is all the fixing that these impliments receive, it is wonderful how they remain in the haft; a novice in the matter reading this discription, would be inclined to imagine that the axe head so fixed would fly off almost at the first half-dozen strokes, but it is not so; for many and many a canoe has been cut with these instruments, without their becoming the least loose even, and when the blunt edge is taken into consideration, it will be quite palpable how enormous must be the labour, and how numerous must be the blows required, to release a sheet of bark, large enough for a canoe, from a tree. As a matter of course now and then these implements will become loose in the middle of some operation, but what of that; even an American axe will get the haft broken occasionally. Ere the advent of Europeans these primitive axes were the only cutting tools the aborigines possessed, unless sharp flint-scales and broken mussel shells can be classed under that head.

The natives hailed the European tomahawk on its first introduction as the greatest boon which was ever conferred on their savage lot; and to hear, as we have done, an old aborigine, even at this day, describing the sensation caused by the appearance of the first amongst his tribe, is of the richest. The news of the appearance of this most wonderful weapon spread far and wide in very short time, and

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great was the aboriginal muster in consequence. Friendly tribes from the remoter districts, flocked into the main camping ground, and single families from the furthermost nooks and corners joined the crowd, all intent upon viewing this marvellous axe; and when it was produced to their astonished gaze, much ejaculation and clucking with the tongue ensued. Each one who had the pleasure of having it in his hand, with glistening eye and radiant countenance, said "*Tumoo Talko;*"* and each one who was permitted the privilege of testing its cutting powers, ejaculated "*Nga loorongandoo tumoo talko.*"† As a natural consequence, every one wished to become the owner of this *Talko patchic,*‡ so that there came very nearly being a sanguinary conflict over the matter; indeed it was only a universal promise to loan it on every canoe-cutting occasion that kept the peace and good fellowship that had existed in these tribes for ever so many generations, from being summarily terminated on the spot.

Of fibre plants there are three, which are utilised by the aborigines in the manufacture of twine and cord. The *Kumpung* (Typha Muellera) root, furnishes the fibre most commonly employed in making the thread from which waist-belts, bow-bands, and bags of all sorts and sizes are netted. The larger sized *Mockoor Mockoor* (bags), are used for carrying their various belongings from camp to camp, whilst the smaller ones take the place of the pockets of civilisation. Each male is provided with one of the latter, which is carried over the point of the shoulder, or round

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* *Tumoo Talko:* More good.
† *Nga loorongandoo tumoo talko:* And very much more good.
‡ *Talko patchic:* Good tomahawk.

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the neck as the fancy of the wearer inclines. This fibre is procured after a very simple and primitive fashion, thus :— After the root is cooked (it produces food as well as fibre), it is not cut up into short sections for convenience in eating, as doing so would render the fibre comparatively worthless by reason of its shortness; therefore each root is taken separately, the skin peeled off, and the remainder, consisting of both farina and fibre, is twisted up into a knot, often being larger than a good sized fist, and these knots are crammed into the mouths agape for their reception—most ludicrously. Sometimes both hands are required in the performance of this feat. When one of these immense mouthfuls has been masticated sufficiently to extract all the farina, the residue, which is the fibre, is rejected in the shape of a small knot of beautiful white tow. These knots of tow, as they are formed, are carefully packed away in bags, which are then utilised as pillows, until the time comes round for twine making. When about to make twine, these tow knots are steeped in water for twelve hours, which effectually softens any starchy matter they may contain. They are then teased out and scraped with mussel shells, until they are perfectly cleansed. The clean flax is then tied up into small neat hanks, and is ready for the thread makers' operations.

When we consider that these aborigines do not possess any appliances other than those furnished by Dame Nature, it is truly wonderful how deft they are in the making of cord and twine. They make these of sizes varying from the thickness of our clothes lines, down to the very thinnest twine. Whatever the size may be, the cord or twine in all cases consists of two plies or strands only;

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and the most singular thing about it is, that both strands are twisted at one time, and as the hand is drawn back from twisting them, the retrograde action twines them together into the finished cord. The work is done on the bare thigh, thus:—Two flax hanks are loosened out, the ends of which are held by the left hand; the rest is then stretched out over the thigh, and kept apart by one of the fingers of the hand holding the ends; the palm of the right hand is now moistened, and placed over the flax on the thigh, when it is rubbed sharply towards the knee. By this action both of the flax hanks are twisted into hard threads. The finger which had kept the hanks apart is now withdrawn, and the right hand is drawn back with a sharp jerk, which results in the two threads being firmly twined together into a neat cord, so much of them at least as the palm covers. The end of the shortest hank (they always commence with a long and a short hank), is now teased out, and the end of another hank is mixed with it, and the two rubbing actions are again performed with a like result. So it continues, two rubs and a join alternately.

This process they will continue hour after hour, until the thigh becomes quite painful to the slightest touch. It is then thrown aside until the thigh returns to its normal condition.

The Fibre Rush is the next plant from which they procure flax. This plant is cut as close to the ground as possible, so that the fibre may be of a fair length. It is tied into bundles of about six inches diameter, after which it is soaked in water for twenty-four hours. After the soaking has been effected, it is placed in an oven and baked for four

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hours. It is then in a fit condition for the next process, which is scraping. This is done by means of mussel shells, with the view of removing all the husk and pithy matter. Whilst the scraping is in progress the rushes are continually being dipped into water, the softening influence of which aids materially in the proper cleansing of the flax. When it is quite finished it is laid on the grass to dry, which it soon does, as it is spread out in small parcels, each parcel being merely sufficient to form one of the neat hanks of the correct size required in the manufacture of the cord or twine they may have in view. When dry it is made into the hanks, and stored away for future use.

From this fibre fishing lines and nets are made, as also nets for taking ducks. It makes a most serviceable netting twine, having the power to resist the rotting influence of water to a great extent; in fact, it is superior in that particular to the common netting twine of commerce, which we have proved on more than one occasion.

The next and last of their cord-making plants is the giant mallow. The fibre from this plant is of a much coarser nature than those already described; therefore it is only employed for making very thick cord, which is afterwards worked up into nets for capturing emus. The process of separating this fibre from the plant is the same as that adopted in the case of that derived from the rush, with this one difference—After the mallow is taken out of the oven it is well bruised with heavy clubs previous to its maceration and scraping.

The emu nets made from the cord which is manufactured out of the mallow fibre are frequently from eighty to one

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hundred yards long, the mesh being six inches wide. When completed it looks exactly similar to our sheep nets, and very nearly as strong. The following is the manner of their application in enmeshing emus :—

The locality of a drove of emus is noted, and such natural features as the country in the vicinity presents (such as the near convergence of a lagoon and lake, or a river and a lagoon) are utilised for side or guiding lines to the net, the latter being fixed at the nearest point of their convergence. As a matter of course, in all cases the ground between the converging side lines at the point selected for the fixing of the net must be narrow enough to be spanned thereby. The net is firmly fixed in position by means of good stout stakes. When all is in readiness several of the elderly natives hide themselves in the long grass at each end, whilst the younger members of the tribe stretch themselves out in two lines having the form of a V with the apex cut off, the narrow opening of this mutilated V fitting on to the natural converging lines. Previous to these lines being formed scouts, warily taking advantage of all the inequalities offered by tree and bush, stealthily creep round the unsuspecting emus. When their purpose has been achieved they await in ambush for the preconcerted signal to startle the game towards the net prepared for their reception. The signal being given, the scouts rise from their concealment simultaneously, and with shout and gesture so frighten the gigantic birds that they start away with the velocity of a locomotive engine, the thuds from their great feet almost making the very ground to tremble. If it so happen that the birds take off in the desired direc-

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tion no word is spoken. The scouts merely keep following them up as fast as possible. If, however, the game should swerve from the right line, then those whose side they are approaching show themselves, and if that should not turn them then shouting and gesticulating are resorted to, which in mos c ases have the desired effect. Sometimes, though, the effect is greater than is desired. In this case the natives forming the other line show themselves, whilst now the panting scouts coming up behind make as much noise as their labouring lungs will allow them. When the birds have got within the water lines the whole force in the field, with the exception of those lying in wait at the net, rush madly on with the noise of a pack of demons let loose, which causes the emus to put their best feet foremost until they run blindly into the net, when the old savages waiting to that end rush forward with a joy (which it is only given to real savages to know) and club the poor enmeshed birds, and it is but seldom that any escape out of the toils to warn their fellow emus of the fate to which they are all liable if due care and unwearied watchfulness be not continually exercised.

As many as a dozen emus are frequently taken at one time in this manner, when, of course, there is nothing but feasting and riot thought of in the camp for days, or as long as their supply lasts, or until it becomes putrid, which is not by any means an uncommon result after hunting expeditions which have been successful.

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CHAPTER IX.

OF DUCK NETS, THEIR CONSTRUCTION AND METHOD OF APPLICATION; FISHING NETS, WITH THEIR USES ILLUSTRATED; WEIRS FOR TRAPPING FISH; HOW CONSTRUCTED, AND OF WHAT UTILITY.

Duck nets are usually one hundred yards long by two yards broad, the mesh being four inches wide. In making these nets the aborigines do not use a gauge, as is usual with Europeans. They simply judge of the size by the finger and thumb. The knot, however, is precisely similar to the one which European net-makers use. The meshes are as regular in size as though a gauge had been employed, and the finished net is as uniform throughout its length, and quite as strong as those made by men whose sole occupation is that of net-making.

Fishing nets are about the same length usually as those for catching ducks, but they are not so wide, being only four feet in width. The mesh, too, is different, being only three inches wide. The same kind of twine is used for making both nets. Nets for taking crawfish are only ten feet long, with a width of six feet, the mesh being three quarters of an inch wide. These nets are made by the women always, it being deemed beneath the dignity of aboriginal manhood to make nets to catch such insignificant game as crawfish. The women also make all the bags, waist belts, and brow bands, no matter whether they are to be worn by the nobler animal or not. The long nets, however, are made entirely by the men—that is to say, in every particular, with the exception of preparing the flax, that

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part of the business being always performed by the women.

When a duck-hunting expedition has been decided upon, all in the camp—men, women, and children—get in motion early in the morning, and start off to the lagoon which has been selected for the scene of their operations.

On their arrival at, or rather near the lagoon, the women make a sort of impromptu camp, where they remain with the children and prepare fires, to be in readiness to cook some of the game which are intended to be taken.

Four men (generally patriarchs in the tribe) go off with the net to the point of the lagoon where they purpose fixing it. It is stretched across the lagoon, and close enough to the water to prevent the ducks from escaping underneath. In the meantime the young active men of the tribe range themselves at regular intervals along both sides of the lagoon, and high up amongst the branches of the trees with which the margin is fringed, those in the trees having each a light disk of bark about seven or eight inches in diameter. When they are all properly settled, one who has been sent off for the purpose startles the ducks. As is natural with these birds, the moment they are put to flight they fly off along the lagoon, following its sinnosities pretty closely. Should it happen, however, as it occasionally does at those times, that they wish to leave the course of the lagoon for some other water in the vicinity, one of the natives in the trees nearest the flying birds whistles like a hawk, and hurls his disc of bark into the air. The ducks, hearing the whistle, look sharply about, and seeing the revolving disc, imagines it a hawk, consequently a simultaneous stoop is made down close to the surface of the water to escape their

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fancied enemy. Then they continue along the course of the lagoon, the whirling bark disc and the shrill whistle of the native having materially accelerated their flight. When this panic has subsided, and they again begin to soar in their flight. Another whistle, with the accompaniment of a gyrating disc, soon brings them once more to the desired level, and thus the sport continues, until after having run this exciting gauntlet the poor birds find themselves suddenly enveloped in the folds of the treacherous net, when the four guardians thereof, with the assistance of all hands, who now rush forward, take but a short space to secure the struggling prey, 'mid an abundance of pleasurable ejaculations, and such tongue chucking from the women and children, who gloat over the fat, plump birds as they are drawn from the net. Scores and scores of ducks are captured in this manner every season in those districts which abound in wild fowl, and where suitable lagoons obtain.

The fishing net is made use of in two ways. The first and commoner method of the two is what civilised fishermen term hauling. It is conducted in the following fashion:—A lagoon which is known to abound in fish, and is perhaps not more than waist deep, is chosen as the scene of their operations. When the natives have arrived at the chosen spot those who are about to work the net tie pieces of calcined clay, weighing about a pound and a half, at intervals of four feet all along the bottom side, these pieces of clay having been carried by the women for that purpose from the nearest oven. On the upper side they fix small bundles of reeds at intervals of six feet, which act as floats;

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then the net is ready for work. One man now stands on the edge of the lagoon, holding one end of the net, whilst another native, holding the opposite end, stalks very quietly into the water, describing a considerable semi-circle in his progress, coming back to the bank about thirty paces from his mate, when the work of hauling begins in earnest, during which operation those holding the respective ends of the net gradually converge until within two yards of each other. Should the haul be a successful one, all the available muscle, in the shape of women—yes, and children, too—is called into requisition, when, as a matter of course, such a jabbering and clucking of tongues arises as is not heard anywhere out of an Australian aboriginal assemblage. The bellying centre of the net, however, is all the time being drawn nearer to the shore, as can easily be seen by the floating reed bundles, until at last, with one prodigious and final tug, the finny denizens of the lagoon are landed on the grassy margin in one struggling mass of dazzling glitter. We have on many occasions seen as much as half a ton weight of fish drawn from Murray lagoons at one haul, consisting of cod, perch (golden and silver), cat-fish, black fish, and turtle. It is quite a sight to see them all tumbling and jumping about on the grass. Codfish from fifty pounds down to two, and perch from ten pounds down to the same minimum, the large mesh of the net precluding the landing of lesser fish, unless on very rare occasions; and when it does happen that some few small fish are landed amongst the crowd of great ones, they don't take the trouble to throw them into the water again, and as they don't eat such small fry they are left on the grass for the delectation

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of the crows and gulls. As soon as the result of a good haul has been examined the men pick up their spears, &c., and stalk off to the camp in a most majestic manner, leaving the women and children to bring on the wet, therefore heavy net, as well as the spoil thereof. In due time the latter straggle into the camp by twos and threes, groaning and whining under their respective burdens like so many overladen camels traversing some dreary and arid waste within the limits of the torrid zone.

When a small assemblage, such as two or three families, happen to be encamped in near proximity to a lake, they fix a net by means of stakes in zig-zag lines, about twenty yards from the shore, or perhaps a little further should the lake be a shallow one, and from this net daily supplies are drawn, consisting principally of perch and cat-fish. Occasionally a monster cod becomes enmeshed, when, of course, the net suffers considerably, and in most cases with the loss of the fish which did the damage. An untoward accident of this kind gives rise to much aboriginal language of a demonstrative description, as it entails the labour of taking up the net for repairs, which otherwise would in all probability not be moved for a month or more. Nets so staked are visited morning and evening, and on each occasion from eight to a dozen fish are taken, varying from two to ten pounds weight.

In the Swan Hill district the Murray River runs through an immense area of reedy plains. On the immediate banks of the river, for as far as these reedy plains extend, there is an artificial looking dike, having an elevation of three or more feet above the plains which shelve away behind it,

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consequently when the whole of these plains are inundated (which they are five months every year, from August to January inclusive) the dikes referred to act the part of dams, and so prevent the water from receding too rapidly, when the sources from whence it comes begin to fail, or, in other words, when the warm weather of spring and early summer has melted all the previous winter's accumulation of snow 'mid the mountains and valleys of the Australian Alps, wherein the many sources of the Murray take their rise.

Whilst the waters cover the reedy plains for miles on every side, the various kinds of fish find delectable grounds in the shallow, semi-tepid fluid wherein to pursue the prey upon which they feed.

In the artificial-looking banks at irregular intervals there are drains three or four feet wide, through which, when the river commences to fall, the waters of the plains find their way back to their parent stream. As a matter of course the fish instinctively return to the river with the receding water. At those seasons the aborigines are in their glory, and no small wonder either, as these times are actual harvests to them. They make stake weirs across the drains, the stakes being driven firmly into the soil within an inch of each other, so that anything having a greater bulk than that space must perforce remain on the landward side of the weir.

Without any great stretch of imagination, the reader can easily fancy the shoals of fish which congregate behind these weirs when the river is falling, and what a very simple matter the taking of them must be. When fish are required

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a native takes his canoe into the midst of one of these shoals, and harpoons as many as he wishes, or until he becomes tired of the fun.

The water continues to run through these drains for five or six weeks, and during all that time the natives slay and eat to their hearts' content, and are consequently sleek by reason of the vast quantities of adipose matter which they devour in those times of abundance, together with that with which they fail not plentifully to lubricate their bodies from crown to toe.

During this season the windward side of an aboriginal encampment, or even of a single aboriginal, is by far the most savoury, at least to those who are at all sensitive in the matter of malodours.

When the waters have all receded from the reedy plains behind every weir, fish of all kinds are left by thousands to rot and fester in the sun, or to be devoured by crows and other carrion-feeding creatures which are attracted to those points in countless numbers, but notwithstanding their combined and disgusting efforts the air around becomes as pestilential as is the atmosphere in the vicinity of a fish oil factory on the coast of Newfoundland.

Had the aborigines the very least foresight during the fish season they might cure sufficient food to supply their requirements through the dreary months of winter, at which season game is not very abundant, and hunting toilsome. As native salt abounds in the saline lakes of the Mallee Scrub, at no great distance from the fishing grounds it is improvidence alone which prevents them from making the necessary provision. Ignorance of the antiseptic properties

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of salt ere the advent of Europeans might be very well brought in as a plea by them for not making provision in anticipation of hard and hungry seasons. Since their intercourse with white men, however, that excuse is no longer tenable. Still, for all that, the same improvident habits continue to obtain.

The *lyoors* drag the lagoons for the delicious crayfish, which they catch by the pailful. These delicate little crustacæ are highly esteemed by the aborigines because of their piquant flavour, which we imagine to be entirely due to the fact of their eating them without other cleaning than the mere removal of the outer shell. These little things being in so much request, the *lyoors* devote a considerable portion of their time to catching them.

They prepare the net for this purpose by tying a hoop round the bottom edge and the two ends, which gives it the appearance of half an oval; the top of the net is eight feet long. It is worked by two women, each having a bag slung round her neck to receive the result of their labours. They go into shallow lagoons, one at each end of the net, and scrape it along the bottom. They do not make much disturbance in the water during the operation, as very little noise would send all the crayfish within hearing distance into their holes, which, of course, would entail so much lost labour. They do not take the net to the bank to empty it; they merely raise it every now and again, and remove whatever spoil it may contain to the bags round their respective necks, and so they continue until they have captured what they deem sufficient. An hour's scraping frequently results in as many of these crayfish as would fill a six gallon

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measure. They can only be taken by the scraping process during the warm weather. In the cold weather they are all in their holes, so that when a noble savage has a longing for a meal of these favourite shellfish whilst they are hypernating, his poor drudge of a wife has to turn out in the cold and procure the delicacy for him by groping with her hands down the holes of the little creatures, and as the entrances to the holes are all under water, it is both a cold and tedious undertaking to capture a dish of them sufficient for a meal. They have a net also very nearly as fine in the mesh as a coarse cheese cloth, with which during the spawning season they take millions of young fish, many of which are less than an inch in length. Besides these, at the same time they catch immense numbers of young lobsters and shrimps, or prawns, all of which are mixed up together and cooked in the same condition as they are taken from the water. This dish is deemed a luxury of the highest order by the aboriginal epicure. The cooking of these small fry consists merely in boiling them very slowly until the shrimps become red, when the dish is ready. The aboriginal pot made for this sole purpose is an elbow or knot of a tree scooped out until it becomes a mere shell of wood. This vessel is set upon cold ashes, which have been placed to the thickness of two inches over red-hot coals, so prepared for the purpose. After a considerable expenditure of aboriginal patience the water in the wooden pot becomes hot enough to turn the shrimps red, but it never gets beyond the faintest simmer. When cooked this mess looks altogether so disgusting that we never had sufficient temerity to taste of it, even although frequently invited thereto by

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the natives' many high encomiums on its exceeding great merit.

CHAPTER X.*

THE ABORIGINAL MODES OF FISHING BY HOOK AND LINE, AND BY DIVING AFTER THE FISH AND SPEARING THEM UNDER WATER; BAIT USED FOR THE HOOK, AND HOW PROCURED.

One morning just before dawn, in the month of March, after having made all the necessary arrangements the night previous for a day's sport with the aborigines of the Lower Murrry River, we were roused from our peaceful slumbers and pleasant dreams by old King *Pinbocoroo* rapping at our window, and with no gentle voice shouting *pykie, pykie* (get up, get up). Sorely loth, we tumbled out of the sheets, shook ourselves into our raiment, and joined the hoary-headed king, whom we found awaiting our advent with ill-concealed impatience. As our preparations had all been made over night, we had nothing to do but accompany the patriarchal *Pinbocoroo* to his camp, from whence the fishing party was to start. When we reached the camp it was all astir. Men and women were bustling from the camp to the canoes on the river, backwards and forwards, carrying the necessary implements, lines, spears, &c., which would be required during the day's expedition. Chubby little balls of ebon-hued humanity rolled about, too, in every one's way, thereby materially assisting to swell the almost unbearable

*Much of this chapter has appeared in print before in the shape of a sketchy article published in the columns of the *Australasian* newspaper.

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din made by those preparing the canoes for a start, and mongrel, mangey, flat-sided curs belonging to the camp, with yelp and howl, did not tend to lessen the atrocious noise. However, ere the broad red disc of the sun had become plainly perceptible above the horizon, the canoes were packed, and a start effected, we, with our good King *Pinbocoroo*, leading the van.

Altogether there were eight canoes employed in the excursion, each at least having three occupants, and as the flimsy barks (barks in two senses) left the bank and glided gracefully away on the broad surface of the mighty river, whose peaceful waters never yet disturbed by steamboat paddle, glittered and sparkled in the early sunlight, until the flotilla presented a scene so quaintly striking as to be well worthy of an artist's pencil. Like unto muscular athletes those propelling the canoes stood up, nude from the waist, plying their tough and lengthy *maroongies* (canoe sticks) with a grace and elegance quite equal to that displayed by gymnasts whilst balancing their poles during an airy *pas seul*. The showers of spray which flashed from the ends of the paddles as they were alternately raised and depressed, formed tiny rainbows, lovely as they were evanescent.

Besides those in the canoes there were about a dozen *lyoors*, with quite as many youngsters, who trudged along the bank of the river towards the selected fishing grounds, keeping pace with the canoes most admirably, each *lyoor* as a matter of course carrying her *mocre mocre* (bag), containing all sorts of notions, comprising the most incongruous assemblage of articles, ranging from a fishook up to the

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carefully preserved packet of kidney fat, which latter, according to their undoubted belief, is a talisman potent enough to keep *nyambacootchala* (devil) and all his attendant imps at more than arm's length. Besides that, which is considerable, a small portion rubbed over the bait previous to the hook being thrown into the water is a certain attraction to the scaley denizens of the river. After paddling against the stream for about four miles the canoes were brought up to the bank, when their occupants, ourselves included, joined the *lyoors* and *wirtiwoos* (children) on shore. As a matter of course the universal aboriginal habit, whenever they happen to stop, if only for a few minutes even, was followed here, so a fire was lighted, round which the masculine portion of our excursionists gathered themselves, and ere long the air became redolent with the fumes of the fragrant narcotic so dearly loved by all nations, even from the frigid to the torrid zone. There in idle ease they squatted on their haunches, or lolled in lazy attitudes, quizzing each other, or recounting marvels performed on other fishing expeditions, either by themselves or ancestors of generations long since passed away.

The *lyoors* and *wirtiwoos* were meanwhile all in the river, some of them on shallow shelving banks, digging away with their yamsticks most energetically, with the view to the exhumation of the great Murray lobster, whose delicate flesh was destined to tempt the voracious codfish, the brilliant golden perch and his silver-scaled congener, together with the ugly, but at the same time lusciously oleaginous catfish. Others, again, displayed their activity by diving into deeper water in search of mussels, which

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were also intended (after having been partially roasted to facilitate the opening of their shells) to form baits for the hooks.

Half an hour devoted to this fun, accompanied by much laughter, and not infrequently by screams of genuine pain caused by some poor *lyoor*, more clumsy than usual, allowing the nippers of a giant lobster to pinch her finger to the bone, resulted in the collection of sufficient bait for the day's operations.

When the bait had been thus procured the canoes were moved half a mile further up the river to a deep pool, where the water lay comparatively still. The canoes were made fast to the bank there, about ten feet apart, and then the business of the day began in right down earnest.

The lines, each twenty or thirty yards long, to which the baited hooks were attached were carefully coiled up in the hands of the fishermen and dexterously thrown towards the middle of the river, one small coil only being left in each canoe, these coils being left as tell-tales, for the moment the bait was taken, these coils running out immediately denoted the fact, so that a strong, quick pull was only necessary to hook the scaley victim; then a smart haul, hand over hand, soon placed the glistening fish safely in the canoe.

This mode of procedure was carried on for some hours with more or less success, until, indeed, the sun had gained so high an altitude that the heat became more powerful than pleasing; therefore the fish sought deeper pools, caring little for the baits which up to that time they had so greedily swallowed. Even the most delicate piece of lobster, though plentifully smeared with the irrisistible kidney fat,

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failed to tempt them from their cool retreats; therefore the fishermen coiled away their lines, and landed 'mid their scaley prey, huge cutlets from which were soon frizzling and seething on the glowing coals, emitting such appetising odours as are seldom experienced, apart from the camp fire, in the free wilds of the mighty bush, where air and exercise combine to give food such zest as epicures whose lives are laid in cities vainly sigh for. We, in common with our aboriginal brethren, having partaken sumptuously of the luscious cutlets, supplemented by a good-sized bunch of "pigfaces"* by way of bread, charged our pipe, and then, under the influence of the soothing weed, we felt as though children might play with us and not elicit a single growl by reason of their juvenile temerity.

When our pipes had demonstrated that even they could come to an end, there was a stir amongst the male portion of the party. Everything in the shape of clothes was doffed by them, and when reduced to perfect nudity they stood up, spear in hand, waiting for old *Pinbocoroo* to give the word of command; they represented a group in bronze far surpassing in their just proportions the puny efforts of a mundane modeller. Another phase of our sport was about to commence.

The sluggish fish had sought the cool depths of the river, and were not to be tempted therefrom by any kind of bait, however delectable or cunningly devised. The aboriginal fishermen were therefore determined to seek them in their cool retreats. To that end all those in Adam's first attire stole quietly into the river, each with his short,

*The aborigines always consume this esculent when obtainable with their animal food.

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keen fish-spear grasped firmly in the hand. The spot, chosen for their stealthy immersion was near the point, where their knowledge told them that the scaley denizens of the river were enjoying their midday siesta; and there they stood in the river, shoulder deep, still as though they had been mere images instead of men, making *Pinbocoroo's* reiteration of *cuppa cuppa* (hush, hush), superfluous quite. Not a single muscular tremor was to be seen in any one of the expertant savage divers until the word was given by the king, when they simultaneously sank from sight, leaving scarcely a ripple behind to tell the spot from whence they had disappeared. After the lapse of what seemed to us an endless time, though by the clock it could not have been very great, the divers began to reappear, by ones, by twos, and threes, until the whole number were once more on the surface, some struggling with immense fish transfixed upon their spears, requiring considerable assistance to land them safely; others, again, with lesser prey wriggling about on their spears like great entimological specimens on immense pins, required no aid in the landing of their fish. Still, they made as much noise and splutter on the occasion as the landing of a sixty-pounder would warrant; but so it is with these aborigines, even as it is with the greater portion of human kind—plenty of cry and little wool.

This under-water spearing continued with varying success until the sun had declined considerably, when it was abandoned, and the canoes shifted to fresh feasting grounds, then the hooks and lines again became the order of the day. By this time the fish had become as lively as it is their nature to be, consequently they took the delicate pieces of

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lobster, or coarser mussel, with which the hooks were baited quite as readily as they had done in the morning; therefore it was one continuous floundering and spluttering of great fish as the natives kept pulling them into their conoes one after another, nearly as fast, in fact, as the hooks could be rebaited and thrown out; until tired with the long day's successful fun, it was mooted that a start should be made campwards. As the sun was then rapidly approaching the western horizon, the proposal was unanimously agreed to. Therefore, ere long the frail but graceful canoes were once more floating calmly on the bosom of the great river. This time, however, they were not propelled as when outward bound, but were allowed instead to drift along with the current. An occasional touch of the *charroongie* as they chanced to near either shore too much kept them well in mid stream. All on board the canoes had their lines towing astern, baited ready to haul in such fish as had temerity enough to snatch at the tempting morsels as they twirled along in the wakes of the canoes.

All at once our line was hauled tight by a sudden jirk, which nearly pulled us overboard amongst the fishes. We shouted frantically to *Pinbocoroo* to back water, as we had got fast to a log; *Pinbocoroo*, however, only hurriedly replied to our urgent request, "*Kurka, tumoo kurka, waty kulk, koorongiadoo mungie tine*" (pull, again pull; it's no log, but a big fish biting). Following his advice, we did pull in right down earnest, when, to our unqualified delight, a monster whale-like codfish was soon floundering alongside of the canoe. The old king, watching his opportunity, quickly drove his spear through its vertibræ, close to the

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head, and the great brute was then safely hauled into our tiny craft.

The capture of this immense fish seemed to the natives a fitting finale to our successful day's sport, so the lines were all drawn up at once, and the long, slender canoe poles came gracefully into play, which sent the flotilla along in splendid style, rivalling in beauty and celerity a flock of moulting swans when being chased; and just as old Sol sank to rest, mid a blaze of gorgeous colours, we landed at the port from whence we started in the morning.

The result of our day's sport was ninety-three fish, besides those demolished at our midday meal, and a few lobsters, whose aldermanic proportions were the means of their being reserved for the delectation of animals, possessing a higher organisation than the giant codfish of the Murray River.

CHAPTER XI.

RELATING TO THEIR SPIRIT, AND THEIR UNBOUNDED FAITH THEREIN. ABORIGINAL RELIGION AS COMPARED WITH THAT PROFESSED BY CHRISTIANS FROM AN ABORIGINAL POINT OF VIEW. *Bangals* (doctors), *and their powers of spiritual intercourse.*

In matters of religion these aborigines are very, very destitute indeed, yet they admit that all their actions are overlooked by a good and by an evil spirit. These spirits are very prominent figures in all their traditions. The good spirit *(Ngowdenout)* has the credit of being the author of everything which has a favourable

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tendency towards his aboriginal children, and the bad spirit (*Ngambacootchala*) has to bear the blame of whatever untoward event circumstances may bring round.

These good and bad spirits never by any means clash; neither having any control or power of any kind over the other; therefore, it is a sort of let alone, for let alone, position, which they hold towards each other, each acting independently on all occasions.

If a native has been fairly successful whilst hunting, and has consequently bagged a satisfactory haul, he gives *Ngowdenout* all the credit of his luck, inasmuch as he in his great-heartedness had made the game less wary than usual, so that the hunter might have to display but very little cunning in circumventing them.

If, however, whilst trudging back to his camp, well laden with the result of his morning's sport, and full of rejoicings by reason of his successful endeavours, he should chance to stab his foot with a projecting stump, or dry branch with sharp point, *Ngambacootchala* gets the blame for guiding his erring footsteps that way, and is therefore heartily anathametised, in no measured terms either, the aborigines having a wonderful talent for the construction and launching of gross expletives, against who, or whatever may offend their dignity, or hurt their person.

Should it happen that a wild dog, in his foraging rambles, finds and scrapes out a lowna's nest (which had been marked down by an aborigine whilst the bird was building), and eats the eggs; or a known swan's nest has been robbed by a predatory crow, or if even a great codfish smashes many meshes of a net, and escapes, the ever evil-doing *Ngamba-*

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cootchala gets all the blame and consequent abuse. They carry their belief in this spirit to such an extent that they actually pretend to show his tracks or foot-marks on the ground when there is really nothing to show, unless it be perhaps some slight depressions altogether due to the action of water.

They cannot bear the least ridicule which tends to impugn in the slightest degree this absurd belief of theirs; indeed, they become very irate should anyone have the temerity to attempt such a thing.

The aborigines hold it a matter utterly impossible for a white man to understand things which are purely aboriginal; they do not fail to retaliate either when requested to produce their good and bad spirits by asking us to show them ours, of whom we tell them so much. This, of course, we cannot do, any more than they can show us theirs; thus, it is therefore a hopeless task endeavouring to discuss matters having the remotest theological tendency with them; and when (by chance more frequently than design) we have been drawn into arguments of the kind, we have mostly had to acknowledge to ourselves our signal failure, and if we could retreat gracefully from the wordy encounters, we esteemed it something to be particularly grateful for. The aborigines, however, are quite sharp enough to observe our discomfiture on such occasions, however much we may strive to disguise the humiliating fact.

When we endeavour to impress upon their savage minds that our Diety made the whole universe, and every animal on it, man included, they simply say: "Nothing of the kind; it is not so." The world was never made by any

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being; it was not made at all. But if, as you say, one Supreme Being did make it, from whence came the *pimble** from which it was formed? If we make a fire, we must have wood to do it, as nothing is not combustible. If we require a cloak, we must first find the trees containing the *weelangies* (opossums); we must then climb the trees, and cut out *weelangies* from their hollow branches, skin them, and dry the skins; after which we have to scrape them with mussel shells, until they are sufficiently pliant; then we have to sew them together. It is thus very evident that if we had not the *weelangies*, to begin with, we would be unable to perform all these operations, consequently we would not have any cloak, and should therefore sleep cold enough when the *lenangin* (frost) *sines* (bites) in the long, clear, starry nights of winter.

The same thing obtains, too, in whatever we make—canoes, spears, boomerangs, nets, and *waddies*. Before we make any of them, we must have the material to work upon.

We observe also that you white men are placed in very similar circumstances before you make a house, stockyard, or paddock, or any other thing that you require, either on your stations or in your town. You must get the necessary substances to work upon, and we think that if you could communicate with your good Spirit who made the world, and all it contains, out of nothing (as you say you can), that you would get him to make your houses and every other thing you need, instead of having to *give um cheque* to bushmen and carpenters, as we see you doing invariably.

**Pimble*—Earth, ground, soil, or land.*

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You tell us that our good and bad spirits are all gammon, but we do not believe you, because we know better. Your not being a blackfellow is the reason of your lack of knowledge on the subject, and your ignorance induces you to say what you do about it.

You do not like us to tell you that all your accounts of your good and bad spirits, and their various wonderful works, as described by you, are, in our opinions, just so many *lyoors'* stories, well fitted to be told to the *wirtiwoos* by the camp fires to keep them quiet; and we fail to see how you can be astonished at our disbelief either, inasmuch as you have never shown us the performance of any of the great wonders done by *Ngondenout*.

When we go on a hunting or fishing expedition, we usually invoke the aid of *Ngondenout*, not by playing music, singing, and much talk, as you do when you ask a favour from your good Spirit. We simply say: "Pray, let us be successful." And on most occasions we are so. When we chance not to have any luck, however, as will happen now and again, we know that the wicked *Ngambacootchala* has been disturbing the game, or making the water muddy, so that the blackfellows might labour all day, and return to the camp at night with tired limbs, and without anything to fill the bellies of their hungry *lyoors* and squalling *wirtiwoos*.

None of the us aborigines have seen either the good or bad spirits, unless the *bangals* of the tribes, and they can see and converse with them whenever they may have the inclination; and it is from them that we have gained all our knowledge on the subject.

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In this we are not very unlike you whitefellows, as you tell us that the only whites who are able to hold converse with your good and bad spirits, and who have power over the bad one, are the missionaries.*

When the *nowie* (sun) has been very angry in the summer time, parching the grass and drying up the *yallums*† (wells), we have seen the whitefellows going to the house of your good Spirit, not on Sunday either, and on asking them for what purpose they were going on that day, were told it was to pray for rain to come, so that the grass might be refreshed, and spring up green and sweet, and the dried up *yallums* be filled, for the poor, starving sheep, cattle, and kangaroos to feed upon and drink, so that they might stop dying. But, after all that, we did not see the rain come, so all kinds of poor starved beasts continued to die, until one of our *bangals* spoke to *Ngondenout* about it, and cut off some of his own hair, and placed it in the river, after first having oiled it with the kidney fat of a wretched *bukeen*. Then, indeed, but not till then, the big black clouds came up from where the *nowie* goes to sleep, and covered all the face of *tyrilly* (sky) with much blackness, from whence in a short time the rain burst forth; and such a rain it was,

*The aborigines term all clergymen, and those also, whatever may be their status, who strive to impart religious instruction to them, missionaries.

†Yallum.—A small waterhole, or well. The term is usually applied to such as have been made or enlarged from natural crab-holes by the natives, a spot which has a good clay bottom, together with a fairish fall thereto, is the kind generally selected for aboriginal reservoirs. The natives puddle the bottoms and sides of these wells to prevent absorption, and as their positions are usually of a low-lying character, there is in most cases an abundant growth of polygonum, which, in a considerable measure, lessens the evaporation which the summer sun would induce. G

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all the *pimble* became so soft, that the poor starved kangaroos and cattle sank down to their bellies, and were unable to get up again, and so died in their tracks.

The cracked and dried-up *yallums* were filled to over flowing, and all the drooping trees and herbage, which had so nearly died from the effects of scorching rays of the angry sun, grew fresh once more, and all the land became green and beautiful. Thus what your missionaries with their music and talk altogether failed in, our *bangals* achieved at once through our good *Ngondenout.*

From the foregoing the reader can easily divine the difficulties and obstacles the missionaries and clergymen have to encounter in their endeavours to bring these poor savages to a sense of their utter heathenism. Their logic is simple even to childishness, but notwithstanding this fact it is most difficult to combat (baby logic and accompanying cross-questioning have posed most men some time or other in their lives); in fact, it is impossible in many instances to do so. It is only by giving them intellectual culture equal to that enjoyed by mediocre civilisation that they can be made to understand the utter fallaciousness of the faith which they place in their spirits and the truth and beauty of the Christian religion as accepted by so many thousands of earnest professors.

To endeavour to impart such mental culture as we here speak of, however, to the adult aboriginal would be a very hopeless task indeed; therefore it is only in the proper training of the children that anything like a good result can be looked for, and their inherent erratic nature will

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always be a sad stumbling block in the way even of these means.

They have implicit belief in another spirit called *Konikatnie*, whose habitat is in the profound depths of the lakes and waterholes, or else in the dark, deep eddies of the rivers, from whence he only occasionally rises, and then only when he has a mission of evil on hand. The mere fact of his crossing the vision of any blackfellow (not being a *bangal*) is sudden death, so that unless it be the *bangals* no one can speak of him from personal observation.

If a blackfellow suddenly disappear from his tribe through being assassinated by some lurking foe, and his end is never discovered, by reason of the murderers having successfully hidden the body, the fatal presence of *Konikatnie* is unhesitatingly credited with the disappearance. The matter is therefore not inquired into to any great extent, but is merely put down as a tribal loss, and so forgotten.

The *bangals* duly impress upon their people the folly of too closely criticising the actions of what are even only supposed to pertain to the water spirit, as he is most impatient as regards interference, and entirely unforgiving.

It does occasionally happen that some too curious member of the tribe is caught prying rather closer into the mysteries of *bangalism* than the professor thereof has any thought of allowing. This always gives mortal offence; in fact, the death of the offender is the only means by which it can be wiped out; therefore the *bangal* lies in wait for the offender, and slays him by strangulation, which to the aborigines tells no tales as to the manner of his death. Of course the

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sight of *Konikatnie* is the cause to which the death is assigned.

Every now and again a *bangal* will disappear from the camp, and remain absent for many days together, and when he returns his eyes will be bleared and bloodshot, and his opossum cloak rank and covered with the miry ooze of the river. On these occasions he is full of wondrous tales of his adventures at the bottom of the river whilst being hospitably entertained by his friend the *Konikatnie*, and no matter how highly coloured the stories may be, or how glaringly patent the falsehoods are with which he duly embellishes them, his wide-mouthed, greedy audiences give implicit credence to every marvel.

The province of *Konikatnie* is to keep guard during the hours of darkness, when sleep weighs heavy on the eyelids of those whose turn it is to keep a vigilant watch, lest the stealthy footsteps of a vile *bukeen* should steal into the slumbering camp and extract the kidney fat of some oblivious victim.* The task thus assigned to this spirit is rather a singular one considering the fatal effects of even a chance meeting with him, but so it is nevertheless.

When a poor victim to the vile *bukeen* is found stark, with the fat excised from his kidneys as the morning sun wakes the sleeping camp to consciousness, whatever *bangal* chances to be in the camp immediately begins to vituperate the whole tribe for having done something to rouse the ire of the water spirit, who, in consequence thereof, allowed

*Prior to the advent of Europeans, and even for many years after that event, all the native tribes made a practice of keeping sentinels to guard the slumbering camps, and these watchmen frequently lacked the necessary vigilance they were expected to display, as many a bloody midnight slaughter has sorrowfully proved.

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the bloody-minded *bukeen* to enter the camp unseen and successfully carry away the treasured kidney fat of their brother wherewith to lubricate himself, thereby adding the strength that was his victim's to his own vile person, besides depriving the tribe of one of its valuable members. Sometimes a *bukeen wortongie* (savage blackfellow) is found dead within a short distance of the camp, with no visible sign as to how he came by his end; therefore as a matter of course *Konikatnie* gets the credit of having slain him with one of his not-to-be-encountered glances. Great rejoicings ensue accordingly, accompanied by the usual quantum of tongue clucking when the aboriginal mind is in high glee. Besides that, many laudatory ejaculations are passed on the water spirit for his vigilant protection. In these cases the *bangal* present at the time takes very good care to confirm their belief in every possible manner, although more than likely it was he himself who had assassinated the wily *bukeen*. It is probable that whilst prowling about (as it is the custom of these medicine men to do) the bangal had opportunely caught sight of the stealthy *bukeen* lying *perdue*, awaiting an opportunity in all probability for the achievement of no very good purpose, becoming the victim, however, instead of the aggressor, as the discovering *bangal* crept from bush to bush, or wriggled himself like some hideous overgrown snake through the waving grass until within pouncing distance, when, with the fatal velocity of the reptile which we have used in illustration, he darted upon the fated *bukeen*, and had him strangled* almost before he had time to struggle.

*Strangling, or garotting, is a favourite method of assassination with the aborigines, more especially if it should be possible for an outcry to bring aid.

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After one of these successful assassinations, when all the members of the tribe have returned to the camp for the night, the *bangal* carries the body of the dead *bukeen* to where it is certain to be discovered soon; in all probability, indeed, he feigns an excuse to send some one off in the direction of the dead *bukeen*, when, of course, discovery ensues.

The *bangals* are quite wise enough to be aware of the value of these legerdemain kind of tricks in keeping up their prestige in the tribes; therefore they never by any chance fail to put them in practice whenever a favourable opportunity occurs.

CHAPTER XII.

OF THEIR *loondthals* (HUTS), AND MODE OF CONSTRUCTION; THE COINCIDENCES EXISTING BETWEEN PRE-HISTORICAL MAN AND THESE ABORIGINES, AS SHOWN BY VARIOUS IMPLEMENTS, &C.

It is just possible, by the stretch of a very fertile imagination to assign the name of village to an assemblage of aboriginal huts, but such a liberty with the English language could only be permitted to one possessing a highly poetical organisation, as a number of these habitations gathered together in one spot is merely an encampment, and one of the very rudest too.

There is never the slightest attempt at order in the arrangement or placing of these primitive defences against the weather, each one being erected according to the necessity

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fancies of the builder or intending occupant, the only rule observed being that the back of each *loondthal* faces the windward. In this matter, though, they merely display the same instinctive promptings which are to be seen every day amongst the lower orders of creation, as even a sheep will select the lea side of a bush to make its lair in severe weather. All aboriginal *loondthals* are constructed after one fashion, which three sides of a bee hive, with the fourth lacking, very aptly illustrates.

In cold, rough weather the huts are made of bark, placed over a light framework of poles, all the top ends thereof resting together in a forked pole, which latter divides the front or open space of the habitation into two equal parts. Should bark be difficult to procure, the framework is covered with boughs or coarse grass, so as to be impervious to any moderate rain, but in boisterous, bitter weather these offer but a sorry protection against the elements.

During the warm and mild weather each family merely puts a few boughs in a semicircular form round the fire, and this is done more with the view of preventing the fire from being blown about by the wind than for any shelter which they are supposed to afford.

The building of the *loondthals* fall entirely upon the shoulders of the women—that is to say, any men having women folks in their families would disdain to aid in the erection of their dwellings. With the enforced bachelors, and such youths as club together, the matter is very different. They, of course, have to build their own huts, as well as do every other domestic duty for themselves.

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When a man has two wives many quarrels arise between them on those hut building occasions. We remember seeing a dispute between two ladies of one lord over the erection of a *loondthal*, which all the husband's marital authority failed to accommodate. It therefore culminated in a fair stand-up fight, yamsticks being the weapons used, and their method of using them is no child's play either, as they lay on with all their might; so in this instance broken and gory heads were soon visible. After a very fierce encounter one gave in beaten, and the construction of the *loondthal* went on to completion, after which, however, a wordy phase of the disagreement supervened, until their long tongues and vituperative expletives fairly roused the angry passions of their lord and master (who was seated between the dark-skinned combatants) till his savage nature could no longer bear the infliction; therefore he jumped up and caught hold of the centre pole, to which he gave a sudden jerk, and thus let the whole fabric down on the heads of his rival dearies, thereby putting a climax to their clatter. Satisfied with the result so suddenly achieved, he walked off to a neighbouring *loondthal*, where he passed the time in pleasant aboriginal gossip until his termagant helpmates had re-erected his dwelling and got rid of their bad blood, by means of the healthy and arduous occupation which their husband had so unceremoniously thrust upon them.

There are neither castes nor grades amongst these people of any kind, all being equal in the matter of social status. This being so, there is not any cogent enough reason to cause one hut to be made more pretentious than another, as

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would most undoubtedly be the case did gradations of rank obtain amongst them, nor do they possess any traditions tending to show that there ever existed a better, or indeed any other, order of architecture than the very primitive style which is now, and, as far as can be ascertained, always has been followed by the whole of the aboriginal tribes of the Australian Continent. They are a people who seem to have come to a standstill in some remote age, and who remain in the same fixed groove, even to the present day, thus positively nullifying the old and accepted axiom, "That which is not moving forwards must necessarily be retrograding."

In the history of the colony so far nothing in the shape of remains have been discovered denoting the former existence of a higher order of men than is seen in the present low type, notwithstanding the wide area of country which has been turned over whilst searching for auriferous deposits. Properly considering this important fact, it is but fair to suppose that these people are descended from a primitive race, and that that race was either a separate creation or a family who, in the long-forgotten past, had been driven away by adverse winds from the coasts of their own country, off which they might have been engaged fishing, when the wind arose which carried them to Australia.

Our inclination certainly tends towards the latter theory, by reason of the stone axes, spear barbs, and kitchen middens* of these aborigines being precisely similar to those of the primitive races which flourished in the pre-

*Kitchen midden: Refuse heaps, blackfellows' ovens. All these names signify the same accumulation of domestic *debris*.

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historic ages.* Of course we do not mean to imply that the people from whom these aborigines have descended were driven half way round the globe by adverse winds and currents, until the Australian Continent stayed their further progress. But this we do say, the only arts these Australian aborigines possess, whereby they are enabled to fashion their weapons and other implements, seem to have prevailed in Europe when pre-historic man preyed upon the cave lion, the cave bear, and the woolly rhinoceros; for side by side, with the bones of these primeval artificers, the stone axes, the arrow barbs, and the kitchen middens, have been discovered, thus displaying, if not a decided affinity, a marked similarity, in the long-extinct pre-historic races of Europe, to the existing aboriginal races of Australia; but whether the Australians are actually remnants of the same creation to which the extinct races of Europe belonged, or not, is scarcely in our province to say in any definite manner. We merely place these few analagous points *in juxta* position, because of the remarkable coincidence thereof.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF THE HONESTY OF THE ABORIGINES, THEIR FREEDOM FROM HABITS OF PILFERING, &c. OF MURDER, AND ITS PUNISHMENT.

As a rule the habits of the aborigines are so just and upright as regards *meum* and *tuum*, at all events, as far as members of their own tribes and their property is con-

*See M'Causland's *Adam and the Adamites.*

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cerned, that law is an institution perfectly unknown to them, and never by any chance required; consequently, they do not possess any courts of justice, nor have they any laws by which they are kept honest. Of course, the appropriating of goods belonging to tribes with which they are at variance is deemed laudable in the extreme; therefore, opportunities for such acts of abstraction are never allowed to pass unutilised. There are, 'tis true, odd evasions, when the strong pilfers from the weak, even amongst themselves, and laugh at their dupes, too, should they feel aggrieved enough at the unlicensed appropriation to offer any demur. Such cases, however, are of very rare occurrence, and are limited to thefts of the pettiest description, such as a coveted piece of wood for the making of a weapon, or a portion of cooked fish, which the owner had carefully put aside for further consumption. These, and similar cases to these, the reader can readily see are but mild forms of stealing, and can scarcely be classed under the generic term of dishonesty.

The aborigines not having any courts of justice, as a natural consequence the lawyer element does not obtain amongst them, nor have they any judges or patriarchs to whom disputed points can be referred; but, for all this, they manage to exist in (for savages), a fairish manner.

They do not consider any offence criminal, unless it be that of murder; and when such has been perpetrated, the whole tribe sits in judgment upon the culprit. One of the old men generally prosecutes in these cases. However, the legal acumen required under the circumstances is of the smallest, because as a rule the culprit acknowledges his crime, and the tribe merely assemble to hear any extenua-

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ting plea which he may have to offer. Should the prisoner's plea be of no avail, and his crime be adjudged worthy of punishment, he is straightway condemned to stand up as a target, within easy spearing distance, and there to remain, perfectly nude, with only a simple shield for protection, for a space of about twenty minutes, whilst the young men of the tribe essay their marksmanship. The dexterity, however, usually displayed by such criminals in turning aside the spears of their assailants by the simple aid of the shield is truly marvellous, and in most instances brings their persons through the trying ordeal in safety, with perhaps the exception of a few flesh wounds, which are nearly always in the right arm, between the elbow and the point of the shoulder. It is only when the ordeal is too long drawn out, and the dexter arm becomes fatigued in consequence, and therefore unable to wield the shield with the necessary activity and precision, that a fatal result ever ensues. The running of this gauntlet is of frequent occurrence, as the reader may easily surmise, when we tell him that about every fifth man has, some time or other of his life, killed a fellowman.

After a culprit has passed through one of these trying ordeals scatheless, he is received again by his fellows as though he were as free from guilt as a new-born infant; in fact, we are inclined to believe that he is held in higher estimation than ever by reason of the dexterity which brought him so safely through the supreme trial.

In the absence of courts, lawyers, and other civilising institutions, gaols or other contrivances for securing offenders would be out of place; besides, in their code of

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ethics, there is not any crime sufficienty heinous to warrant confinement, unless it be that of murder, and in that case the trial takes place immediately upon the discovery of the crime. In most cases of the kind, too, the murderer voluntarily gives himself up to be judged.

During our long experience amongst the aboriginal tribes, only one instance has come under our notice of a murderer endeavouring to evade the penalty of his crime by flight; and his endeavour, most wonderful to relate, was in every way successful, for he contrived to ingratiate himself into the favorable notice of a tribe at enmity with his own, by whom he was much thought of and admired. His adoption as a member of the tribe took place ere he had been many days amongst them, after which, as a matter of course, he was safe enough as far as any fear of his being given up to aboriginal justice was concerned.

This red-handed vagabond in after years became the leader of every kind of mischief that was perpetrated on the stock, or persons of those who took up country on the hunting grounds of his adopted tribe in the earlier days of the colony.

His vagabond career, however, was fitly and very abruptly terminated at last by the aboriginal police. These police in charge of a European commandant had been sent by the Government of the day out to the border districts with the view of keeping the wild blacks in some kind of check, making their head-quarters in the vicinity of Swan Hill, on the Murray River, from whence they patrolled the country in all directions. The natives, in their semi-civilised character, used to come to the camp of the police

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upon occasion, until they and the police became somewhat friendly, so much so indeed that the latter frequently joined in the fishing parties of the natives without in any way clashing. One day, however, when the police camp had been left in the charge of only one policeman, two or three of the blacks came about, one of whom was the renegade vagabond in question; after staying about the camp for a little time, they induced the policeman caretaker to go fishing with them, which he readily agreed to, starting off with them in all good faith. The pseudo fishing party, after getting about half-a-mile from the police camp, and whilst in the middle of a dense bed of reeds, caught hold of the too-unsuspecting aboriginal trooper, threw him to the ground, where he was firmly held by two of the party until the renegade had excised the poor fellow's kidney fat. After the performance of this ruthless cruelty they started off in haste, leaving their poor mutilated victim to die unattended mid the reeds. Fortunately, however, the butchered trooper had sufficient vitality left to enable him to crawl (although in the acutest agony) to the camp, where, before he died, he gave an account of the murderous assault, together with a clear description of the perpetrators.

But a short space of time elapsed after the recital of this diabolical outrage ere most of the native troopers had started in a body on the trail of the murderers. They soon discovered where the villains had crossed the river, and made but very small bones of crossing after them—horses, accoutrements, and all—taking all sorts of care during the passage not to allow their ammunition to get wet.

After a ride of about ten miles the encampment of the

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villainous blacks came in sight, and just as they were about to enter it, one of the troopers discried the renegade creeping away from the camp through the tall saltbushes, like some great emu. Pursuit was soon given by the troop, which, when the renegade perceived, he stood up from his bounding position and ran, as only an aboriginal can run, when dear life is the guerdon; but his running, swift as it was on this occasion, availed him but little, as the foremost trooper, even though going at full gallop, took aim across his bridle arm, and sent a bullet crashing through the skull of the dastardly savage. As he reeled to the earth a victorious shout from the troop echoed again amongst the trees as they rushed up pell mell to their prostrate foe; they threw themselves in a crowd from their horses, and with flashing sabres smote the carcase of the villainous renegade until it was reduced to pieces not larger than a hand's breadth, deeming that proceeding, butchery though it was, but a fitting caution to all coveters of other people's kidney fat.

When a trial for murder has resulted in the condemnation of the criminal, the capital ordeal follows immediately upon the passing of the sentence, in the presence of all the assembled tribe, including sexes as well as children. In short, it takes the form of a high holiday spectacle, wherein much delight is experienced; much criticism, laudatory and the contrary, obtains as a well or ill-thrown cast is made. Remarks also on the dexterous use of the shield by the culprit are freely interjected, culminating in a spontaneous shout, when a well-aimed spear is caught and smashed on the shield.

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The most patriarchal aborigine in the tribe is selected to act as umpire on these occasions, and, in the absence of timepieces, the twenty minutes' ordeal is either lengthened or curtailed by him, according to the amount of interest that he takes in the proceedings. In general the ordeal lasts a good long twenty minutes, to which the culprit could readily testify; as in most cases, he is on the very verge of fainting, by reason of the continued and violent exertion necessary upon those occasions, ere he gets notice that his penalty has been duly paid. When this good news reaches him, he, with much gladness, throws himself prone to the ground, panting and exhausted; thereupon one of the softer sex belonging to him—wife, sister, or ward—goes up to the prostrate and quivering ordealist, and forthwith proceeds to dry the fervid perspiration, with which his weary body is plentifully suffused, speaking such words of comfort to him the while as can only emanate from one of Eve's sympathising daughters.

Meanwhile the spectators have all dispersed by twos and threes to their usual avocations, commenting freely upon the bravery and expertness displayed by him who had successfuly undergone the supreme trial.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF THE ABORIGINAL DOG. THE GREAT AFFECTION THE NATIVE WOMEN HAVE FOR THESE ANIMALS. HOW UTILISED. OF FLEAS AND OTHER PARASITES.

The only animal the aborigines possess in a state of domesticity is the indigenous dog—*Canis familiaris*

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Australis—and of these quadrupeds they keep perfect packs. The aborigines use them for running down game, and although not by any means particulary speedy of foot, are found very useful in following wounded animals, not sufficiently maimed to allow of their being easily overtaken by the hunters; besides, their sense of smell is very keen, thus enabling hunters to get quickly up with the game they are in pursuit of, which in the absence of the dog, would be a work of considerable time, as well as much labour.

In the cold nights also, these animals are of infinite service to their owners, as they tend in no inconsiderable degree to keep up the temperature in the *loondthals*, where they sleep in common with their masters. This kind of bedding is much affected by the old women, who in consequence value the dogs inordinately, and woe betide the man, either white or black, who should by chance or otherwise, destroy a dog the property of a *galour* (old woman), for she would surely brain him if possible with her yamstick; or at least give him such a filthy slanging as would put to shame the vilest tongued fishwife that ever carried a basket.

We remember on one occassion, in the old bye-gone days of the colony, when a pack of these wretched curs, pertaining to an aboriginal encampment close to an out station hut, played the very mischief amongst a flock of fattening wethers, which were almost in marketable condition; as a matter of course we felt considerably annoyed because of the occurence, and in very palpable terms made the natives aware of the fact. The men of the tribe saw, and acknowledged the harm which the dogs had done to the sheep, and by way of making some kind of *amende*, empowered us to

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poison the mangey mongrels, at the same time giving us many cautions about the *galours*, lest during the distribution of the baits, they should fall upon, and maltreat us, with their potent yamsticks.

Having the terror of the yamsticks when wielded by irate *galours* brought thus vividly before us, ere making a start for the camp with the bag of poisoned baits, we provided ourselves with a gun for protection, not that we had any intention of using it on the angry old women, but we were quite aware that such a weapon in the hands of a white man, even if they knew it was unloaded, was more powerful to keep them in check than any other argument which could be adduced.

In due time we reached the camp, with a bag containing forty baits; at a glance the old dames knew that the bag held poison, therefore commenced incontinently to call their *wirrangins* (dogs) into the *loondthals*, thinking thereby to prevent us from having a chance to administer the baits, and when we told them, that we had come for the express purpose of killing their dogs because of the havoc made by them amongst the sheep, they actually laughed us to scorn in concert. In arguing the point with them, they did not give us a ghost of a chance; their concerted volubility being greater than any one man could pretend to cope with, even although backed up by the possession of a gun. We were nearly beginning to look upon our errand, as a very profitless undertaking indeed, when old *Pinbocoroo* crossed the lagoon upon which the camp was situated, and stalked majestically into the middle of the billingsgating *galours*. His opportune arrival upon the exciting scene, was hailed by us with

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considerable pleasure, and the heated dark skinned dames also seemed to think his presence a fortunate occurrence, as they one and all, immediately began to pour forth their great grievance to him. He however soon brought matters to a very definite conclusion by commanding the oldest *galour* in the tribe (poor old *Nip Nip*), to take the baits from us, one at a time, and straightway give them to such dogs as we should point out. When the earnestness of what the old king said became apparent, the noise in the camp changed from angry clatter to direful woe, in the midst of which, not daring to refuse, old *Nip Nip* came meekly to us for the baits, which she administered as we desired. After concluding this very satisfactory piece of business we left the camp mid a shower of the most opprobrious anathemas that it was ever our fortune to have well hammered on our sorely tired tympanums.

For many weeks after this poisoning episode, the *galour* portion of the tribe grieved abundantly; mourning at morning and eventide over their canine companions; nothing could give them comfort for their loss, the much coveted tobacco even, failed to bring smiles of the faintest on their grief-worn features; some of them indeed went to the extent of cauterising their wrinkled bodies in the plentitude of their sorrow. For many years afterwards, this canine massacre was vividly remembered by the *galour* mind; even when wishing old *Nip Nip* a final good bye, and whilst her rheumy eyes were welling over with genuine tears, because of our departure, she could not help referring to the day of the dog slaughter, by the side of the lagoon.

In rough cold winter weather (which is the Australian

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aborigines' *bete noir*), when hunting is out of the question and other sources of food unobtainable, unless by the exercise of much labour and exposure, these dingoes are converted into food, and really when cooked in one of their ovens these dishes of dog are tempting enough to look at, and there is small doubt about their tasting well, that is of course reasoning from the *gusto* with which the natives consume them; we, however, never had sufficient courage to partake of this dog meat, but we have seen plenty of it taken out of the ovens, which we must say always looked as white and delicate as any chicken.

A puppy dingo when in good condition is esteemed quite a luxury, therefore an aborigine having such a dish for dinner fancies that he is faring most sumptuously. It is not by any means an uncommon thing for a *galour* to have as many as two dozen dogs, and it is certainly a variety to find one possessing fewer in number than half a dozen. It can thus, from this fact, be easily imagined what enormous dimensions the packs assume when all the members of a tribe are assembled in one camp. On those occasions the numbers are far beyond the belief of people unaccustomed to the habits of the aborigines, and as their owners never by any chance think of providing them with food, as a natural consequence they fall foul of any sheep or weak calves with which they may come in contact, thus entailing endless feuds between the squatter and the *galours* of the tribe.

When a tribe is encamped close to a station these packs of dogs are an endless plague, for besides the injury which they invariably inflict upon the flocks in the vicinity, they

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infest the shepherds' dogs with mange (that nasty disease being a portion of their normal condition), and as it is a virulent form of the complaint from which they suffer, common remedies fail to combat it with any degree of success. Then the abominable noise at night, when they commence to howl, is surely something to remember when once heard; a feline serinade is a trifle by comparison, and that is allowed by every one to be sufficiently horrible to rouse the ire of the most patient.

In connection with these dogs, and the habit the aborigines have of making bedfellows of them, there is one feature which we think both striking and peculiar, and that is this fact:—Until the advent of Europeans these people had never seen or heard of fleas, although of the other kinds of parasites common to the filthy portion of civilisation they possess legion. These latter have been a continual source of annoyance to the natives from the remotest period, and althongh they have waged a continuous war against them, even from one generation to another, still the filthy pests have held their own.

With the exception of the hair on the face and head the natives remove every thing of a capillary nature from the body, even to the covering of the *pudenda*; this operation is effected by means of a red hot coal, and is therefore both slow and disagreeable; this tedious and unpleasant process, however, is borne without demur, as it is performed with the view of ridding themselves of the parasitic pests, or at least keeping the interesting insects within reasonable bounds. Besides these measures they manipulate each others heads, as, 'tis said, is the habit of

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monkeys for a similar purpose; still with all that, the poor natives continue persistently to scratch, which indubitably induces a creepy feeling of disgust to any cleanly-inclined beholder. These indigenous parasites could be borne by the aborigines pretty well as ever successive singeing afforded some measure of respite; the fleas, however, are quite beyond their patience, as respite from them there is none, and they cannot lessen their numbers do whatsoever they may towards that end. Their numberless dogs provide the very best of breeding grounds, and their opossum cloaks afford them harbour which cannot be excelled.

CHAPTER XV.

TREATING OF THEIR GEOGRAPHICAL AND ASTRONOMICAL THEORIES. OF THE SEASONS. THEIR METHOD OF MARKING TIME. THEIR HAZINESS IN COMPUTING NUMBERS. THEIR UTTER WANT OF COMPARISON.

The ideas possessed by the aborigines are both crude and vague in the extreme.

They imagine the earth to be one vast plain without limit, covered with forests in certain localities, whilst others are destitute of timber; mountain ranges here and there, sometimes continuous, and in other places isolated, with solitary hills dotted about, showing former encampments of the *Ngoudenout*. These, together with occasional rivers, creeks, springs, and lakes, when all summed up together, is about the extent of aboriginal geographical knowledge.

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They consider the Murray River the largest flowing volume of water in the world, and that it is without either beginning or end. They further deem the water of the Murray the sweetest, and the fish thereof the best and fattest in the universe. The sea is only considered by them to be an immense lake of *cawie kayanie* (salt water). They have not the remotest notion how or why it ebbs and flows; nor have they the faintest idea of its vastness, or that Australia is merely one of its countless islands.

Their total ignorance of these matters is most singular, as we would have imagined that their *ngallawatows* (postmen) would at least (in their continual intercourse with the various tribes with whom their bartering proclivities brought them in contact) have gained some notions on the subject less crude than those which they possess.

In astronomical subjects, however, their annals are less barren, but this fact does not offer much room for astonishment, as their continuous outdoor existence brings them daily, as well as nightly, face to face with the celestial luminaries, and as they are entirely dependent upon the sun for light, whilst foraging for their required sustenance and for guidance during their manifold wanderings, they note his motions and aspects with as much interest and anxiety as mariners do.

As a matter of course they imagine that it is the sun which travels from east to west, and so causes daylight and darkness as well as the changes of ths season; they have not the least idea that it is the earth's motions which effect these changes, and when we have endeavoured to explain these phenomina to them they have gravely shaken their

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heads and fancied us more than a little given to stories of a *Baron Munchausen* character. This sceptical feeling is induced in a great measure, we imagine, by reason of the poetical licence which, as a rule, is generally indulged in by themselves, and they, knowing that they are highly endowed with the romancist furor, imagine that white men lack probity to an equal extent; therefore, it is that they take whatever we tell them of a wonderful nature, or in any way beyond aboriginal ken, with many grains of salt.

After having explained and discussed some such subject to them we have overheard them whilst seated round the fire at night talking the subjects over amongst themselves, and the fashion in which we, together with our elaborate theories were handled, was anything but flattering to our *amour propre*. Their powers of ridicule and their fine sense thereof are unmistakeably keen, and they use and enjoy them with infinite zest, and upon every favourable occasion which chance throws in their way.

They imagine the sun to be a large fire, kindled in the *tyrrily* (sky) by *Nyoudenout* daily, accounting for its origin in the following fashion:—

In the long past and forgotten times the only light which shone upon the world came from the moon and stars only. At that time there were not any aborigines on the earth, it being inhabited by beasts and birds alone.

One day during this semi-dark period an emu and a native companion quarrelled very violently, and the latter, whilst in the very height of his passion, threw one of the simple-minded emu's eggs up to the vast *tyrrily*, where it broke on a large pile of firewood, which *Ngoudenout* had seemingly

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prepared to that end; the concussion of the egg when it came in contact with the heap of wood produced spontaneous fire, and the whole world was incontinently flooded with light, *Ngoudenout* immediately saw the great advantage that this light would be to the dwellers upon the earth, and he thereupon vowed that the earth would never more be left in a continual state of darkness as it had been up to that time, for he would light the fire that seemed so good every day, and the vow then made by the good spirit had never been broken, even to the present time, which is sufficient warrant to the whole aboriginal race for its continuing for evermore.

They prove this quaint theory of theirs by pointing out that in the morning, ere the fire is well kindled, the *nowie* (sun) diffuses but little warmth, as the day advances, however, the heat becomes greater and greater until noon, when its fervency culminates; from that time the warmth gradually lessens as the fire becomes more and more reduced, until evening, when the pile is completely burnt out; then darkness covers the face of the land; but during the darkness *Ngoudenout* has his attendant spirits employed preparing a fresh pile of wood for next day's consumption. The moon, they imagine to be composed of some shiny substance, such as a large slice of mica, or Muscovy glass, and in order to prove that in this matter they are also correct they hold that there is not the very slightest degree of warmth emanatting from the *mitian* (moon), that it merely glitters and shines coldly, and that a large piece of *calkoo ban*, blackfellow's bones (which is the aboriginal for mica) would do the same; indeed, they illustrate this theory by holding a piece of mica

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in the rays of the sun or within the influence of fire light, and triumphantly ask whether better proof could be. It is only wasted time to make them understand that the mica possesses no light or glitter of its own, but merely has the property of reflecting the light which proceeds from some other body, as the sun or fire light. They sagely shake their heads at what they deem a very clumsy endeavour to shake the belief which has endured, amongst them, for generations beyond number, and wisely ejaculate—"Oh! too much you white fellow. Plenty *bumhammn wirrimpoola* (stupid ears), you!" According to their computation the moon lasts as many nights as three times the number of their fingers, or thirty days; they compare it to an opossum cloak after this fashion:—

When a native has a rug to make he does not wait until he has acquired a sufficient number of skins to complete it, for as soon as he has two or three skins he sews them together and wears them mantilla fashion across his shoulders, going on day by day adding thereto as he procures the skins, but wearing it all the time, until it becomes a finished cloak. Shortly after the completion (in fact frequently before that achievement) of the cloak, as a matter of course it generally begins to fray at the edges, until by use, like the moon, it is worn completely out, necessitating the commencement of a new one after the same manner.

According to the mythology of these people, *panma-rootoortie* (pleiads) is composed of seven *mooroongoors* (young virgins), being sisters, who were translated to their proud position in their sky because the whole of them, from the eldest even to the youngest born, retained their virgi

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purity until the advent of grey hairs. When *Nyoudenout* with unqualified pleasure, saw that these virgins had attained the meridian of life and still remained chaste he deemed them far too good to associate longer wiih their dissolute tribe, therefore he forthwith translated them to the sky, where he fixed them, in order that they might ever after be enabled to see the actions of their heretofore sisterhood, and so be ever ready to guide them straight should temptation induce any of them to swerve from the path of rectitude; besides, they would be to the *lyoors*, as is a beacon on a rough coast to the hardy mariners who tempt the deep, as they could always see them by looking upwards, and could therefore be scarcely guilty of any gross indiscretion in the very faces of the *panmarootoortie*, whose lives whilst on earth were without stain or reproach.

Thus it comes that this group of stars is more revered by the aborigines than any other constellation in the heavens.

Boorongcortchal (Venus) is sent in the early morning by *Ngoudenout* to let the world know that he is about to light up the glowing *nowie* so that his black people may prepare for their daily avocations before the crimson emanations tinge the eastern horizon with *jinky* (red). In the evening this planet is termed *worka worka*, at which time his forte is the well-being of gestation, whether of man or beast. Therefore, pregnant women when they observe him bright and unclouded, looking calmly down on the earth, like a miniature moon, imagine that their wishes (whatever they may be) with regard to the expected offspring will be granted them. On the other hand, however, should he be

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perceived when dimmed and diminished, by reason of the intervention of a hazy or murky atmosphere, the fate of the unborn will be a fitful one; therefore the prospective mothers are elated or depressed accordingly.

They do not possess any ceremony or incantations wherewith to propitiate this birth-governing *worka worka*, even although they deem his influence all-powerful in the making or marring the fortunes of the unborn.

The aborigines divide the year as Europeans do, viz., into four seasons.

Bakroothakootoo (spring) is defined by the advent of succulent herbage, upon which the *Ngarrow* (Bustard) loves to graze, by the pairing of birds and consequent egg harvest, and by the emergence of the young kangaroo from forth the parent pouch.

Kurtie (summer) is distinguished by a general display of flowers and by their gradually changing into seed vessels and fruit, and by the brown tints assumed by the ripening grasses, together with the flight of all fledgelings from their parents' nests, and the abandonment for good of the maternal pouch by the young kangaroo.

Weat (autumn) is known by the cottony gossamar substance which floots about in the atmosphere during that season in this colony, by the hybernating of snakes and other reptiles which then usually seek out their quarters for their winters repose.

Myangie (winter) begins with the first frosts and continues until the mild lengthening days of spring puts it to flight. There is little chance of this season passing unnoticed, as the cold, wet, dreary days thereof are frequently

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borne by the poor aborigines whilst in a state of semi-starvation as regards both food and warmth; therefore the first indication of spring makes them jubilant to a degree, as then the near approach of food in abundance and of all kinds seems tolerably tangible, and no longer mere visions of the brain, induced by taking infrequent as well as insufficient meals of very indigestable food.

They have no single term which includes all the seasons such as our year. Their method of computing time is by *nowies* (suns or days), *mittians* (moons), and *kurties* (summers), but having nothing save oral records their data, as may well be supposed, is oftentimes very far out in point of time, therefore the reliance to be placed on any dates which they may give with regard to occurrences, if even not more than a very few years back, can only be of the smallest.

After getting beyond twenty or, at the most, twenty-five in numbers, they become very hazy, and to get themselves out of the fog they say *co co* (many), which may mean ten, or five hundred, or, in fact, any other quantity, and their is no means short of actual investigation whereby it is possible to know whether the greater or lesser number is meant when an aboriginal makes use of the term *co co*.

The entire absence of the organ of comparison in the native character tends very much to the creation of this difficulty, as, for example, ask a blackfellow which one of the two flocks of parrots is the largest, and his reply will be —"Two-fellow *co co*." This same reply will be given in every other matter of comparison which may come under observation, whether of numbers or quality, only in the latter *talko* (good) will be substituted for *co co*.

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CHAPTER XVI.

THEIR IGNORANCE OF INTOXICATING FLUIDS. OF A SWEET BEVERAGE WHICH THEY MANUFACTURE FROM *taarp*.* *Taarp* AND HOW PROCURED. OF THEIR SONGS AND CORROBERIES.

Unlike most savage races these aborigines do not compound intoxicating drinks of any kind wherewith to muddle their unsophisticated brains or to induce false spirits ; they, however, make a sweet and luscious beverage by mixing *taarp* with water, and this *taarp* is so highly esteemed by them they will go almost any distance, and put up with endless privations to procure it.

As an instance of the extreme fondness evinced by the aborigines for this sweet, we may say that even those employed on stations who can command abundance of sugar, will throw up their various occupations upon the least hint being promulgated that *taarp* has made its appearance, and walk themselves off with their belonings to the *taarp* grounds. Nothing in the shape of a bribe will tempt them to forego a chance of obtaining *taarp*, and no

**Taarp* is the excrement of a small green beetle wherein the larvæ thereof are deposited. These insects at certain times congregate in myriads and make their deposits on the young shoots of eucalyptus scrub, which has grown up from stumps, being the residue of a previous season's bush fire. The deposits are made in such large quantities that an aboriginal can easily gather forty or fifty pounds weight of it in one day. During the *taarp* season the natives do very little else but gather and consume this substance, and they thrive on it most amazingly. In appearance the *taarp* is not unlike the manna which some of the eucalyptus tribe shed in the summer months. The taste is also something similar, with the addition of a slightly sub-acid flavour. These *taarp* deposits are made in the dry summer weather, and are procurable from their first appearance until the early autumn rains commence, when it is at once all dissolved and washed away.

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matter how urgently their services may be required at the time they will take themselves off all the same, even although there may he a chance of their forfeiting wages already earned by so doing.

It frequently happens that the *taarp* deposit is fifteen or twenty miles away from water (the most arid spots in the locality are the ones usually chosen by the insect, if the young gum-shoots be available), but, notwithstanding the distance and absence of water, every member of the tribe who can crawl at all, including children, start off to the *taarp* field in the jolliest of spirits, carrying all manner of things wherein to pack the expected treasure. Seeing them in their high glee preparing to start on one of these expeditions is a most amusing sight, and conveys to the mind of the observer the impression that he is looking upon the happiest community of people in existence; there is, however, another side to the picture which is the reverse of pleasing, and that is this:—Ere half-a-dozen miles have been travelled by the jolly *taarp*-seekers the frail and weak ones of the party begin to groan and moan as none but aboriginal human nature can; finally, of course, they knock up entirely, and so come to a stand-still, the strong ones however, do not pay the least attention to these laggards, but continue in their course quite nonchalantly.

The willing spirit of the weakly searchers after this aboriginal sweet has to succumb to physical incapacity, therefore they have to sit down in their tracks to recuperate their energies to enable them to return to the camp, from which, of course they feel that they should not have started.

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The strong ones also, who had stepped out so valiantly at the start to the *taarp* field, present a very different appearance on their return, for their high jubilant spirits have quite evaporated by reason of the toil experienced on their weary tramp, and consequently they struggle back to their camp as moody and surly as they well could be, by ones, by twos, and threes, the former number being the most common, surliness not being conducive to social intercourse, and it is only after several hours of sulky rest, together with much gluttony that they can be brought to describe the trip to and the condition of the *taarp* grounds. Notwithstanding the hardship and privations experienced on the first expedition, as soon as ever their aboriginal nature has recovered its normal tone, a fresh excursion is organised similar to the preceding one, with the exception that this time the frail ones and the children remain behind, enjoying the fruits of the first expedition.

For so long as the *taarp* is obtainable these peeple continue day after day to tramp backwards and forwards to the ground where it is produced, and it is only when the rain comes and dissolves it that they leave and return to their usual avocations. Should the *taarp* harvest extend over six or eight weeks, as it does frequently, the blacks become quite fat and sleek, though they partake of very little other food all the time, thus showing how great must be the nutriment contained in this saccharine substance.

Though the natives no not possess any intoxicating beverages of their own manufacture when they become half civilised they soon learn to hold the stimulants common to Europeans in high estimation; therefore, speaking in a

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general way, they are every one drunkards, and that, too, of the very worst type. When under the influence of spirits their savage nature runs riot to a frightful extent; nothing in fact can control it short of solitary confinement. Though one of their greatest antipathies is the lock-up, they will even brave the chance of twenty-four hours of its gloom rather than forego the fiery draught which opportunity may offer to their longing lips.

The poetical faculty is altogether lacking in the aboriginal character, consequently they do not possess any poems, either martial or national, and the absence of sentiment in the intercourse of one sex with another leaves the largest of all poetical fields but a barren waste. Their *tchowies* (songs), to which they dance their *corrobories*, never comprise more than two lines, and even these do not jingle; their measure, however, is always most perfect, and in their dances the time is unexceptionable. As a rule their brief songs have reference either to something good to eat, to some successful midnight fray, or to some grossly lewd subject, and those partaking of the latter nature meet with the greatest appreciation.

Tchowies are not transmitted from one generation to another, because when the maker of a *tchowie* dies all the songs of which he was author are, as it were, buried with him, inasmuch as they, in common with his very name, are studiously ignored from thenceforward, and consequently forgotten.

This custom of endeavouring to forget everything which had been in any way connected with the dead, entirely precludes the possibility of anything of an historical nature

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having existence amongst them, in fact the most vital occurences, if only dating a single generation back, are quite forgotten, that it is say, if the recounting thereof should necessitate the mere mention of a defunct aborigine's name.

These *corroborie*s, with regard to their diversity, are about as meagre as are their *tchowies*. They merely consist of a series of grotesque contortions and coarse postures all, however, requiring considerable muscular exertion in their performance, but, strange as it may seem, their time is always most excellent.

When viewed for the first time a *corroborie* does certainly offer a considerable *quantum* of interest. We, of course, do not mean such as are expressly for display before the "whitefellow," but those which are performed by them in their savage state and purely for their own especial edification. When seen thus for the first time the exhibition is, without the slightest doubt, a very novel one.

We remember on one occasion having to follow up the tracks of a lot of sheep which the blacks had appropriated without having asked permission. After a long weary ride, and just as the sun was about to set, we came in sight of the blacks' camp, and knew that the stolen sheep could not be very far off as their trail, with aboriginal footprints above it, was quite fresh. Being so nearly dark we deemed it prudent to defer recovering the sheep until daylight next morning.

Not long after we had partaken of our bush supper and had arranged our watches for the night, the wind brought the sound of the *corroborie* up to our camp in such a tantalising manner that, as we had nothing particular to do,

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we determined to start forth quietly to within sight of the aboriginal encampment, with the twofold purpose of viewing the *corroboree*, and noticing if possible the whereabouts of the sheep. As the wind was blowing directly from the blacks' camp, and pretty strong at the same time, it was not a work of very great difficulty getting near it unheard; when, however, we had approached within about three hundred yards we deemed it prudent to get upon our hands and knees, and in that position worm ourselves through the long waving grass, as close as prudence would allow. We were beginning to become heartily tired of this mode of progression when, all at once, we found ourselves on the summit of an undulation, at the base of which the blacks camp appeared, brilliantly lighted up. The suddenness of this spectacle bursting upon our vision quite took our breath away, and it was some time before we became collected enough to note calmly that which we had come purposely to observe. We had reached not only to within sight of the savages, but we were quite near enough to hear them speaking plainly. At the moment of our arrival on the crest of the rise there was much talking and laughter going on, the stolen sheep doubtless being the theme.

We had not been viewing the proceedings in the camp long from our recumbent position when the aboriginal foot-lights, or fire, which served the same purpose, were freshened up, and the *lyoors* (who were seated in a semi-circle a short distance from the fires, and whose duties consisted in the orchestral portion of the performance) gave a few spasmodic thuds on the *Mullangies** by way of calling the performers

**Mullangie*, opossum-skin drum. This primitive instrument is formed by merely folding a cloak tightly up into a bunch. It is beaten by the open palm, and when struck emits short, dull thuds, which might issue as well from a much-beaten woolsack.

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to the front; thereupon a hoary-headed ruffian stepped forward, *birraworie** in hands, which he clinked in concert with the *mullangie* thuds, at the same time beginning a *tchowie* in a low monotonous tone, which ere long gradually swelled in volume. At the end of the first bar the *lyoors* chimed in, and the dancers sprang into the lighted space, flourishing their weapons in savage glee as their lithesome legs quivered in time to the savage music. The hoary leader of the band, becoming warm to his work, rushed backwards and forwards along the crescent row of *lyoors*, singing out the *tchowie*, apparently for bare life, while flakes of foam spirted from his lips, as it might do from the mouth of a hunted boar, by reason of his exceeding fervidness. The *lyoors*, taking their time from him, became equally energetic in their performance upon the *mullangies*, and their high, shrill treble, mingling with the leaders bass, made altogether the most hideous accord that it was ever our ill-luck to listen to. Meantime the dancing had become as vehement as the music, for the quivering and writhing of forty pairs of legs, strung up to high pressure by their *tchowie* and its barbarous accompaniments, made such an exhibition as it seldom falls to civilised man's lot now-a-days to witness. The time now became faster and more fast, till at length the motion was altogether so rapid that individual legs could not be distinguished. Looking at the dancers when they had attained to this phase of the corroborie seemed like viewing a monster heap of serpents heaving and coiling together in the throes of mortal agony But, alas!

**Birraworie*, time-sticks. These are made of two sections of wood, ten inches long and two in diameter, hardened by fire; they are held one in each hand, and when struck together give forth a sharp, metallic, ringing sound.

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even aboriginal muscular humanity cannot keep up such high-pressure motion for ever, so, with a deafening clang, produced by the *birrawories* and *mullangies* conjointly, the *tchowie* ceased instantaneously, and the sweltering dancers sank as one man exhausted in their tracks.

This grand finale was just about as much as our nerves could well sustain; therefore, after having noted the position of our abducted sheep, we gladly crawled from the vicinage of the savage dancers and retraced our steps cautiously to our own encampment.

We recovered the sheep next morning, and did not fail whilst doing so to admonish the thieves for the trouble they had given us, as well as for the sheep they had so shamefully maimed, and those they had killed outright and consumed.

When the aborigines steal a number of sheep, if whilst driving them away they should find themselves pursued, they immediately break the legs of a goodly number, knowing right well that those so maimed must be left behind, and will therefore be recoverable after the pursuers have retired with the sound ones. Frequently, too, the blacks, when they have succeeded in getting off with a lot of stolen sheep and have consequently no fear of pursuit, will, to save all further trouble in the matter of shepherding, break the legs of every one close to their camp so that they can slay, frizzle, and eat, with but the merest minimum of exertion.

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CHAPTER XVII.

THEIR LACK OF COMMEMORATIVE MONUMENTS, EVEN THE MOST SIMPLE, TOGETHER WITH THE CAUSE THEREOF. THEIR METHOD OF GENERATING FIRE. OF OPOSSUM CLOAKS AND THEIR MANUFACTURE. OF THE UTILISATION OF GRASS SEEDS, &C.

The continued and persistent endeavour of these people to forget those of their tribes who have paid nature's just debt prevents them from possessing any monuments or other analagous objects wherewith to commemorate particular or striking events. Even the rude cavern common to most uncivilised races is unknown here, but the reason for this is obvious enough. Any such lasting work would, without doubt, have the effect of keeping the memory of those who constructed them, or those whom they were intended to honour, ever present to their descendants, and the avoiding of this is the one thing in which all the aborigines of the colony are unanimous.

The innate terror of death, which the aborigines as a rule possess, gives rise to this peculiar characteristic, besides it is the cause which induces the cowardice so largely found in the aboriginal character, and altogether precludes anything approaching to combinations in their relations with hostile tribes, as (to quote their own adage)—"What would it advantage me if my tribe quite destroyed the *Bukeen*, if I should be killed in the struggle?" Thus it follows that every individual man's *corpus* is every individual man's special care, or, in other words, number one is the aboriginal golden rule.

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Their method of generating fire, we imagine, to belong exclusively to the Australian aboriginal tribes, at least we never heard of the same system being followed by other races. Their *modus operandi* is as follows:—

A hard dry log is selected, having a sun crack in it about half an inch wide at the surface and about an inch and a half in depth, and this crack is filled to within half an inch of the lips with dry grass, well teased out to make it soft. Then the operator, having a piece of dry wood fourteen inches long and from two to three broad, fined down to a blunt edge on one side, holds it by one end in both hands and rubs the blunt edge backwards and forwards across the crack immediately above the part containing the dry grass. At first the rubbing is performed very slowly, but with considerable pressure; as the crack, however, begins to get filled with the filings the rate of motion is increased, until the filings quite fill he crack to the top; then, for the space of half a minute, the rubbing is done so rapidly, the rubbing stick cannot be distinguished. At this stage the operator suddenly pauses, without lifting the rubber from the groove, which by this time he has cut across the crack, and gently fans the filings under the rubber with one hand, and if the smoke continues to ascend the operator knows that the result is satisfactory and that fire has been procured; therefore, with great care, he lifts out the dry grass upon which are the ignited filings (it is these filings which take fire, and not the rubber as many would be inclined to suppose) enveloping them nicely with the grass, waves it gently in the air, and in a short time it bursts into flame.

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The whole operation is most simple, and takes much less time to perform than we have taken to describe it; so easily is it done we many times have had a native do it merely to get our pipe lighted.

The best timber for effecting this purpose is red gum (a eucalyptus), pine, grass-tree, and salt-bush. Those timbers of the eucalyptus family, known by the colonists as box, messmate, and stringy bark, are utterly useless for the purpose of generating fire by friction, but for what reason we cannot tell. We only know that such is the fact, though doubtless it is either for their lacking altogether, or containing too much of some requisite principle, this, however, is a question for chemists to solve.

Should it be necessary to make fire when the timber has been saturated by continued rains the native cuts down the log on which he intends to operate until he has got beyond the saturated portion, then he cuts a groove to take the place of the sun crack, and the rubber is split from the heart of a smaller log to ensure dryness. If it be raining at the time fire is required an opossum cloak is held over the operator until the desired end is achieved.

In the matter of tattooing these people differ considerably from other savage races. The tattooing performed by most savages, more especially the New Zealanders, is more like the marking produced by pricking Indian ink or gunpowder into the skin, as practised by seafaring men, than anything else, whilst the tattooing of these natives is prominent enough, even in the dark. One ornament of this kind, which we have found common to all the aboriginal tribes, is the raising of hard, smooth lumps across the back from the

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point of one shoulder to the point of the other; these lumps graduate from the centre of the back, where they are longest, to each shoulder, where they are shortest. In the centre of an adult's back the lumps are about three inches long, by a thickness in the middle of about three-quarters of an inch, and the short ones on the shoulder are two inches in length, with a diameter in the middle of half an inch. These excressences are ovate in form, and are placed at regular intervals from each other, which when seen at a little distance, looks like a broad ornamental band stretching from shoulder to shoulder. The excrescences do not show any scars, but are perfectly smooth, more so in fact than any other portion of the person, and when seen on a man inclined to be hairy their lack of capillary growth is most peculiar. These tattooings are formed by cutting through the skin and filling up the incisions thus made with opossum fat, previously mixed with fine, wood ashes; the wounds by these means are kept open for several months, and during all that time suppurate and slough considerably, but notwithstanding this fact the wished for excrescences continue to grow. When the growth is deemed sufficient, the fat is applied in a pure state, when, in the absence of the irritating ashes, the wounds soon heal up, and, strange to say, without leaving the faintest trace of scar behind. They also make bands of a similar character, only less in size round the upper portion of the arm, the excressences being parallel with the length of the limb.

The women are not tattooed in any way, this honour being reserved exclusively for the lords of creation. The operation is performed shortly after the attainment of puberty.

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In the making of their opossum cloaks it might be said that they display at least a modicum of taste approaching to the artistic. When an opossum skin has been thoroughly dried and all the fat removed it requires to be scraped to ensure pliancy; this part of the operation is performed by means of sharp-edged mussel-shells, and scraping so performed is generally done so as to represent a pattern of some kind. They succeed in doing this so well that the various portions scraped upon the separate skins join together most accurately when sewn into the rug.

Before the advent of Europeans these cloak patterns usually took a scrolly shape, and striking objects in nature, such as flowers, foliage, or animals, were never copied. Since then, however, we have seen the great glaring designs common to cheap druggists very successfully reproduced, even to the colours. These colours are made by mixing pigments of different shades with fish oil, and laying the shades on the respective portions of the designs requiring them, thus produce an exact counterpart of the copy. Should a rugmaker be entirely lacking in artistic taste he merely scrapes the skin diagonally. When the whole skin has been thus scraped he turns the skin round and again scrapes diagonally, this time, of course, the scraping crosses the lines first made, thus forming a lossenge-shaped design. This latter method, as regards utility, is unequalled by any other, for thus treated, if the pattern be a small one, the skins become pliant and soft as well-prepared doe-skin.

The prepared skins are sewn together by means of fine sinews, which are drawn from opossum tails, instead of thread; these sinews are used whilst in a damp state, there-

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fore when well shrunk, which they become from drying, the seams formed by them are both strong and firm. Needles not being known to them in their savage state, a bodkin made of bone was the instrument by which the punctures to receive the sinews were made, and the quickness and dexterity displayed in the manipulation of these rude instruments and appliances is truly astonishing.

In wet weather the rug is invariably worn with the fur to the weather. Worn in this manner they are almost impervious to rain, whereas when the flesh side is exposed to the wet the cloak becomes saturated and consequently unpleasant in a very short space of time.

In those portions of Australia where *nardoo** and other freely seeding plants containing farina in the seeds abound the natives possessed mills† wherewith to bruise the seed into a coarse description of flour. These mills were made of quartz slates, shaped like an ellipsis, shelving gradually from the edges to the centre; in size they were two feet six inches long by eighteen inches broad, the pestal being a clumsy piece of the same material, shaped somewhat like a steelyard weight.

These mills were quite common from the north-western portion of Victoria right through to Cooper's Creek, on the confines of New South Wales, and thence to Lake Hope, in South Australia, but doubtless they are extant to this day in the regions remote from settlement.

**Nardoo.* This is the plant upon the seed of which those gallant explorers, Burke and Wills, strove to sustain life at Cooper's Creek, in Central Australia, and failed.

†We speak here in the past tense, because these primitive machines have been altogether discarded wherever the aborigines have come into contact with Europeans.

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The operation of milling was always performed by women, and the method thereof was by rubbing the clumsy pestal round and round on seed in the hollow slab, with, of course, an occasional thump or two.

This grinding or bruising, or in fact a combination of both motions, requires two operators, one to use the pestal and the other to stir the meal during the process. The meal would stick to the mill by reason of the thumping were it not constantly kept stirred As the clumsy pestal, if wielded for long by one person, becomes fatiguing the *lyoor* millers change alternately from that implement to the stirring *culk* (stick).

They do not possess any means whereby the husks can be separated from the meal, it is therefore used as it leaves the mill. They seldom convert the meal into bread, but when they do, it is formed into thin cakes and baked on the hot coals, as bush men do their *leather jackets.*

The way in which the meal is commonly prepared for consumption by the aborigines is by mixing it with water until it is of the consistency of gruel, in which state it is greedily consumed by old and young.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LEGEND OF THE *courtenie* (NATIVE COMPANION) AND *kurwie* (EMU); OR, HOW THE WICKED ONE WAS PUNISHED.

Before the blessing of the sun's cheering rays was vouchsafed to the earth, when the days and nights were alike dreary and dark, and long prior to the advent of man;

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when, in short, the earth was little better than a dark, cold wilderness, and was inhabited by the birds of the air and the beasts of the field only, it might be supposed during that cheerless time that peace and goodfellowship was the rule which obtained amongst the birds and beasts, but it was not so, for even in those days strife was more common than amity; the birds and beasts quarrelled continually, and much bad blood and general discomfort accrued accordingly. Broken bones were not by anyway uncommon in those days; even grim death's visage occasionally entered upon the already dreary-enough scene of their incessant disputes.

The *courtenies* (native companions) were nearly always at the bottom of every disagreement, and like ill-conditioned attorneys, they seemed to make a point of laying themselves out for mischief and were never at rest unless so engaged.

The *kurwie* (emu) in those long-since bygone days dwelt altogether in the clouds. She had immensely long wings then, which bore her wheresoever she felt inclined to go. During her manifold flights through airy space she occasionally caught a passing sight of the earth and the birds and beasts thereof, and these glimpses of terrestrial life gave much food for thought, and little wonder either, as everything she saw there was so very different to what existed in her cloud sphere. The little that she had seen of the earth and its creatures raised her curiosity to such an extent that she at last resolved to know more about them, so one day she soared quietly down until she was near enough to the earth to be able to take note of the on-goings there. From the point of observation which she had chosen she saw the

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various beasts and birds of the earth enjoying themselves after their respective natures, and wished in her heart that she might join them in their sports; amongst them all, however, the proceedings of the *courtenies* met with the greatest approbation.

Having thus seen the *courtenies* so apparently happy, dancing and singing*, the *kurwie* could not help returning again and again to view their proceedings in the swamps, and to listen enraptured to the sweet tones of their voices. On one of these occasions she became so ravished by reason of the dulcet music and graceful dancing of the *courtenies*, she could no longer contain herself in the clouds, so swept right down amongst the birds and beasts much to their consternation. With the exception of the *courtenies* every bird and beast that could fly or run took themselves off in the direst of terror; the *courtenies* would gladly have done the same had they been able, but fear, craven fear, had paralysed their wings, so that they were unable to budge even a single feather; this fact, however, is not much to be wondered at, as the sudden and abrupt advent of such an uncouth monster as the *kurwie* seemed to them was cause ample enough to frighten the very bravest, whether beast or bird.

When the *kurwie* found that her feet felt firm and did not sink into the ground, she folded her wings with much complacency, after which, on finding that she possessed the power of progression (of which, until then, she had been

*In those days the native companions had much sweeter voices even than swans; however, because of their wickedness, this pleasing organ was taken from them, but they still possess the talent for dancing unimpaired.

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entirely ignorant) other than that of flight, she stalked majestically up to the *courtenies*, bowed gracefully, and wished them "good day;" the salutation having been politely reciprocated by the *courtenies* she proceeded to account to them for her unlooked-for presence—"For ever so long it has afforded me much pleasure watching your usual avocations in the swamps, and the wonderful aptitude which you display in capturing the fine fat fish and frogs with which they seemingly teem, has met with my unbounded admiration; and, really, the unaffected gusto with which you gobble them when caught has made my beak water on many occasions. Your music, too, to which I have greedily listened with the utmost rapture, surpasses every sound I ever heard, and you excel so in dancing that in watching your frequent performances I have been so carried away by sheer excess of delight that I have caught myself on more than one occasion endeavouring to tread a measure in the air, taking your finished example as a guide, but, of course, failure to a most lamentable degree was the unvarying result. Now, should you not object, I shall be highly pleased if you will condescend to instruct me in all these wonderful accomplishments. Without doubt this is a great deal for a stranger, such as I am to you, to ask, but really I am so enamoured of all your graceful acquirements, as well as being most anxious to feed on the dainty produce of these inviting marshes, that I would almost undergo any amount of privation; yes, indeed, I would even endure considerable physical pain to gain my end. And the mere fact of my having overcome the hereditary pride of the *kurwie* race so far as to place myself under an obligation to

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any bird, should, methinks, be quite proof enough of my extreme longing in the matter, therefore I fancy that you may be inclined to pardon me for the coolness of this request."

"Oh! as for that Madam *Kurwie*, I don't see anything particularly cool about your expressed wish for extended knowledge," replied a gaunt dame *courtenie*. "We shall only be too delighted to impart whatever we may know, of which so courteous and clever a stranger as yourself happens to be ignorant (the fear engendered by the *kurwie's* abrupt appearance on the scene had, thanks to her excessive suavity, quite departed), but, as far as I am able to see, it is almost impossible for us to comply with your wishes, and the reason thereof is obvious enough, as you will readily admit when I explain it to you." Before the conversation had reached so far, at a sign from the *courtenie* with whom the *kurwie* was holding converse, all the assembled *courtenies* had placed their wings across their backs, making it appear to the simple *kurwie* that they were wingless. "You see, you have very long wings of your own, which carry you whithersoever you may wish to go; now it is a noted fact that birds with wings, capable of flying, can never learn to catch fish and frogs as we do, nor is it possible for such birds to be taught either singing or dancing." The *courtenie* dame said all this so pat, and in such an emphatic manner, as could not help but impress the innocent *kurwie* with its truthfulness; she therefere hung her head most disconsolately; after a little consideration, however, she brightened up somewhat, as she asked—Whether there was not some means by which the mere

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accident of her having wings in common with the whole *kurwie race* could not be remedied so that she might be enabled to gratify her inordinate longing by being taught the *role* of a terrestial bird ?"

"There is certainly one way in which the thing could be done," said Dame *Courtenie*, "but really I do not like to propose it, lest in doing so you may imagine that I purpose making a *bumbuma koeworie* (laughing jackass*) of you; or, at least, that the required sacrifice (for there is a sacrifice in it, and a great one, too) would be greater by far than the benefit accruing; but since you seem to have taken the matter so much to heart, I shall tell you the penalty you must pay, ere you can attain your wishes, and then, of course, it will rest solely with yourself whether you will agree to it or not. It is this simply, you must allow yourself to be shorn of your wings, and so become a walking bird, such as I am. Remember, however, that if you elect to have your wings cut off, you will ever after be compelled (whether you like it or not) to walk on the earth, and perhaps you might not be altogether willing to do that, as who knows but what some fine day you might have a longing to soar untrammelled away into the mysterious depths of the clouds, as has been your habit hitherto, and in the event of some such case arising, it is more than probable that your disgust at the cause of your inability would be considerable; consequently, your having complied with the rule which alone can procure you the advantages possessed by the animals of the earth, would be a constant source of

*In those days the *bumbuma koeworie* (stupid head, jackass) was a perfectly mute bird; his vacancy of look consequent thereon, together with his great unmeaning head and beak, gave rise to his *soubrequet* amongst the beasts and birds. J

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regret to you; therefore, I strongly advise you to consider the matter well in all its bearings before you think of coming to any decision."

The sly dame *Courtenie* saw plainly enough that the poor innocent *Kurwie* had already made up her mind to the sacrifice of her wings, although all the time she pretended not to be paying the slightest attention to her too-willing victim's cogitations; however, when the stupid simpleton, after no very long course of thought, said: "Well, you cut 'em *tertow* (wing or arm) belonging to me, for although I am perfectly well aware of the seriousness of such a proceeding, still I think that the advantages I shall gain thereby will considerably more than counterbalance the deprivation."

When the deluded biped had finished speaking, the wicked *Courtenie's* eyes twinkled with untold roguery. So greatly overjoyed was she at the success of her nefarious scheme, she came very nearly forgetting her assumed *rolê*, and so spreading out her wings in perfect jubilation, which, if she had done, as a matter of course her little piece of diabolism would have come to a termination. With a severe struggle, however, she managed to keep her countenance whilst she performed the required amputation, but almost before the delicate operation was finally completed, she gave unrestrained reins to her mirth, so spread wide her wings, bowed several times most gracefully to her all too confiding victim, and finished off by saying: "I hope, dear *Kurwie*, that you will be successful in your sport, even to the top of your heart, and that your vocal powers, when you try them, will far outrival in sweetness those possessed by any other bird

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which walks the earth." Thereupon the cunning dame *Courtenie* made a few Thespean steps, in which she was joined by all her kindred there assembled, brimful of malicious glee, after which one and all cut an astonishing wing, by way of *finale*; then, spreading out their wings to the ambient air, they flew away, leaving the mutilated *Kurwie* lost in wonder.

The *Bumbuma Koeworie*, sitting on a neighbouring tree, saw and heard the whole performance, and although up to that time he and all his kind had been mute birds, the successful wicked cunning of the sly dame *Courtenie* thus displayed before him so tickled his risible faculties, that before he was aware of it he burst out with a loud, long and joyous laugh, and from thence even to the present day, anything at all comical or absurd passing under the observation of the *Koeworie*, is certain to elicit much and prolonged laughter.

When the *Kurwie's* consternation, consequent upon the abruptness of the *Courtenie's* departure, had subsided somewhat, she soliloquised thus :—"How vilely that abominable old Dame *Courtenie* has imposed upon me to be sure, to say that she and all her fellows were only walking birds, when 'tis plainly enough demonstrated that they can fly as well as ever I could. I trust that the cunning creature has not perverted the truth as much with regard to my being able to catch fish now that my wings have been cut away; but this thought need not trouble my head long, as I can easily put it to the test, which I shall do forthwith." Alas! that it should fall to our task to relate it, but, sad to tell, the poor misled *Kurwie's* first fishing experiences

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nearly proved fatal to her, and after all she did not succeed in capturing even a paltry tadpole, much less a fish. After shaking the water out of her feathers upon reaching land, to console herself, as it were, for her decided failure in the fishing *rôle* which she had just adopted, she raised her head with no inconsiderable amount of pride, drew it well back, closing her eyes the while, and opening her beak to the widest possible extent, intent upon flooding the whole vicinity with a stream of unheard of melody; but alas! and thrice alas! the horrible sounds which issued from her throat were so terrible to hear, the *Kumbama Koeworie* came nearly tumbling off his perch from the force of downright fear, whilst she herself had all but swooned away by reason of her own discordant uproar.

Thus, when all too late, she had discovered how completely gulled she had been by the plausible cunning of the wicked *Courtenie*. Being, however, sensible beyond the general run of birds, she saw that repining would be but of very sorry avail, as do what she might her wings could not be restored to her; therefore, comforting herself in the best manner possible under the trying circumstances, she stalked away from the scene of her folly a wiser though a much sadder bird.

She walked away leisurely across the swelling undulations of the plains, pecking the succulent herbage as she passed, which she found wonderfully palatable and more to her taste than anything her late cloud world could offer, and when, with a crop full almost to bursting, she found herself comfortably squatted under the fragrant shelter of a Myall scrub, she came to the conclusion that she was not so badly

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off after all. She therefore thereupon determined never again to allow either her curiosity or appetite to induce her to forsake that of which she was already assured for the somewhat doubtful good of a brilliant shadow.

Time passed on its course even in those times, when the sun did not shine upon the earth, and when the season came round when it was usual for the animals of the earth to add to their several kinds, the *Kurwie* had nearly forgotten that she had ever been other than a terrestrial bird, and the scene of her transformation had almost faded from her memory.

In this teaming time both the *Kurwie* and the *Courtenie* were honoured by the cares of maternity, and some short time after the production of the respective broods, one day the sly old Dame *Courtenie* espied the *Kurwie* with her numerous covey coming along by the margin of the marsh upon which she was feeding with her brood all about her. Just then a maliciously cunning thought occurred to her, which caused her to tell the young *Courtenies* hastily to hide in the grass with the exception of one, and with this solitary one she walked about pretending to be carefully catering for its welfare, when up stalked the *Kurwie* surrounded by her large family of *Kurwielets*.

"Good day," quoth the *Kurwie*, "how do you get on? but I need scarcely inquire either, as it is palpable enough to all that you are as happy as can be, and small wonder I may say, seeing you have only one chick to provide for; but if you had as many little bills to provide for as I have you would find yourself in a very different pickle, I can tell you."

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"No, I should not," replied the cunning old dame, "I know better than that. Why, my clutch was quite as numerous as yours is when I had done hatching."

"What has become of them, then? I only see one."

"Become of them, indeed, why dead to be sure. I pecked all their brains out—yes, and ate them, too, and very good they were. I had no idea of killing myself by scratching for so many; no, not I. One is ample for any reasonable bird to rear."

"Ah, to be sure, I never thought of that," soliloquised the *Kurwie*, "it is not by any means a bad idea;" then aloud, "I say, Dame *Courtenie*, did you not think it very wrong to kill all your brood but one chick?"

"Wrong, indeed, not I. I even find one a greater tax on my energies than I care for, but I'll rear him now that he is so well grown. If I were in your place, however, I should kill (without the slightest scruple) every chick you have, and never think twice about it, that I should. Why, by the time that these young ones of yours are old enough to look after themselves you will be quite worn down to bones and feathers, when, if you don't take care, you will stand a fair chance of visiting your old aerial abode in the clouds through the agency of a whirlwind. Now, don't you be soft-hearted in the matter; just take my advice, and let their brains out without more ado. If, however, you should have a sort of slight affection for the little torments do as I did, save one, but if you do like me you will find that one all too many for your personal comfort."

"Well, Dame *Courtenie*, I think you are quite right, a clutch like mine is too much of a good thing altogether.

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Many thanks for your good advice, which I shall follow incontinently. I shall save one, though, just for company's sake."

The foolish *Kurwie* was but a very short time engaged in the destruction of her promising brood, whilst the cunning old *Courtenie* looked on all the time with badly-suppressed glee, and when but one of the late numerous clutch remained alive she clapped her wings and danced, ejaculating the while, "*Geralka Beralka, Geralka Beralka,*" which brought the whole of her abundant brood speedily from their hiding places in the rushes to her heels.

The vile, barefaced wickedness of the cunning Dame *Courtenie* being thus patently made manifest, rendered the poor simple bereaved *Kurwie* absolutely dumb, so that she could do nothing but gaze open-mouthed in speechless horror ; but whilst so engaged the punishment of the wicked overtook the infamous Dame *Courtenie* on the spot where her latest villany had been so shamelessly enacted.

Her long graceful neck, which had hitherto been the admiration and envy of bird and beast, became awry and crooked on the instant, and her dulcet vocal powers disappeared as though they had never been, leaving her with two discordant notes only, these being the tones by which she had been accustomed to call her family around her, *Geralka Beralka, Geralka Beralka,* and from these, down even to the present time, the tones have not varied. This deprivation, together with the crooked neck, still remains distinctive characteristics of well-merited punishment, and doubtless they will be reproduced from generation to

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generation through all time, or so long as the *Courtenie* race has a single representative on the fair face of the earth.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN ADDITIONAL EPISODE IN THE LIVES OF THE KURWIE AND COURTENIE; OF THE FIRST ADVENT OF THE SUN'S LIGHT ON THE EARTH AND ITS CAUSE; REWARDS AND PUNISHMENT FOR GOOD AND BAD DEEDS; NOBLE CONDUCT AND ITS GUERDON, AS DISPLAYED IN THE LEGEND OF THE NGAROU (BUSTARD, OR WILD TURKEY OF THE COLONISTS) PEOPLE.

The *Courtenie* and *Kurwie* did not again come in contact until a goodly time had elapsed after the cruel slaughter of the *Kurwielets*, and when chance did once more bring them together, the feelings of the *Kurwie* were scarcely of a friendly nature towards the cunning old Dame *Courtenie*.

The wholesale slaughter of her promising young brood by the margin of the great reedy marsh still rankled in her mind, and the unsolicited presence of the vile Dame *Courtenie*, that had, by dint of the most specious mendacity, induced the unmotherly act, did not tend to lessen the never ceasing regret; but, on the contrary, it brought all the terrible proceedings as vividly to her mind as though the deed were only a day old, instead of a dozen moons.

Breeding time had again come round, and the *Kurwie* was patiently sitting on thirteen eggs, which, she trusted, would in due time produce an equal number of downy *Kurwielets*, the fate of which she determined should be very different to that of her former clutch.

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When Dame *Courtenie* saw her simple victim of old so contentedly sitting beneath a bushy tree, the dense foliage of which kept the chill, biting winds at a respectable distance. She immediately divined that poor *Kurwie* was contentedly engaged hatching another brood. This being apparently so, the wicked old bird set her cunning wits to work at once to turn the circumstance to some malicious account. Accordingly, with much pretended meekness, she approached the sitting *Kurwie*, saying, "Ah, my dear *Kurwie*, I am so overjoyed to meet you again; it does seem quite an age since we last forgathered. Where have you been all the while? Surely you have not avoided me purposely?" "Indeed, then, dame *Courtenie*, that is just what I have done; and now that you are here I do not wish to have anything to say to you at all, your absence I assure you is appreciated infinitely more than your abominable presence, therefore, if it be all the same to you, you had better take yourself off at once. You're a vile old bird, and should not be allowed to come near any bird, or beast either, for that matter, that has the slightest pretensions to respectability."

"Poor old thing" rejoined the *Courtenie*, "I believe you are in a passion. What, have you not forgotten the little cheepers yet, that you so properly knocked on the head, by my advice, last season? Well to be sure, now after that conduct nothing can astonish me. Certainly gratitude does not seem to be a failing of yours, but it serves me right, and just shows the folly of throwing away good advice on fools; however, I shall be more careful in future."

The *Kurwie*, being a bird of long suffering, could upon

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occasion stand a considerable amount of humbug, but to be called a fool was a trifle more than her good nature could put up with; therefore she sprang off her nest, intending to make it a salutary warning to old dame *Courtenie*, and as she did so she said, "You wretched wry-necked old harridan, what do you mean by coming here at all? If you don't get out of this neighbourhood at once I shall incapacitate you from ever doing so." Thereupon she made a determined rush at the crooked-necked brute, intent on slaughter dire; unfortunately, however, she knew but little of the cunning possessed by the sly grey bird, as the immediate sequel demonstrated. The *Conrtenie* waited calmly until her furious adversary was within a few feet, when she nimbly flapped her wings and vaulted lightly over the poor *Kurwie's* back, alighting close by the side of the nest; meantime the impetus of the *Kurwie's* deadly attack had carried that poor bird many yards away, and by the time she had stayed her irate career, and turned round, the wicked old *Courtenie* had danced all the eggs but one to smash, and that one she held in one foot, whilst she wickedly hopped about on the other, to an accompaniment of derisive ejaculations.

When the irate *Kurwie* saw the destruction which the *Courtenie* had effected with her cherished eggs, with foam flaked beak, she again rushed madly at the vile old brute; but, alas, the result of this second attack was as futile as the former one, for, judging her time accurately, the sly *Courtenie* again sprang into the air, as *Kurwie* came up with a rush, sending the egg which she held in her claw, at the same time, flying to the sky with as great velocity

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as a *Toort* (star) falls to the earth. When the egg reached the sky, it struck on a great heap of wood which had been gathered there by *Ngoudenout*, and the concussion was so great, fire immediately followed the violent contact, and lo, the whole world was incontinently flooded with celestial light!

The consternation of the *Kurwie*, and old dame *Courtenie* as well, upon this sudden deluge of unheard of effulgence was so altogether overpowering, their virulent feud was forgotten on the moment, and they and their descendents have ever since dwelt together in perfect amity, jointly paying due homage to the celestial orb of day, which had its being, and arose, out of their latest and most deadly quarrel; and which has continued ever since to bless the face of all nature with its brilliant and vivifying rays.

When the sun had thus made his glorions appearance, blessing the hitherto gloomy earth with his light and genial warmth, those of the birds and beasts who had been good in their respective generations, and had striven on all occasions to assist their fellows when overtaken by trouble, and had looked after their own food, without reference to what their neighbours fed upon, were at once converted into blackfellows, and their ancient fellows that had been discontented grumblers, and otherwise obnoxious were given them to prey upon.

This is one of the very few instances wherein their legends speak of rewards and punishments for good and bad behaviour.

Another instance is illustrated in the legend of the ogre *Ngarou*, that lived on the earth ages before the advent of

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the Sun. This vile *Ngarou's* habits were of a most depraved nature, in fact many of them had never been heard of in *Ngaroudom* until his hideous appearance came on the scene to defile the earth.

His prevailing *penchant,* and the one most dreaded by the innocent *Ngarou* people, was that of slaying his unsuspicious fellows and feasting upon their flesh.

To enable him to pander easily to this detestable longing of his, he had cunningly made his camp on the margin of a nice plain, where delicious yams grew abundantly; and where *Ngarous* from all quarters made a point of assembling, in the proper seasons, to feed on the succulent and milky roots, so grateful to their simple tastes.

In the long, gloomy periods of that sunless time, when crowds of *Ngarous* feasted on the fair yam plain, this wicked old monster would patiently wait, and watch, until some unwary young *Ngarou* separated from his fellows, to enjoy his accustomed siesta by some fragrant myall tree, away from the noise and turmoil caused by his busily feeding brethren; and as soon as slumber had supervened upon his preceding state of repletion, the old watchful vagabond would stealthily creep up to his unsuspicious and unconscious victim, and throttle him ere he had a chance of waking.

The position chosen by the wicked old *Ngarou* for his camp was not only advantageous to him, by reason of its near proximity to the succulent yam-field, but also because the great highway, along which the *Ngarou* people were wont to travel, when visiting their breeding grounds every season, ran close by the spot.

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As a matter of course, many travelling *Ngarous* were overcome by fatigue, called at the camp, and asked permission to rest their wearied wings and feet ere proceeding further on their journey.

On those occasions the wicked old monster seemed the very personification of hospitality, nothing was too good for his way-worn guests ; and the manner in which he used to make his better half trot about to procure yams, as well as other esculents, for the tired travellers to feast upon, was really something to admire.

After feasting his visitors until their crops were incapable of further distention, with the assistance of his dame he would then prepare soft and fragrant couches of yam stalks, for the reception of their weary limbs, upon which he had much pleasure in seeing them prepare to repose. When this wished-for moment arrived, he would bid them take a good sound sleep, so that they might rise refreshed for another weary day's travel.

Thereupon he and his spouse would retire as though they also were about to court repose ; this, however, was the very furthest idea from their wicked thoughts, as the retiring to rest was only the merest pretence, meant to lull his guests into feelings of false security ; in most cases too the ruse succeeded. As soon as silence had fallen on the sleeping camp, and no sound was there, saving the deep breathing of the sore winged and footed sleepers, the detestable old ogre would stealthily arise, using much caution the while, fearful lest the least stir should awaken the weary travellers, and so frustrate his diabolical designs.

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If he found, on peering cautiously at the couches, that his way-worn guests still slept on, he would creep out of the camp to the fire,* and with a shovel (which had long before been prepared for the purpose) take up quite a heap of glowing embers, which he straightway poured over the sleepers' devoted heads, thereby sending them into their last long sleep.

As a matter of course, the poor *Ngarous* thus destroyed were carefully hidden away, so that casual passing travellers might not have a chance of discovering the wicked character of the beastly ogre, and he and his spouse, worthy spouse for such a mate, would delectate upon the bodies of their victims as long as they lasted; and when the ghastly food had all been consumed, they wearied much, until dame fortune kindly sent them some other tired out *Ngarou* in search of rest and refreshments, when the same cruel proceedings would be pitilessly and ruthlessly carried out.

The total disappearance of so many of their fellows, and always during their migrations at breeding time, or at the yam season, gave rise to the greatest distress and wonderment among the innocent *Ngarous*; but when they discovered the cause of their many serious bereavements through the escape of a half-throttled, young yam-eating *Ngarou*, together with a like miraculous escape of a worn-down old hen returning from the breeding grounds, that managed to get out of the horrid monster's clutches, with the loss of all her neck and head feathers, their consternation was pitiful to behold. They knew not what to do, in

*Although the *Ngarous* were not a cooking community, still they always kept a fire burning, more especially during the hours of slumber, with a view to its protecting influence.

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this the greatest extremity which ever befel their lot ; however, they determined in future to exercise more wariness on their gaming expeditions, and their breeding grounds excursions. But notwithstanding all the caution displayed by the terror-stricken *Ngarous*, every now and then a fresh disappearance would occur, to add to their already abundant grief.

This relentless old vagabond had practised these abominable atrocities as long as the most ancient *Ngarou* could remember, though so late of being discovered, and he was now becoming worse, and more daring the older he grew, in fact the poor *Ngarou* people had no longer any peace or happiness of their lives, because of this cruel monster's continued wickedness.

Every *Ngarou* in the land had lost some near or dear fellow by the horrid ogre's machinations ; nothing but wailing was therefore heard throuhogut the length and breadth of *Ngaroudom* ; the poor *Ngarous* were actually driven to their wit's end, so much so indeed they had serious thoughts of making a general exodus to some other country where they would have a chance of feeding in peace ; it was only the fear of being followed by their arch enemy that decided them against the movement.

About this time of universal sorrow in the *Ngarou* nation, two smart young *Ngarous* that had travelled through strange lands, and sojourned with extraordinary beasts, returned home to find the whole of their kindred swallowed up by uncontrollable grief, by reason of their numerous bereavements. On learning the cause of all the wailing and misery throughout the land, which had so astonished

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them on their return, they laid their wise, though albeit youthful heads together, with the view of devising some prompt means of ridding the nation of the foul-feeding fiend, from whom it had suffered so much, and so long.

Their cogitations resulted in the framing of a scheme which they deemed most feasible for the purpose, although, perhaps, the carrying of it out would entail considerable risk ; this latter, however, they had patriotically determined to encounter, if found necessary. Their scheme was as follows :—

They were to contrive to reach the great yam plain unperceived by the wicked old ogre, when one of them was immediately to hide himself mid the tall yam stalks, whilst the other was most conspicuously to pretend to feed for some considerable time, after which (when he had seen that the wicked old fiend had observed him) he was to retire to some cosy corner, in close proximity to his friend, as though intending to take a quiet slumber, after his seemingly satisfactory meal ; and then, when the unnatural old *Ngarou* came slyly up, intent upon procuring his coveted, and disgusting food, on a preconcerted signal being given by the dauntless *Ngarou* that was to pretend to feed, they were simultaneously to fall on the national foe, with the most deadly determination, nor fail in their arduous efforts for a moment, until *Ngaroudom* was freed from the foul-feeding monster ; and as the foe to which they were thus to give battle was very old, and consequently very feeble, they doubted not but that the issue would be successful in every particular.

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The travelled *Ngarous* were fortunate enough to carry out their concerted scheme to the very end; after a severe struggle they destroyed the abominable ogre, and left his vile old carcase to rot on the plain, which had been the scene whereon many of his most detestable atrocities had been cruelly enacted.

To do every honour to these brave slayers of the demon *Ngarou*, on their return from the successful exploit, nearly all the inhabitants of *Ngaroudom* assembled, and whilst the *Ngarou* people were lavishing honours and caresses on their brave saviours, as they designated them, they suddenly soared away in circling whirls, higher and higher, until they reached the very *Tyrili* (sky) itself, when they became fixed as the pointers to the Southern Cross.

The consternation and lamentations of the *Ngarou* nation were very terrible when they beheld their two noble deliverers soaring away towards *Tyrili* in airy circles, but when they saw them fixed as *Toorts*, and felt, therefore, that they had been merely translated to a higher sphere, they one and all danced with joy, saying the bleak, dark earth was not good enough for them, and that a much higher guerdon had been conferred on them for the supreme service they had rendered to the nation, than if all the *Ngarous* in the world had endowed them with the whole of their possessions. And now these two glorious *Toorts* can for ever see, from their commanding position, how truly grateful all the *Ngarou* people are for the mighty service they had performed ere being translated, and gratitude from their heretofore fellows is as grateful to them, as is the

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fragrance of the *Yanup* (Myall) in the nostrils of the yam-loving *Ngarous*.

CHAPTER XX.

CONCERNING ABORIGINAL MAGICIANS AND THEIR MAGIC, AS APPLIED TO CURATIVE PURPOSES IN SICKNESS; TOGETHER WITH THE POWER OF INFLICTING SICKNESS ON WHOMSOEVER THEY PLEASE; OF THE NGALLOW WATTOWS (POSTMEN) AND THE PURPOSES WHICH OCCUPY MOST PART OF THEIR EXISTENCE.

In every aboriginal tribe there are usually one or two members who are esteemed learned beyond their fellows; they are termed *Bangals* (Doctors or Magicians) and are supposed to be endowed with powers far beyond the finite grasp of humanity in general; they are therefore looked upon by the rest of their respective tribes with considerable awe, and no native would knowingly offend one of them, as every such offence would be sure to bring condign punishment on him who had offended.

The functions of these *Bangals* are various, amongst which bleeding and other surgical operations are not the least. As they elect to cure every ill to which aboriginal flesh is heir, from a simple headache induced by overfeeding, up to the severest form of pulmonary consumption, they are seldom without a fair share of patients to attend to; the patients have the most perfect faith in their ministrations, consequently they are as passive and ductile in their hands as so much well-wrought glazier's putty; of

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course this implicit belief tends in a great measure towards a cure, whatever may be the ailment.

When a patient recovers the wise *Bangal* receives boundless credit, which he accepts with the becoming grace of a duly qualified professor, who is getting no more than his just meed. But, on the other hand, should grim death steal in, and snatch the poor victim from under the very eyes of the *Bangal* he gets no blame, as the death is certain to be attributed to the malign influence of magic practised by some *Bukeen** tribe to that end, of which he is ignorant, therefore unable effectually to cope with. On these occasions, however, he tells the assembled tribe that he will visit *Konikatnie* (water-spirit) down in the deep waters of the lake, or river, and from that spirit learn from whence the magic came which killed their brother, and then they can take ample and swift vengeance on the hidden foe.

When the curious ones of a tribe wish to discover that which is beyond aboriginal ken they depute the *Bangal* to arrive at the desired knowledge through the medium of the water-spirit. Thereupon the *Bangal* most mysteriously disappears from the tribe, and many days may elapse before he returns, in a manner equally mystic with that of his departure. On some of these occasions he brings the desired information ; on others, again, he merely intimates that the matter sought for was not for them to pry into, therefore it had better be forgotten at once, and for good, as the *Konikatnie* bears but badly any opposition to his expressed wishes as rendered by the *Bangal.*

*Bukeen signifies wild or savage, capable of perpetrating any description of enormity. The name is applied to all tribes with whom no intercourse is held, any stray subject of which being deemed fair game, from whence, if possible, to draw a supply of the universally coveted kidney fat.

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Of course any information he may be pleased to give at those times, as being the result of his conference with *Konikatnie*, is fiction pure and simple concocted by himself whilst absent from the tribe; it is necessary, however, if he should retain his power in the tribe, that he should from time to time fabricate such romances as are calculated to have that effect, and, without doubt, the ability which they possess and display in this description of literary composition is truly marvellous.

Arabian tales, of good and evil genii, are as nothing compared to the wonders related by these imposters; and the utter ignorance of the aborigines, together with their extraordinary superstitious beliefs, induces them to give perfect credence to whatever these charlatans may be pleased to advance. The manner in which they graduate for the office of *Bangal* is somewhat peculiar, and it requires the display of great daring, besides the possession of much moral courage on the part of a would-be candidate to carry out the programme to a successful issue. When a *Bangal* dies, and has been buried, a *Loondthal* (hut) is neatly erected over the grave, and whoever has sufficient temerity to seek the vacant office of the defunct, must go at sundown, the first night of the new moon, and place himself in the mausoleum, and thus remain until sunrise the following morning. This proceeding has to be repeated every night until the moon has waxed and waned, and if he successfully undergoes the loathsome ordeal without flinching, he is deemed to have graduated satisfactorily, and is consequently inducted forthwith to the vacant office with its train of honours, duties and privations; and of

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the latter he has many to contend with, more especially during the periods which he pretends are occupied visiting the *Konikatnie*, in his humid *Loondthal*. The greatest scamp in the tribe is usually the candidate who comes forward to fill the departed *Bangal's* office. As a rule in aboriginal physiology, vagabondism and courage generally go together, and without the latter quality in abundance, it would be virtually impossible to undergo the necessary probationary ordeal, which the office demands of its professors.

One member of every tribe is devoted solely to the office of *Ngallow Wattow* (postman or messenger). He can travel from tribe to tribe with impunity, whether they should be hostile to his own people, or the contrary; he is employed carrying news backwards and forwards, and it is most wonderful how rapidly anything possessing interest to the aborigines is thus disseminated.

These men also negotiate all barter and trading required by their respective tribes. At the first blush it would almost seem that the aboriginies could not have very much in the shape of goods to dispose of, but that would be an erroneous conclusion to arrive at; as the districts inhabited by the different tribes produce each their own particular class of commodities, and those alone; therefore, as the aboriginal requirements over the whole of the colony are very similar, the only manner in which many of their wants can be supplied is by means of barter. For example, the tribes inhabiting the mountainous regions have an abundance of stone suitable for making axes of; and the tribes which roam over the vast depression forming the Murray

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river valley have many miles of reed beds, from whence reeds are procured for making spears, and not having any stone for axes on their own territory, they procure it by exchanging reeds with the inhabitants of the stone country, where reeds stout enough for spears do not grow The same mercantile relations obtain in the matter of gums, resins, ochres, etc.

Thus a single glance will suffice to show that the *Ngallow Wattows* have always abundance of work cut out for them, going from tribe to tribe on trading expeditions.

In consequence of the continuous intercourse with strange tribes, the *Ngallow Wattow* becomes altogether more liberal in his views, and less narrow-minded, than it is natural for the general aborigine to be; he is accordingly looked up to by his fellows as a sort of oracle, or know everything, with whom it would be folly to dispute or argue.

From an aboriginal point of view, as a rule, these *Ngallow Wattows* are not overwise, that is to say, in the matter of stategic cunning essential to their success in the hunting up of game, necessary to their daily wants; they are mere children, in fact they are childish to the verge of imbecility; but in our opinion the very fact of this eccentricity is the reason of their persons being held sacred by tribes hostile to those to which they belong.

Every phase of insanity is venerated by the natives, be it mild or violent, as they consider those so affiicted to be under the special protection of *Ngoudenout* (Good Spirit); therefore to hurt or otherwise ill-treat one so afflicted would be certain to bring down the vengeance of the Good Spirit upon all concerned.

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The aborigines are more peculiar in their tastes than people of a more refined status, inasmuch as they are actually envious of a fellow native who becomes mad; envious of the marked good treatment which he receives on all hands, and of the high consideration in which he is held; consequently madness is very frequently simulated, and sometimes with so much success that months will oftentimes elapse ere the imposture is discovered; but when the madness is found to be only counterfeited then woe betide the pretender from thenceforward; his life then has but small pleasure in it, and it is only wonderful that the amount of ridicule and obloquy which is continually cast upon him does not make him in reality that which he has feigned.

The *Ngallow Wattows* are always bachelors, consequently have to carry all their own belongings from camp to camp, as well as erect their own solitary *Loondthals*, bring wood and water, and, in short, do everything which a native having a *Lyoor* never thinks of doing. Physically these men are small in stature, as a rule, and in flesh spare almost to attenuation; they excel, however, all the other tribal members in physical endurance, especially as regards the powers of making long trying journeys on very short commons; their continual trampings from tribe to tribe keeps them in a state of perpetual training, as it were, and the frequent scarcity of food which they encounter on their weary travels has a tendency to keep down flesh, and makes long fasting somewhat bearable.

The *Bangals* and *Ngallow Wattows* in general lead very solitary lives as compared with their fellows, seldom ming-

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ling in *corroberie* dances, or joining in the lewd songs common at all great gatherings, deeming such diversions frivolous, and beneath the dignity of their respective offices.

The *Bangals* are all under the conviction that they possess the power of causing sickness, even unto death, to fall upon whomsoever they please, and the laymen of the tribes are quite certain that such is actually the case; this is, therefore, the principal cause of the awe these imposters inspire their more ignorant fellows with. They, however, never put this pretended power in practice on members of their own tribes, at least they pretend never to do so; upon the *Bukeens*, on the other hand, they are continually trying the potency of their magic powers.

The mode by which they carry out this fell art of theirs is extremely novel, although it has but very little of the supernatural about it, as the following will plainly show.

Should a *Bangal* in the course of his wanderings drop across an old encampment of *Bukeens* he searches about carefully for some *debris* (such as bones) of the food they have eaten, but should his search for bones, or some other kindred *debris*, be unsuccessful, as frequently happens (from the fact of its being a habit common to all the aboriginal tribes to consume by fire the bones of the game upon which they have fed before they abandon a camp) he anxiously scans the ground all round the abandoned camp for feculent excrement, and should any of the *Bukeens*, from laziness or other cause, have omitted to use his *paddle** or to have used it carelessly, the vigilant *Bangal* pounces

*When an aborigine obeys a call of nature, he always carries a pointed instrument with him to turn up the ground with, so that his fecal excreta may be well hidden from the keen vision of vagaband *Bangals*.

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upon the unhidden *fæces* as a miser would upon a treasure. After he has secured his savoury find, he lubricates a piece of opossum skin with the kidney fat of some of his victims, and carefully wraps it round his treasure, after which yards of twine are wound round and round, each wind being what sailors term a half-hitch, thus independent of the preceding one or the one which follows; if bones are found they are treated in a similar manner.

At night, when all in the camp are quiet, the *Bangal* carefully takes his prize from the *Mocre Mocre* (bag) beginning a low monotonous chant, whilst he thrusts one end of the prepared roll into the fire (the fire is small by design); during the process of gradual combustion the chant is continued, sometimes low as a weak child's wail heard a considerable distance off, and again swelling up into the sonorous tones of a strong man's agony, yet never losing its weird monotony. The chant consists of sound principally, with an occasional interjected request (always in the same tone) to *Konikatnie*. Should it be his wish to kill the *Bukeen* outright, in one night, he keeps up the chant, and pushes the burning roll forward into the glowing embers as it consumes, and when the last vestige of it has dispersed in unsavoury smoke, the life of the *Bangal's* victim has ceased.

Should the *Bangal*, however, wish to prolong the dying agonies of his foe, he merely burns a small portion of the roll nightly, chanting his incantation during the process, and should months pass before the roll is totally consumed, so long will the torture of his victim continue.

All aboriginal deaths (unless those caused by violence

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alone), and indeed every ailment by which they are attacked from time to time, as well, are attributed to the magical power possessed by the *Bangals*, and all the arguments and ridicule in creation will not cause them to alter their belief one iota.

When discussing the matter with them, and to prove the imposture of their *Bangals*, we have offered ourselves as subjects to be practised upon by any Bangal they might choose, telling them that it would not be necessary to complete the process, the mere fact of our being made slightly unwell would be proof to us, perfectly conclusive, that their *Bangals* were all they claimed them to be.

Our fair offer to them seemed so absurd they merely laughed at us, saying, "*Bumbuma Wirrumpoola Ngenic* (stupid ears you) too much you white fellow. Not that one *Bangal* belonging to you. What for you *Bumbuma poorp* ?" (stupid head.)

CHAPTER XXI.

PHILOLOGY.

According to various philologists the structural basis of most primitive tongues is to be found in sounds and sights in nature, and in natural feelings. Thus the sounds noticed most frequently as arising from the wind blowing through some medium is likely to be adopted as its (the wind's) nomenclature; the same rule holds good with regard to the naming of animals, they being usually designated by their respective calls.

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Heat and cold are named according to the ejaculations induced by each.

Tree, grass, water, fire and earth, are called after some plainly seen natural peculiarity.

In this manner or method it is quite possible for a language to originate, and to become, after many centuries of practice, quite copious enough for all common purposes, in life's everyday intercourse.

This first accepted principle, however, is altogether lacking in the dialects of these aborigines ; natural objects, feelings, and appearances have never seemingly been called in to aid in their construction* ; had they been, the numerous aboriginal dialects would have been much less meagre, and more similar than inquirers have found them. The lack of similarity is somewhat wonderful, considering how closely the territory of many of these tribes approximates ; that it is so, however is an incontrovertable fact to which anyone can speak who has had the opportunity of familiar intercourse with the various tribes. Every tribe speaks a perfectly distinct tongue† which is altogether unintelligible to aborigines out of its own pale ; and when we tell the reader that about every fifty miles square of the mountainous or well-watered portion of Australia possesses a separate tribe having a dialect of its own, he can well imagine the

*There are three exceptions to this rule, which are as follows :— The plover is named after its note *perrit perrit* ; the goose after hers *Ngack Ngack* ; and the mountain duck after her call, *Nguckernel.*

†We use distinct advisedly, although there are some few instances which we could name where neighbouring tribes mix and intermingle, when, as a matter of course under these circumstances portions of the respective dialects spoken are incorporated into each ; but as instances of this character are very rare indeed it is scarcely worth while making exceptions of them.

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diversity of tongues, with which the philologist who undertakes the task of reducing the language of the Australian aborigines to rule has to deal; in fact, he will see at once that such a project is not in the remotest feature feasible.

Were the terms meaning the same things in the various tribes traceable to common roots, then, of course, the difficulty would be surmounted easily enough; but as this is not the case in *any* instance, the enquirer is at a loss to know from whence the words proceed, which go to the formation of the numerous dialects, or in what manner they were originally constructed.

To show how very dissimilar the dialects are, we give below a few examples taken from two of the Murray River tribes, which join, the territory of neither having a longer frontage to that river than forty miles.

For the information of the reader we hear state that in *all* cases the negative of the dialect spoken is the name of the tribe which speaks it; or, in other words, the name of the tribe is the negative of the dialect, repeated twice.

English.	Watty Watty Tribe.	Litchoo Litchoo Tribe.
No	Watty	Litchoo
Yes	Eya	Ngo
Sun	Euroka	Nowie
Moon	Mittiam	Bocobothal
Belly	Wotchowoo	Bingie
Cold	Yebra	Mirrinumoo
Dog	Wirrangan	Cul

These examples, though few, are (we imagine) ample enough to show how very unlike these dialects are; and the same dissimilarity holds good throughout the dialects of the whole race. Thus, therefore, one glance will suffice to show that it would be both fallacious and absurd in the extreme

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to endeavour to compile a work on these diverse tongues, with the view of its having general application. An endemic production of the kind would be practicable enough, as can be seen by the vocabulary at the end; but then the value thereof would be absolutely *nil* outside the limits of the tribe from whose language it might be compiled.

It would scarcely be according to the notions of anyone outside a lunatic asylum either, to have a vocabulary of each dialect in this country collated. It would be infinitely better to have the aboriginal principle carried out in all its entirety (*i.e.*, their persistent endeavour to forget) as regards their own tongues, and have the English language taught instead.

The *Nyallow Wattows* (postmen), it is true, are linguists sufficient to be able to converse with the various tribes all round their own, even to the distance of a hundred miles, or more. Had these travelled men still been extant, their extended tribal knowledge would have been of incalculable service to the enquirer in all matters pertaining to the multifarious dialects of the aborigines; as, however, the occupations of these men vanished as settlement and civilisation advanced, the task to the philologist now-a-days is both wearisome and unsatisfactory.

The paucity of words which go to the formation of any one of these dialects precludes the remotest possibility of anything like a readable translation of even the commonest conversation, as the same word is frequently applied in many different ways; and it is only by the inflections, prolongations, etc., thereof that what it means to imply can be understood; therefore, unless to the initiated, a sentence

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translated into English *verbatim* would be all but unintelligible.

Of course there are many common, simple phrases, such as those given at the end of the vocabulary, which anyone however obtuse, might readily understand; but to obtain anything approaching to a general knowledge of the dialects, so as to be enabled to apply it with any hopes of success, a life's experience, together with continual intercourse, supplemented by unflagging observation, is absolutely necessary.

It would be utterly impossible to teach these dialects by rule without first forming a code of signs (which, of course, would be foreign to them), whereby to denote the various accentuations, inflections, prolongations, and applications.

These dialects are quite innocent of everything in the shape of grammar, grammatical relations being denoted by prolongations, accentuations, or position; each, or either of which, changes the meaning of different words entirely.

Thus pronouns are the same, whether relating to places or things, masculine or feminine gender. Thus *Wanthy*, for instance, signifies he, she, it, him, that, them; other pronouns are used in a similar manner.

Adjectives are applied much the same as in English; for example, *Talko* (good) is always used alone, the noun being understood; the other adjectives are used in a like manner,

Their verbs are particularly imperfect; for example:— *Callo yetty wirwy*, I went. *Callo mitha yetty wirwy*, I went a long time ago. *Yetty wirwy*, I go, or am going. *Darty yetty wirwy*, I will go. *Berha yetty wirwy*, I will go to-

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morrow. *Urgin berha yetty wirney*, I will go the day after to-morrow.

The adverb stage is still a long distance off.

In illustration of the extreme meagreness of these tongues, we give the few following examples :—

Kayanie, water. *Tolkine kayanie*, thirsty, *Mirnen kayanie*, tears. *Cooroomboo kayanie*, milk. *Birra*, dead. *Birra wotchowoo*, hungry. *Bocoin wootchowoo*, stuffed with food.

Their dialects do not possess any synonym for size, the adjective *Corongondoo* standing for large in the matter of bulk, and for a great many in numbers; whilst *Panmaroo* takes the place of small in size, or few in number.

The only conjunction they possess is *Nga* (and), and according to the position thereof, so is its prolongation, or the contrary, the prolongations being formed by dwelling on the final a. As for prepositions or articles, their tongues are altogether devoid of these necessary parts of speech.

Their numerals merely consist of two, viz.:—*Polite*, two ; and *kyup*, one. *kyup murnangin* signifies five, or one hand ; and *polite murnangin* means ten, or two hands.

For a number such as thirty, or even a hundred, they say *co co*, and for any larger number than that, such as a flock of sheep, or an immense flight of ducks, they ejaculate *corongandoo*.

Thus it can easily be seen that the dialects of these people are about as meagre in quality and quantity as they well can be; if they were but ever so little more so, it would be most difficult, if not altogether impossible, for the

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aborigines to convey their thoughts or make their requirements known to each other.

From the Middle Darling River, in New South Wales, right through, to far beyond Cooper's Creek, and stretching thence to Lake Hope in South Australia, the natives all speak the same tongue, or nearly the same. At all events, over that portion of Central Australia the natives can readily understand each other without the intervention of *Ngallow Wattows*. We attribute this circumstance to the fact of that region being a very arid and dry one, having but few permanent waters in seasons of drought; so that all the native tribes of that inhospitable country are compelled during such seasons to assemble round these waters, there to dwell together, oftentimes for many months at a time; and doubtless, on occasions of excessive drought, for a year, or perhaps even longer than that. At such periods a general amity must perforce prevail amongst the tribes so assembled, otherwise total extermination would quickly ensue.

The fact of the tribes inhabiting so extensive an area of country, all speaking one tongue, induces us to imagine that the aboriginal inhabitants of Australia originally spread over the country from the neighbourhood of the Gulf of Carpentaria, breaking up into small sections such as families, so that food might be found for all, such breaking up taking place after getting well south to the country of rivers and creeks; then each section or family diverging to the right or left, as the fancy inclined them, thus forming the *nuclei* of the various tribes as found by the colonists.

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The dissimilarity of the various dialects to what we deem the parent one—that is, the one spoken by the inhabitants of Central Australia—is fully accounted for by the persistent endeavour to forget, which we have before shown, to be one of the leading characteristics of the aborigines.

Should our theory of the course followed by the earliest of this race be correct, it would not be altogether beyond the pale of possibility to trace these people back even to pre-historic man, whose remains have frequently been found in Europe side by side, with the "kitchen-midden," stone axe, and spear barb, all of which latter pertain in exact similitude at this day to the aborigines of Australia.

Personal nomenclature is, in almost every instance, due to individual characteristics, or peculiarities perceivable in physique or manner, as the few following examples will clearly enough show.

Yandy murnangin—left-handed.*

Mirmile mirnen—squint-eyed.

Kyup mirmen—one-eyed.

Mirmile tchantchew†—crooked nose.

Cowendurn—the creeper.

Walpa chinangin—burnt foot.

Boceroin—the breaker.

Waikeroo woorinen—ugly mouth.

*According to physiologists, right and left handedness is due entirely to training from the very earliest childhood, until the habit (whichever it may be) becomes confirmed. This may be correct as regards civilsed man, but it is not so in primitive man, taking these aborigines in illustration. Amongst them a left-handed or ambidexter man is as rare as in civilised life, the right being the premier one, as with ourselves, and these people grow up as nature made them, untrammelled either by laws or rules.

†It is here apparent that the olfactory nerve derives its name from the sound made by sneezing. L

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There are numerous other names which doubtless arose from equally perceptible features, but being rather objectionable, we do not care to quote them.

Names of places arise generally from local features, or from some occurrence vivid enough to be worthy of note. Below are a few examples by way of illustration :—

Chittoo beal—termination of the gum timber.

Workin doloo—the black stump.

Nanowie—the sun.

Bocoin tcheric—broken reed.

Mirmile maroong—crooked pine.

Tye bulite—box forest infested by gerboas or kangaroo mice.

Tyrilie—The sky ; this name is one given to an immense salt lake in the northern portion of Victoria.

In the aboriginal alphabet there are neither F nor X, P being substituted for the former and K for the latter.

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VOCABULARY.

ENGLISH	ABORIGINAL
Ancestor	Ngamalloroie
Aunt	Koingeroo
Air	Bokie
Ashes	Boonie
Autumn	Weat
Animal	Burbagooan
Acid	Kiryie
Active	Katkira
Awake	Bukoya
Asleep	Wopia
Ask	Kuliya
And	Nga
Bachelor	Wenkie
Boy	Piankoo
Brother, if older	Wawoo, but if
Younger	Palaroo
Brother-in-Law	Weeie
Brood	Mooroongalloo
Body	Piankangoora
Back	Warmoo
Brain	Mirkpoorpoo
Blood	Coorcoo
Bowels	Muntermunter Coonangin
Blister	Kertenkertenen
Blow	Lurka
Branch	Kurnenen
Bark	Moorium
Bee	Morengomie
Bird	Joejiwert
Boomerang	Wannie

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ENGLISH	ABORIGINAL
Boat	Eunkoie
Big	Koorongandoo
Bald	Birrawil
Bad	Wiekeroo
Brave	Kitcherkwa
Blind	Mokin
Bleareyed	Nimnimkoor
Bitten	Ngomie
Blunt	Mortoo
Beat	Lurka
Bend	Purtanie
Bite	Boondan
Bleed	Kertrow
Boil	Thalourda
Break	Bookoin
Bring	Wywa
Bring Forth Young	Nycalamoom
Blow, as the Wind	Booronka
Build	Poorpa
Burn	Nunga
Bury	Turntungoo
Child (masculine)	Poopoop
Child (feminine)	Poopoopcour
Cousin	Winagoomoo
Children	Pienkumbools
Childlessness	Watty Pinkoo
Corpse	Koimabil
Cheeks	Tercoo
Chin	Poorpuganingin
Chest	Tungoo
Calf (of the leg)	Poorawoo
Cat	Koortowa
Cloud	Moornkie
Calm	Tycherry
Cold	Mirrinewma
Comet	Terariwil
Country	Ngerringitamgie
Creek	Paunoobarnawar
Chain of Ponds	Woondung Woondung
Cockatoo, yellow topknot	Kerangie
,, Major Mitchel's	Gellela
,, crestless pink eyes	Kurter
,, slate colour, crimson breast and crest	Willick Willick
,, black-red crest and tail	Tcherin
,, black-yellow crest and tail	Wirranie

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English	Aboriginal
Crow (carrion)	Wangie
,, (gregarious, and not carrion)	Warangan
Claw	Ginalapoo
Club	Pinpinbyganingie
Cowardly	Bambin
Cruel	Kooly Wootchoo
Cripple	Ngarpa
Call	Kurnda
Camp	Toorangie
Carry	Walliya
Catch	Kurka
Climb	Werwa
Come	Yanga
Comeback	Wirtoowa
Cook	Buka
Cry	Toomla
Cut (verb)	Galpoona
Cure	Pipagira
Daughter	Munkie
Daughter-in-Law	Methcoorie
Double Teeth	Wirpleangin
Dog	Wirrangin
Duck, black	Tarnawar
,, with fringe round bill	Ngananganie
,, teal	Berner
,, wood	Ngernie
, mountain	Nynkoornel
,, whistling	Wotchor
,, the tribe generisly	Tartamung
Down	Wawalloo
Deaf	Nurtulabil
Dame	Wirrewa
Dewy	Doordooroo
Die	Birra
Dig	Bunga
Dine	Boortoin
Divorce	Yerrin
Do	Ngunkoie
Drag	Leampoo
Dream	Yoe Yoe
Drink	Kopoe
Enemy	Cartpercartpie
Eye	Mirnoo
Eyelash	Wirringcoomirnoo
Eyelid	Wirtmirnoo

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English	Aboriginal
Eyeball	Wirtenmirnoo
Ear	Wirrumbool
Ear, love of	Moomwirrumbool
Evening	Borangie
East	Kurter
Earth	Tungie
Eagle	Wirpill
Emu	Kurwingie
Empty	Lathoo
Eat	Jakla
Evacuate (*i.e.*, fears)	Koonangin
Ever	Poorpooangan
Father	Mamoo
Father-in-Law	Ganthangathoo
Family	Kirtapinkangoewoo
Friend	Murnunyetic
Female, or Mother	Baboo
Forehead	Kinninew
Face	Tehampamirnoo
Front Teeth	Teangin
Forearm	Ngurnoonginoowo
Finger	Ngarringoor
Fist	Milpa
Foot	Chinnanew
Foot, sole of	Kellychinnanew
Flesh	Piankie
Fall	Boikin
Fog	Cowangie
Frost	Tennangin
Flood	Bongeroo
Fire	Warnowie
Flower	Peetchan
Fruit	Chirinew
Fish (verb)	Tiherael
Fly (noun)	Pitie
Frog	Neenie
Feather	Weertinew
Fin	Wernawoo
Flock	Ngullanguloo
Few	Ngimmananima
Far	Weryie
Fat	Piangwil
Far-sighted	Werimirnoo
Fast	Kerky Perting
Full	Wawyn
Fresh	Tangeroo

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English	Aboriginal
Fight	Thalcherung
Fish (noun)	Bundgell
Float	Chipa
Fly (verb)	Pika
Grandfather	Cockernoo
Grandmother	Cokinew
Guest	Wirker
Gum (belonging to teeth)	Boollorotakin
Gum (of a tree)	Kookoie
Grass	Woolnkie
Goose	Ngakie
Grey	Poolaroo
Good	Talko
Go	Yanawoo
Get	Manin
Give	Woekie
Husband	Murtoomé
Hast	Cokwawy
Head	Poorpie
Hearing	Derbima
Hair	Ngarranew
Hand	Murnanew
Hand, back of	Wirtmurnanew
Hip	Moollonew
Heel	Kunowoo
Heart	Monredoo
Hail (noun)	Pertowie
Heat	Mypantenie
Hill	Poorpoo
Hawk	Pirwie
High	Kirkarra
Handsome	Banie
Hard	Terma
Hurt	Toowa
Healthy	Booringer
Hungry	Birra Wotchowoo
He	Keelo
His	Kaykoonga
Him	Kaykunga
Himself	Noonyingum
Herself	Kiurnin
Hang	Pirtoowa
Hate	Kimowan
Hear	Derbimin
Hold	Tismaloonga

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English	Aboriginal
Hunt	Kerraworidoolie
Here	Kima
Infant	Neillumoom
Ice	Taán
Insects	Thoulum
(This name is applied to all insects having wings; those that creep are Bulla Bul).	
I (personal pronoun)	Yetty
Itself	Yelliwooroo
Instep	Witchinanew
Jaw	Kentenolurkin
Joint	Boondomboondomoo
Knee	Pirtinew
Kneecap	Nganipertinew
Kangaroo	Koorangie
Kick	Kirna
Kill	Sulkinuan
Kiss	Boondartarkow
Knot and Tie	Pirty Jeriming
Know	Nineawa
Lungs	Lango
Liver	Boetho
Lightning	Millagoo
Light	Yanna
Lizard (sleeping)	Wallup
,, (small fly catcher)	Turamunder
,, (fril)	Kentie
,, (with indimentary legs)	Eukoon
Laughing Jackass	Koeworie
Less	Enwgatum
Large	Murpur
Long	Toorangal
Low	Koomoowal
Load	Wirtoo
Low-sounding	Ngoomblngoomble
Lazy	Eval
Lame, in leg	Ngarpenngwngimgie
Lame, in arm	Tutchatartow
Lame, in hand	Tutchamurnangin
Lame, in foot	Tutchachinangin
Laugh	Weeia
Leave off, or behind	Watha
Lift	Wiewa
Live	Kinaroongaiva

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ENGLISH	ABORIGINAL
Lose	Willain
,, the Way	Willainiebirrie
Love	Koombooboko
Man	Wortongie
Mother	Baboo
Mother-in-Law	Mankooroongoo
Marriage...	Ngangkulung
Male	Mammoo
('Twill be seen that this is the same as father.)	
Mouth	Wooronew
Moustache	Moiyonworo
Matter	Potchonie
Moon	Mittian
Meteor	Putchema
Morning	Murmurnerp
Mountain	Bankool
More	Tummoo
My	Yanaiyow
Me	Yetty
(This, 'twill be seen, is the same as the personal pronoun I.)	
Myself	Nukioo
Marry	Woyinmurtoomie
Make	Waramie
Milk	Kayaniea Koorumboo
Nephew	Ngunungipie
Niell	Tchowilkoorie
Nose	Tchainchew
Nostril	Wotchootchainchew
Neck	Koorndoo
Nail	Lyreomurnangin
Nuckle	Yerywa
Noise	Ngoomblengoombloo
Night	Kuralie
North	Moiwellak
Nest	Soinoo
None	Biratha
Near	Walowal
Near-sighted	Walowalamirnoo
Never	Noongan
No	Watty
Old	Ngarumbin
(This term is applied to any old man, animal, or tree.)	
Old Woman	Gallour
Opossum...	Willengie

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ENGLISH	ABORIGINAL
Owl	Wirmal
Oar	Warkie
One	Kyup
One-eyed	Kyupmirnoo
Our	Ngallathong
Palm of Hand	Longmarnangin
Planet	Nginawoomurmurnerp
Plain	Wurkie
Privates (male)	Bonanabacurroot
,, (female)	Bottoo
Parrot	Koorankooran
Pigeon	Tuppie
Pelican	Pirtangal
Plover	Perit Perit
Pair	Politeula
Pleasant Smelling	Jirywotchoo
,, Tasting	Purtnema
Play	Wara
Pluck	Kirpa
Pour	Kangala
Puke	Kurma
Pull	Sutha
Push	Eurawa
Plant	Moorndie
Quail	Boorongie
Quick	Lyrka
Quench	Boetkna
Race	Tongeroondie
Rain	Mirtie
Root	Ngaryalloo
Rough	Kerrinkerrinoo
Raise	(See Lift)
Rise	Pikie
Run	Wirrwie
River	Barniwarroo
Stepfather	Kerumkerum Mamoo
Son	Wirtoowoo
Son-in-Law	(See Stepfather)
Step-son	Kerumkerumwertwoo
Sister	Meanie
Sister-in-law	Woengirie
Step-sister	Jerykoorie
Shoulder	Tchertirioo
Stomach	Mittoo

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ENGLISH	ABORIGINAL
Skin	Meetchoo
Swelling	Wawya
Sky	Tyrrily
Sound	Kulliar
Speak	Boolangboolang
Smoke	Pooringi
Sun	Nowie
Star	Toortie
Spring	Bakiootbakiootoo
Summer	Kurtie
Sunset	Boortowennowie
South	Tchalan
Shrub	(See Plant)
Stem	Poorwallangoo
Seed	Wirtiwoo
Sap	Nillangow
Sea	Ngamuth
Spring of Water	Merkin
Swamp	Totoieil
Snake	Kannie
Sinew	Wiranew
Swan	Koonoowar
Snipe	Quambalith
Sting	Koolinew
Shield	Murcur
Spear	Ptacumbicoinew
Small	Pawnoo
Short	Toloneu
Steep	Pillingaloo
Strong	Wonkoowie
Squinting	Wornmer
Stinking	Boangie
Salt	Cowie
Sweet	Wootchawootha
Sharp of Hearing	Derbimatungie
Silent	Koorgia
Soft	Polkoo
Sharp	Katie
Slow	Yarmbie
Sore	Wirpoo
Sore Head	Wiromapoorp
Sore Chest	Wirom Tungie
Sore Belly	Wirom Wotchowoo
Sick	Murranmurrinie
She	Koorgerung
Scratch	(See Dig)
Scream	(See Call)

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ENGLISH	ABORIGINAL
See	Nanga
Sew	Tirringa
Shake	(See Push)
Sleep	Koomba
Sit	Nganya
Sing	Warranga
Shout	(See Call)
Smell	Ngarwa
Speak	Werriea
Stand	Jerry
Start	Toongka
Steal	Pagn
Strip	Booroloo
Swim	Weeria
Temples	Kinnimiroo
Tears	Mirnooakayanie
Taste	Purtama
Throat	Tehackoorndoo
Thigh	Kerrywoo
Toe (great)	Bahchinangin
Thaw	Boria
Thunder	Munder
To-morrow Morning	Murmurnerpoo
Teal Duck	Berner
Tail	Westmoomoo
Tame	Loywill
Tender	Poorpoogoonyen
Tough	Terrima
Thirsty	Konema
Tired	Mikapinkoo
They	Wirriwa
Take	Manna
Taste	Purtuma
Think	Derbeima
Threaten	Koorngie
Throw	Moorooma
Thrust	(See Push)
Touch	Punnia
There	Kio
Uncle	Werpoolomamoo
Ugly	Wonkoorwil
Unkind	Nullungie
Virgin	Mulkoor
Valley	Doomdoomo

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ENGLISH	ABORIGINAL
egetables	Moornalhakumie
Widower...	Loorkoolahill
Woman	Lyoor
Wife	Murtoomie
Widow	Tungoor
Whiskers and Beard	Ngenninew
Wrist	Markmurnangin
Wound	Wirpii
Wind	Willangie
West	Tchaloop
Water	Kayanie
Waterhole, or Well	Yallum
Wing	Kerrytartow
Weapons...	Terkill
Weak	Dertindertine
Wild	Wilker
Warm	Nunga
We	Kinniathouna
Walk	Yana
Wash	Purta
Weep	(See Cry)
Whistle	Wirta
Winter	Myangie
Young Man	Kolkurn
,, Woman	Mooroongoor
,, Bird	Wirtiwood
Young	Ngerriwoo
You	Nginma
Your	Kinyie
Yes	Iya

Numerals.

1—Kyup.
2—Polite.
3—Polite Kyup.
4—Polite Polite.
5—Kyup Murnangin (or one hand).
6—Polite Polite Polite.
7—Polite Polite Polite Kyup.
8—Polite Polite Polite Polite.
9—Polite Polite Polite Polite Kyup.
10—Polite Murnangin (or two hands).

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Examples.

Yetty	Wirwie	Melbourne	Kurrawillow,
I	went (to)	Melbourne	yesterday,
nga	keelynowie	wirtoowa	kimma,
and	to-day	came back	here.

Yetty	nine	willker	wirangin	jakla
I	saw (a)	wild	dog	eating
talko	koorangie		keelynowie.	
(a) good	kangaroo		to-day.	

Watty	kayanie	jerry	yallum.
No	water	lies (in the)	well.
Kooronando		Nowie	kopa.
(the) great		Sun (has)	drank (it).

Wilker	wirangin	boondan	kingie
(a) wild	dog (did)	bite	your
kaatle	kurawillow,	yetty	nine
sheep	yesterday,	I	saw (him).

Kingie	murtoomoo	banie.
Your	sweetheart (is)	handsome.

Nginma	warramie	warnowie.
You	make (a)	fire.

Kinniathouma	nine	polite polite		kannie.
We	saw	four		snakes.

Keeloo	bokoin	kaykoonga	tertow.
He	broke	his	arm.

Nerteroo ?	Keelynowie.	Wintya ?	Boorongie.
When ?	To-day ?	Where ?	(in the) scrub

Ngallathong	Mamoo		jerry	Tyrrily.
Our	Father (that)		lies (in)	Heaven,
talko	kingie	nirrinew,	kingie	weeia
good (be)	your	name,	your	smile
yunga	kimma ;		kingie	ngamga
come	here,		your	wishes
lurka	kimma		tungu,	ngooly
(be) made	here		(on) earth	as
Tyrrily ;	woeka		ngallathong	hernimie
(in) Heaven,	give		us	bread
keelynowie,	nga		yakna	ngallathong
to-day,	and		take away	our

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wickeroo	warra,	ngooly	kinniathouma
bad	deeds	as	we
yakno	wickeroo	warra	neardoo
take away	(the) bad	deeds (of)	others
nga	tinda ngelletchie	watty	harrie
and	lead us	not (in	the) road
wickeroo	warra, nga	yakna	yethong
(of) bad	deeds, and	take away	evil
derbimin	tolking in,	nginma	kirtowel
thoughts	altogether.	You (are)	thousand
	kertowel	wonkeroo	
	thousand	powerful.	

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