

THE ABORIGINES OF AUSTRALIA.

BY EDWARD G. PORTER.

So few of our countrymen visit Australia that I venture to believe that a paper upon the Aborigines of that country may not be without interest to the members of this Society, even though the subject may seem remote from the province of our ordinary investigations. The continent of America, naturally, furnishes most of the topics for our proceedings, but I have noticed that we have always been friendly toward ethnological and anthropological matters, from whatever quarter they have come. When, therefore, the president kindly invited me to give the Society at this meeting some impressions which I had gathered during my recent journey in the far East, I concluded that I could offer nothing of greater value than some facts, not widely known in this country, which came under my observation during a pleasant sojourn of a few months last year among the antipodes.

I visited all the Australian colonies but one (West Australia), and saw their thriving capitals, many of the interior towns, some of the sheep and cattle stations, the largest gold and tin mines and plenty of the bush and scrub.

It is indeed a wonderful country; wonderful in its extent, its scenery and its products; totally unlike any other part of the world. Nowhere else have I seen tree-ferns forty feet in height, and the proud Eucalyptus towering to an altitude half as high again as our Bunker-Hill monument, considerably exceeding the *Sequoia gigantea* of California. In no other country have I been greeted by such natural curiosities as the kangaroo, the wallaby, the emu,

the platypus, the lyre-bird, the black swan and the laughing jackass.

But while I would gladly dwell upon the strange appearance of the country, its unique *fauna* and *flora*, and the abundant evidences of an imported civilization which is steadily advancing to subdue the continent, my object now is simply to describe that lonely and mysterious race, still found in the land, and, until recently, the only race that could properly be called Australian. That name is now being appropriated, with pardonable pride, by the new occupants of the soil, just as we Americans call ourselves by a name which, ethnologically, belongs to our predecessors, whom we have ousted from their fair domain. It is ever so. The dwellers are supplanted by the intruders; the weak yield to the strong; the savage retires before the civilized.

The traveller who to-day visits Sydney or Melbourne, would not be likely to meet a single representative of the Aborigines any more than he would encounter a red man on the streets of Boston or New York. But there are vast areas in the northern and western, as well as in the yet unexplored central portions of that country, where the original tenant still roams at will. The colonial governments have obtained an approximate estimate of the number of the blacks living in the more settled parts, and report about thirty thousand, many of whom are classed as civilized, being peaceably disposed, and in some cases, earning their living as shepherds, stockmen or farm-hands. Some roam about in bands like gypsies and are allowed to camp for a month or two at a time on crown lands near the larger towns, where blankets are furnished them once a year at the police-barracks. Others are cared for at certain stations in each colony provided by the government, or by benevolent societies. At these stations, instruction is given in a few practical industries, also in the simple branches of

a common-school education, and in the fundamental principles of Christianity.

A much larger number, it is believed, is still at large in the bush; how many, it is impossible to say. Some experts suggest one hundred thousand, and some a much larger number. Of course there is no means of calculating the probable number at the time the country was first opened, a hundred years ago, but it is well known that there has been a rapid decline wherever the black man has come in contact with the white. In Tasmania, the last representative of the Aborigines of that island died in 1876, —Trucaninni,—a woman, whose skull I saw in the museum at Hobart.

The inquiry naturally arises: Who are these people and where did they come from, and to what branch of the human family do they belong? Much learning and ingenuity have been expended upon the subject without clearing up the mystery which envelops it. Something, however, has been gained. All observers are practically agreed that the race is one of great antiquity, and descended from a common stock. Their physical and mental characteristics, the tribal languages, and certain widely-prevailing customs show this conclusively. Their ancestors probably landed at a remote period in the north or northwest—on the coast of the Timor sea—and gradually spread themselves in three directions,—southwest, south and southeast.

They seem to have had very little intercourse with their island neighbors in the surrounding seas, for they differ radically from them all, whether Maories, Melanesians, Papuans, or Malays. Are they Africans? Many would think so. But the woolly hair, the thick lip and the projecting heel of the negro are wanting. Mr. Curr, one of the recognized authorities, maintains the African theory in part, but says that the negro must have been crossed by some other race, what one he does not venture to suggest.

The Australian, while differing from the African in a few important physical features, resembles him very much in color, size, language, customs and superstitions. He may have had his origin, I think, in some negro type of an early time, before the negro race had developed its present status in Africa. The Australian of to-day may resemble the African of long ago in language and customs even more than the African of to-day does. Wallace inclines to the opinion which several writers have recently held, that these Aborigines may have come from certain hill-tribes in Central India, as there are several physical and linguistic points of resemblance. But this theory has not yet been established.

The Australian is not quite as black as the negro, but rather of a dark chocolate hue. His hair is usually jet black, and curly but not woolly. Men and women wear it of the same length, and often tied in a knot with grass or feathers on the top of the head. The men wear fine bushy beards kept rather short. The forehead is low and receding. The eyebrows are prominent. The eyes deep sunken, the eyelashes long. The pupil is large and black, and the white of the eye is yellowish and often blood-shot. The expression of the eye seemed to me generally soft, lustrous and animated. They have far better sight than we. In fact, all their senses are keener than ours, owing of course to their mode of life. Their nose is flat and triangular, the nostrils are distended, and the septum is often pierced for an ornament or the pipe. Their mouth is large, but adorned with the finest teeth I have ever seen. Their tones of voice are rather harsh, but more musical, I thought, than the average Asiatic's. Their neck is shorter and thicker than ours, as may be seen when they wear our coats and collars. Their skin is soft and velvety. The odor is offensive, but, I should say, not as bad as that of the African. Can any one tell me whether it is true that the gradation of odors is in proportion to the degree of

darkness in the skin? Their legs and arms are slender. The feet are flat and the heel protrudes slightly. They usually pick up things with their toes to save stooping; for, be it remembered, this is a very erect and dignified race. Their movements are easy and graceful, though I noticed a tendency to walk, as savages are supposed to walk, with their toes turned inward, unlike the Javanese, who always walk proudly as if they were actors on the stage.

The average height of the Australian is less than the English but more than the French. He is much less muscular than either. The women usually have small limbs, a prominent abdomen and hanging breasts. The old women, I must say, are veritable hags. Their little children are pretty, but they soon outgrow their charms. A woman will seldom have more than three or four children. They are weaned late, and occasionally one is seen nursing at the same time with a younger member of the same happy family. Childbirth, it is said, causes but little trouble among them. Infanticide is common for various reasons; but the mother generally seems fond of her child, protects it, sings to it rudely, and carries it about in a basket or on her shoulder, though sometimes, it must be said, she takes it up by the legs as we do a chicken. As a race they are all short-lived, seldom exceeding the age of fifty years. Half-castes are not uncommon in the white settlements. They resemble the native mother more than the European father. They are considered, however, more capable and promising than the ordinary blacks.

The Australians differ widely from other races in their mode of life. They have never cultivated the soil, never reared cattle, nor kept domestic animals, except their mangy, half-starved dingo dog. They have never built permanent dwellings; have never boiled water for cooking; never have manufactured anything except their weapons, a few ornaments and the scantiest kind of clothing. They have never even had idols or sacrifices or any form of di-

vine worship. I doubt if there is another race on the face of the earth, unless it be the Terra del Fuegians, who have developed so few of the attributes of our common humanity.

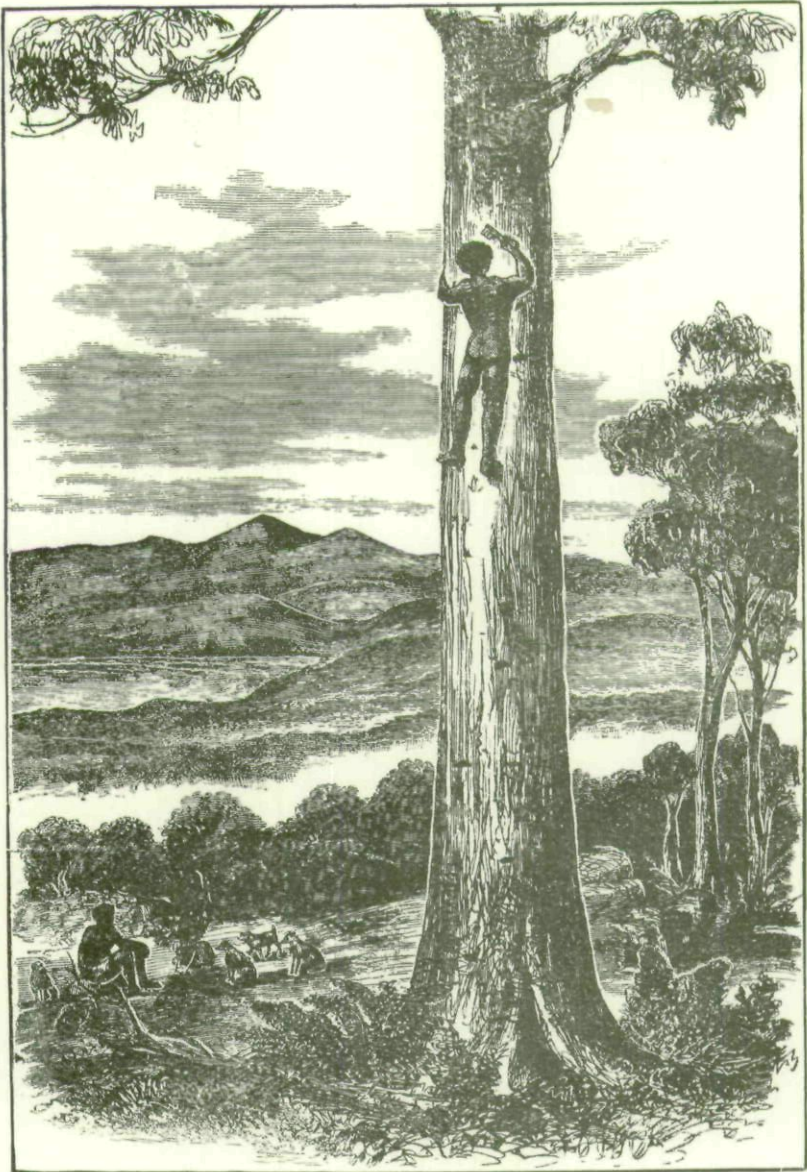
For food, these people have always depended upon such animal and vegetable products as nature furnished ready at hand. Their menu is extensive and their taste by no means epicurean. The choicest of their viands is the opossum, though they never scorn the wallaby, or the kangaroo, when they can get it. They will eat all manner of birds from the emu down to the wren. Fish of all kinds and water-fowl, turtles and frogs, lizards and snakes, are ranked among the staples. And, for side-dishes, they relish worms, grasshoppers, grubs, caterpillars, ants, moths, and maggots. Their vegetable courses are not so varied, but include leaves, herbs, grasses, *fungi* and the roots of bulrushes and wild yams. Their only drink is water which they sometimes mix with honey.

The whole race is tainted with cannibalism, though the practice disappears wherever the country is settled by the whites. In the North and West it prevails, although I believe not to the extent that is generally supposed. Its origin may be traced to a scarcity of food; and who shall say that any race, under the prolonged pressure of famine, would be exempt from the temptation, horrible as it is! We know that some of the escaped British convicts from Botany Bay, roaming in the bush for months, and failing to find ordinary food sufficient to sustain life, have found themselves compelled to cast the fatal lot and select a victim of their own number to save the remainder from starvation. So far as I could learn, the native Australians hold the custom in reserve for emergencies. Lumholtz, the plucky Norwegian naturalist, who has just spent four years in Queensland, chiefly on the Herbert river, has given his book the rather sensational title, "Among Cannibals," yet he does not record a single instance of the practice as having fallen under his own eye. No doubt these

poor children of nature would seek to conceal such things from any white man, and in ordinary times they would not be driven to the necessity of feeding upon human flesh. With rare exceptions, they do not eat any of their own tribe, but only their enemies. It is said that the white man is not very palatable to them, being too salt for their taste, while the Chinaman, whose food is chiefly rice, makes a very acceptable meal. They roast or broil their meat on hot ashes, skin and all, and eat it by tearing the flesh with their fingers and teeth, devouring everything but the bones. Sometimes a kangaroo or emu is roasted whole. Hot stones are then placed inside the animal and as it is turned on the fire, they roll about and give it an effectual grilling. Green grass is often placed on the ashes to protect the food. The teeth of many old people are worn to the gums by the inevitable grinding of so much dirt with their food. The whole process of eating reminded me of a political barbecue or a Rhode Island clam-bake.

The old way of obtaining fire was by the friction of two sticks—usually of grass-wood (*xanthorrhœa*) twelve to fourteen inches long. Using one as a drill, they could easily bore a hole through the other and catch the sparks upon dry bark or leaves. This operation requires great care to keep up a steady friction and prevent the chilling of the wood. Faraday, referring to this in one of his lectures, said he had never succeeded in the attempt, nor had he ever heard of a white man who had done so. The natives delight in the crack of our matches when they can get them. In removing from one camp to another, the women usually carry the fire-stick. They always keep a fire burning in front of their tents, which open on the lee side, and squat around it at meal-time and through the evening. When sticks require to be broken, the average blackfellow will break them, not over his knee, as we should, but over his head.

Their huts—or *gunyahs*, as they are often called—are easily put together in a single hour on the approach of cold weather or the rainy season. A ridge-pole is supported by forked sticks, and boughs or sheets of bark or opossum skins are spread over it. One room answers for the whole family, and they are usually very social when together. They talk, laugh, tell stories, and sing in a melancholy way after a fashion all their own, chiefly in half tones, very high and then very low. Nothing escapes their observation. Many a good joke is enjoyed at the expense of some white person. During the day, the men may often be seen giving lessons to the small boys in the art of throwing the spear or the boomerang. The women—called *lubras* or *gins*—keep by themselves most of the time. They have to do the hard work, grubbing with yam-sticks for roots, carrying their children—whom they call *piccaninies*—on their shoulders, and bringing in the daily supplies in rude baskets. The young women often decorate their hair with beeswax and feathers and cockatoo crests. They usually wear a girdle of leaves or feathers, and sometimes they adorn themselves with our civilized trinkets, such as necklaces, combs and mirrors, when they can get them. Any single article of our clothing they will don with great pride and consider it full dress. One of their noted women, Queen Gooseberry, the widow of King Bungaree, was often seen by the colonists with nothing on but an old straw bonnet and a waist-cloth. Three black-fellows were engaged by a friend of mine to work on a farm, and when they arrived, they had one boot, an old cravat and a waistcoat between them. Whatever clothing they get from the whites, they will wear in turn, each one of the tribe claiming a share of it. Both sexes scarify their bodies, punch the nose, and anoint themselves with 'possum fat and red ochre. The tattooing is done by cutting parallel gashes across the chest, shoulders and back, and blowing wood-ashes into the wounds, which then swell into



ASCENT OF A TREE.

FROM A SKETCH BY JOHN F. MANN,

permanent ridges. Sometimes they let ants walk about in the sores thus created. Such flesh marks are supposed to indicate rank.

These curious people dread the rain and will huddle together, whenever it comes, under any obtainable shelter; yet in the North, they are very fond of bathing. They can all swim and dive, even the little children, and often they remain a long time under water. One of their tricks to escape observation, when pursued, is to lie down at the bottom, with one end of a hollow reed in the mouth and the other end above the surface. They are naturally very skilful in spearing fish under water. In the South, where the weather is colder, they do not take to the water so readily, and in fact they are very filthy for the want of it.

Their canoes are made of sheets of bark eight to twelve feet long, about three feet wide and eight inches deep, and are held open by cross-sticks. They draw but a few inches of water and yet will carry a very considerable load. Having no keel they overturn easily. The natives never venture far out at sea. If pursued by sharks, they paddle away with all their might for the nearest shore, throwing out as they go, any fish they happen to have.

Nothing in Australia interested me more than the tree-climbing. These sons of the forest have always depended upon the trees for many of their supplies, such as bark, *fungi*, bird's eggs and opossums. Often the lowest branches of the gum-trees will be fifty to eighty feet above the ground, and the trunk will measure twenty feet or more in girth, so that it cannot be grasped with the arms like the palm-trees of India. The Australian, however, always finds a way to do what he wishes, and armed with nothing but his trusty stone hatchet, and perhaps with a 'possum-belt he will cut notches an inch or two deep, step by step, two for his hands and two for his feet, and ascend with surprising rapidity, by hugging the tree very closely and inserting his fingers and toes in the notches.

It would be a perilous thing for any white man to undertake. Sometimes the blacks use a long vine-rope, which is passed around the tree and held tightly as a support in climbing. Accidents seldom happen among these born gymnasts. There are no keener observers of nature. A broken twig, a displaced stone, notched trees or crushed grass will be sure to reveal to them the presence of food of some kind. Sometimes their instinct comes too near home to be agreeable to the English squatter. Once when encouraged to plant potatoes, the blackfellows went out in the night and dug up the seed and ate it. When expostulated with, their only reply was "Why bury good food?" They never have had any idea of agriculture.

Some of their weapons are unique and ingenious, especially the boomerang, which has obtained a wide celebrity. It is a wooden blade, shaped something like a scimeter, curved in its own plane, from sixteen to thirty odd inches in length, and from an inch and a half to three inches in width. One side is plane, the other slightly convex. The edges are sharp and the cusps rounded or slightly pointed. The lower end is cross-grooved to aid in holding it. The boomerang is cut from the natural bend of the heavy iron-wood tree, and scraped down to the required thickness by the use of sharp stones. The curve often approaches a right angle and must lie in the wood itself.

I could only admire the dexterity of the native youths in hurling this their favorite weapon. Holding it in the right hand, with the flat side down and the concave side forward, the thrower will gracefully take his aim, and then, with a run and a shout, he will fling his missile with all his might off into the air. Up and away it goes to a great height, like a bird with wings expanded. Sometimes, revolving on its axis, it describes a great circle; or it may take opposite directions, or even remain for a moment stationary. It can be made to *ricochet*, and to spin against the wind, and to return and strike a designated object near the start-

ing-point. No one but the thrower knows where it will hit. It may be hurled with killing effect into a flock of pigeons or ducks. I heard of an instance at one of the camps in which the projectile came in contact with a gentleman's hat and cut it off as clean as a razor would have done. He was fortunate to escape with his head. Sometimes after striking the ground, it will ascend again. Heavy boomerangs may be thrown low so as to roll like a wheel along the ground with such force as to knock over a man or a kangaroo. They often come in contact with an object without being arrested and will fly off at a tangent with apparently undiminished force. I have never seen any two of these strange weapons exactly alike. Every native knows the quality of his own boomerang, and will practice a long time with a new one to be sure of getting familiar with its peculiarities.

The boomerang has perplexed many learned mathematicians in Australia and Europe. Several German observers are now trying to discover the secret of its curious flight. Herr Froebel, a manufacturer of toy boomerangs in Weimar, claims that the curve must be broken near the middle, leaving two arms of unequal length, in the proportion of 4 to 5. The longer arm must be pared down so as exactly to balance the shorter one.

It is remarkable that so rude a race should have discovered such an occult principle as seems to be lodged in this unique weapon. One thinks of the old myth of Thor's hammer returning to the hands of its thrower, but there can be no possible connection between the Norse warriors and the Australian savages. Some writers have suggested that the throwing-stick of the Dravidians in India was the same as the boomerang, but Brough Smyth discredits the idea, and says that the Australian weapon has no duplicate in history.

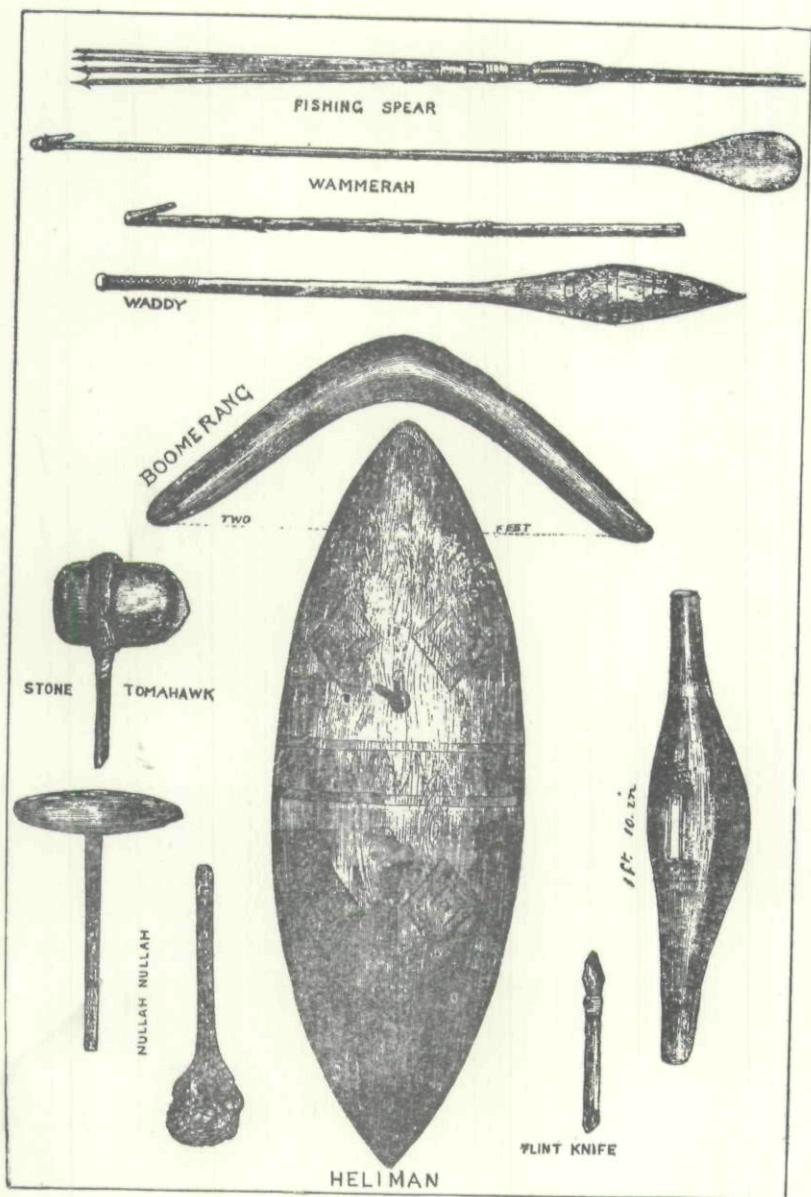
The Aborigines never knew the use of the bow and arrow, but the spear and *wammera*, or throwing-stick,

appear to have been a very good substitute. The spear is made in a variety of ways. For war purposes, it is eight or ten feet long and weighs about four pounds. Sometimes it is barbed out of the solid wood and sometimes tipped with flint or quartz. Such a spear can be thrown seventy feet. For the chase, a lighter kind is made, which can easily be thrown one hundred, or even one hundred and fifty feet. The spear is hurled with great effect by means of the *wammera*, a stick about three feet long and shaped something like a long-handled spoon, the spoon part being rather flat and frequently used as a paddle when fishing from a canoe. By this simple gun-like contrivance, the spear is thrown with unerring aim, but it is eluded in war with surprising ease by the agility of the enemy, and by the skilful use of the shield.

One of the recognized punishments among the tribes is the "ordeal of spears." The culprit, condemned for a certain crime, is obliged to stand off at a distance, perfectly nude, but armed with a shield, and there receive from twenty to fifty spears, according to the nature of his offence. The spears are thrown only one at a time, but in such rapid succession that the unfortunate victim has little breathing space between. Yet ordinarily he will dodge the spears or receive them on his shield with marvellous facility. Sometimes the shots are fatal, but when a fellow undergoes the ordeal in safety, he is completely absolved, and elevated to a higher rank than he had before.

So accustomed are the blacks to the use of the spear on all occasions, that they think they have a right to try it upon anything that crosses their path, whether it be wild or tame. So they instinctively let fly at wallaby or sheep, emu or chickens, and often to the great discomfiture of the English settlers. Women never use the spear.

The common shield, or *heliman*, is a stout sheet of wood, oval-shaped, about three feet long and half as broad, and three-fourths of an inch thick, usually retaining the natu-



ABORIGINAL IMPLEMENTS.

DRAWN BY JOHN F. MANN.

ral curve of the tree. A *heliman* that has stood the test of spears without splitting is considered a great acquisition. It is often painted grotesquely with a device remotely suggesting a coat-of-arms.

One of their most useful implements is the stone hatchet or tomahawk, which is always at hand. The edge is obtained by striking off flakes and grinding upon rocky ledges. The handle is either a split stick, or a bundle of twigs twisted together and secured by grass-tree gum and fibre twine. No axes with holes in them have ever been found. This is the ordinary tool for making spears, shields, boomerangs and clubs, for stripping bark and cutting 'possums out of the trees, and for many other everyday conveniences of savage life, but it is seldom used in battle.

The common meat-knife is made of a flat piece of wood with sharp pieces of quartz fastened to the edge. Their cutting-tools are mostly of flint and shells. They cut their hair with clam-shells or sharp stones, or, quite as often, burn it off with a firebrand.

In addition to the spear and the boomerang, their common weapons are the *waddy* and the *nulla nulla*. These are stout, big-headed clubs of the toughest wood, resembling somewhat the celebrated "morning-star" of the Middle Ages in Europe, and, I should say, equally effective in a hand-to-hand fight. They are sometimes thrown at game on the hunt. I have also seen the two-handed broad-sword of hard wood, about five inches wide and very long. The women are expected to gather up the weapons, and to protect a fallen warrior.

The blacks in their primitive condition are fortunately not often sick, but when they adopt the habits of civilized people, they succumb to many serious troubles. They will perspire in woolen blankets all day to keep up appearances, and then at night, when they need them, they will cast them aside and enjoy the luxury of sleeping in the old-

fashioned way, naked. And so they get cold, and contract fever, pneumonia or rheumatism, and may often be said, literally, to die of blankets. They are generally kind to their sick, and acquainted with the properties of certain herbs and roots. Many ailments are relieved by rubbing the body with the astringent sap of the bloodwood tree. A counter-irritation is readily obtained by having the patient stand on an ant-hill for a few minutes.

The Medicine-man, or "Kooradgee" as he is called, often fills his mouth with water and spurts it over the sore part. One of their favorite prescriptions for a man with a diseased limb is to sit with it buried in the ground until he recovers. Fortunately their wounds heal rapidly. The Kooradgee enjoys special consideration among the tribes, and cases of dispute are referred to him as umpire. He is regarded as a conjurer or wizard, and usually he carries a rock crystal in his armpit, rolled up in dirty rags. This charm is sacred in their eyes, and no woman is allowed to look upon it. Any good piece of cut glass, like the stopper of a decanter, will suit them just as well. Their surgery, it need hardly be said, is of the rudest kind, but of great account in the practice of two mysterious ceremonies universal among these people; one, which confers the status of manhood, and the other, sometimes called *mika*, a terrible rite, described by Eyre, Lumholtz and others, designed to prevent an increase of the population.

From all that we can gather, the life of a young man must be far from happy in those camps. He has to be initiated into all the mysteries of war, religion and the chase by undergoing a severe ordeal called the *bora*. He has to prove his ability by abstaining from food, by publicly throwing the spear and the boomerang, by climbing the tall Eucalyptus, and by having his two upper front teeth knocked out with a tomahawk. Until this is done, he has no social position.

The Aborigines have a very popular entertainment called *corroboree*, which I believe is not known elsewhere. The spectacle takes place only at night, and embraces music, dancing and the drama. Men are the chief performers, though women often act as musicians. A level spot is chosen, and faggots and leaves are piled up all around and set on fire, to throw a bright light upon the scene. The dancers decorate their bodies fantastically with elaborate designs in pipe clay, and brandish their weapons vigorously. They spring from the ground, spread their knees and draw up their legs like a jumping-jack, so that the soles of their feet touch each other, then they all come to the ground simultaneously with a heavy thud.

Their songs resemble somewhat those that are heard in Asiatic countries, and consist chiefly of monotonous and plaintive repetitions. Their tunes are, to my ears, less guttural and more harmonious than those of the Turk, or Arab. Several of their songs, including the *Koorinda Bria* have been set to music by the late Mr. Nathan. I shall not soon forget their pleasant *cooey* signal—a loud, clear call from the throat—which can be heard at a great distance. It suggested to my mind the *iodel* of the Tyrol-ese, or, still more, the sweet *barcarolle* of the Dalmatians. The rising or falling of the last note indicates which one shall wait for the other. Their hearing, like all their other senses, is very acute. They will detect the presence of game or water like a dog. They find their way straight through the bush with marvellous facility where a white man would be bewildered or lost.

The different tribes are in the habit of sending messengers to each other at certain intervals to convey or obtain information. The message is carved in signs on a stick, and carried in a netted band which is worn around the head. The messenger's life is sacred in peace or war. He is generally one of the older men. Light-bodied widowers are said to be especially eligible to the office. They serve

without pay and are always treated with marked civility. They travel fifty or a hundred miles, and are absent perhaps a month or more. In approaching a camp, the messenger advances cautiously, and when within forty or fifty yards, he sits down in solemn silence until one of the tribe to which he comes, lights a fire. This is a sign of hospitality, and they begin to draw nearer together and exchange courtesies and receive communications.

The Australians have no written language. Bleek divided their various dialects into three general divisions. Northern, Southern and Tasmanian. The Southern is the best known through the proximity of European settlements and the study of the missionaries. Of the Northern, we know, as yet, very little, and the Tasmanian has ceased altogether. The grammar is somewhat developed, but the verb is wanting in most of them, and there is no vocabulary for expressing general or abstract ideas. There are sufficient resemblances among them to show a common origin. Along the Murray and Darling rivers, substantially one language is spoken, but in the mountain sections of New South Wales, there are many distinct dialects.

The names of places and things struck me as often very euphonious; e. g., *Paramatta, Illawarra, Terriboo, Larra, Yandilla, Bundara, Mooramoora, Yara Yara, Wallaroo*. It is amusing to notice how the English, here as in India and China, have distorted some of the native names, as *Eurobodalla*—a really beautiful word—shortened into *Bodalla*, to which there might be no objection, but when the change goes on and we hear the colonists speaking of “Boat Alley,” the pedigree of the word would hardly be recognized. The blacks, however, it must be confessed, have equal difficulty with our English words; e. g., Cape Howe they call “Gabo,” and windmill, “wooloomooloo.”

Their numerals are very limited, hardly exceeding three. When they wish to express a higher number the word is

repeated, and the fingers are freely used. Thus on the Northeast coast *bolworra* is the word for two. This is shortened into *bull*, and *bull bull* means more than two, perhaps half a dozen. *Cowal* means plenty, and *cowal cowal* a great abundance.

The religion of these poor savages is very obscure. Those who have studied them the most assert that they have no knowledge of the existence of a Supreme Being and hardly any of a future life, and no idea of worship or sacrifice, or even idolatry. But they believe in an Evil Spirit which, when talking to the whites, they call "devil devil," and which they fear as malicious, cruel and vindictive. They have various ways of describing him. They say he has countless eyes and ears, runs very fast, has sharp claws, and spares neither old nor young. They often change their camp to evade this dreadful enemy. Some old men are credited with having had personal encounters with him, and are consequently held in great reverence. Christianity has obtained but a slight foothold among them, owing partly to their extreme degradation, and partly, I fear, to the deplorable effects of their contact with unprincipled whites, who have abused them in many ways, inflamed them with liquor, and taught them all the vices that infest our civilization. The half-castes are stronger, physically and mentally, than the pure blacks, and as might be expected, acquire our habits and faith more readily. They are relatively numerous, and efforts are being made to merge them into the general population.

The natives never speak of their dead, so they have no history; not even myths or legends. The oldest man they can remember they consider to have been the first man. The dead are disposed of in various ways. The body is sometimes wrapped in bark or skins, and put under heavy stones, or on a high framework of sticks, as a protection against dogs. Sometimes it is placed in a hollow tree and

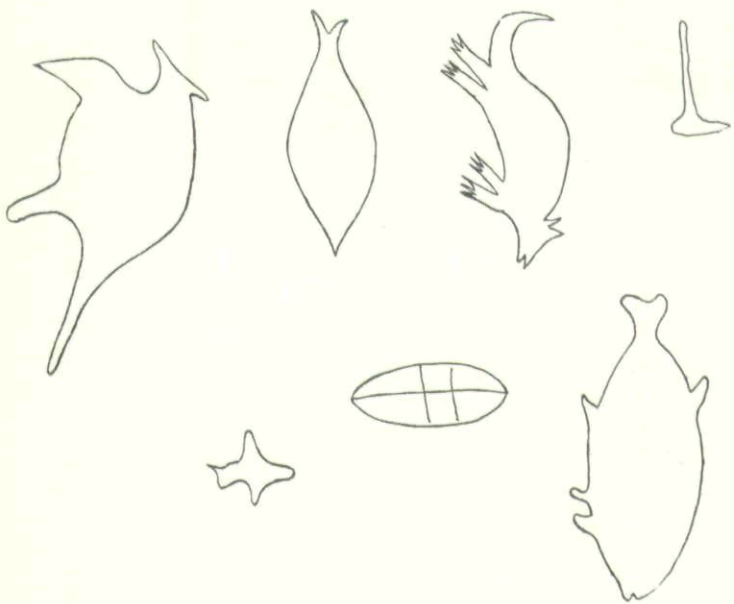
sealed up with clay. Sometimes it is buried and sometimes burned. Occasionally it is dried into a kind of mummy, in the sun or over a slow fire, and carried about with the tribe or left in some lonely spot. The mourning lasts for a few days only. The skull is often preserved as a drinking cup. Those natives who have had much acquaintance with the colonists are now inclined to bury their dead, and they have mingled a little Christianity with a good deal of ambition when they say, as I have heard, "Blackfellow go in ground, come up whitefellow."

In a few localities near the salt water, mounds are seen covered with earth, and evidently old. When excavated, they are found to consist of oyster and mussel shells.

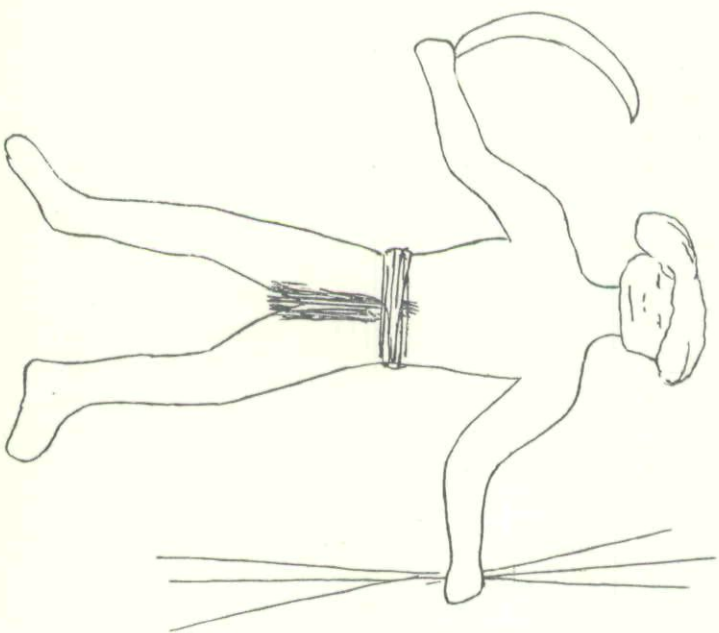
Their rock-carvings, so called, are only outline sketches of men, fish, animals, &c. They are sometimes seen on the top of large, flat rocks. There is no symbolism or mystery, I think, to be attached to them.

These strange people have no marriage laws. Wives are obtained by strategem, purchase or abduction, and readily exchanged on occasions. Polygamy is common among all the tribes; but consanguineous marriages they abhor. Kissing is as rare as in Asiatic countries. A mother will show her affection for her child, not by kissing but by smelling it. A family clan numbers from twenty to thirty; a tribe, ordinarily, from two hundred to three hundred. The tribal affairs are managed by a council of the older men.

Mr. Curr, who has studied the Australians closely, says they cannot be raised to our civilization in one or two generations, but might, possibly, after a continuous training for a long period. They are keener and more observant, he says, than the European peasant. They have the qualities of young children; are fond of pictures and stories; are easily pleased or troubled; are wild from habit, capricious, humorous, improvident, and live without much thought or reason. Their lack of moral restraint has involved them in many sufferings at the hands of the rough whites. Much of



ABORIGINAL DRAWINGS.
SYDNEY COMMON.



ON A ROCK BETWEEN BRISBANE WATER
AND
HAWKESBURY RIVER.

the mischief charged upon the natives might easily be traced to the brutal conduct of ex-convicts and others, who have often treated them like dogs, and shot them down without the slightest cause.

Eyre and Sturt and Grey give many instances of their honesty, justice and humanity. As for treachery and cunning, they are in the breast of every savage, and are regarded as cardinal virtues—lawful weapons, offensive and defensive. But in judging of them, we must remember that these qualities are not yet wholly rooted out of our civilized races.

The colonial governments have provided liberally for the protection of the Aborigines. A special department watches over their interests, and distributes rations, clothing and medicines. Large reservations have been set apart for them, amounting in South Australia alone to 670,000 acres. In Victoria, there are two government and four mission stations. These mission stations, or farms, are supported by voluntary contributions, and furnish educational, religious and industrial instruction for considerable numbers of blacks, old and young. They live in neat cottages, do their own work, enjoy a good degree of freedom, and are subject to friendly and wholesome christian discipline. The old people make baskets and mats, and sometimes carve wooden objects. The strong men work on the farm and the children attend school. The regulations are enforced by the superintendent, who lives with his family at the station, and exercises a strong personal influence over the whole establishment. They all pick up English enough to understand the requirements of daily life. They are disinclined to severe labor, but when wisely managed, they do very well at repairing buildings and fences, making roads, raising crops, shearing sheep and tending cattle. They are particularly fond of horses and ride like born cavaliers. The children show a fair interest in their lessons, and I

thought their writing-books as good as the average in our own schools. They are all fond of holidays, and often get special favors in that direction as a reward for good conduct. They can run and hurrah, and play football, marbles and leap-frog as well as any boys in the world. There is, however, always a tinge of wild blood in their veins which cannot be eradicated. I have heard of instances in which young persons, who had received a good christian training for years, and were even admitted to the communion of the Church, who yet after all, under the strange spell of heredity, would secretly throw away their clothes and take to the bush and disappear from the white settlements altogether.

The extinction of the Aborigines may be delayed in some quarters for a time, but it is sure to come. They are steadily fading away before the touch of the invading Briton. Large as Australia is, it is not large enough for these two races to exist side by side. The stronger has come to stay. The weaker will have to go.

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