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From the SOCIETY.—Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London, vol. 5, No. 4.

From the EDITOR.—Nature (to date).

FOR THE MUSEUM.

From Prof. STRUTHERS.—Skull of a Chinese individual; skull from Aberdeen.

From Rev. WALTER GREGOR.—Skull from a kist in Banffshire.

Two skulls, one being that of a Chinese individual, the gift of Professor Struthers, were exhibited.

A skull from a kist in Banffshire was also exhibited, by the Rev. Walter Gregor.

The Chairman exhibited, on behalf of Captain Edge, R.N., an idol from Nicobar.

The following paper was read by the author :

The INHABITANTS of CAR NICOBAR. By W. L. DISTANT, M.A.I.

THE following short account of some of the manners and customs of the inhabitants of Car Nicobar, is extracted from my journal kept during a visit to that island in the months of May and June 1868. A trip for the benefit of my health on board a trading brig from Penang, which remained at Car Nicobar for upwards of four weeks, afforded me some fair opportunities for observation. I had also the benefit of the captain's experience, the result of regular trading with this island for a series of some six or seven years.

Car Nicobar is the most northern of the Nicobar islands, and a description of its inhabitants will scarcely apply to the other islands of the group, which were little visited at the time of my journey, and whose inhabitants were reported to be of a more ferocious and less trustworthy character. The inhabitants of Car Nicobar are a tall and muscular race, larger in stature than the average Malay, and darker also in the colour of the skin; hair long and straight, worn generally to about the shoulders, except when mourning for the dead, when the head is closely shaven. The countenances of the men have usually good-humoured expressions, with dark, restless, observing eyes, always watchful, and quick to catch any characteristic or peculiarity. Their memories are particularly retentive, and they readily acquire a sufficient knowledge of the different languages spoken by the various traders who visit the island. Disease seems very rare among them. During the time I remained there, I only observed one case of paralysis, which had deprived a man of

the use of his right side, and a few cases of common ailments incidental to children. They make great use of the big toe as an opposable thumb, rarely bending to pick up any small thing with the hand from the ground.

The dress of the men is of the most primitive description; usually a string round the waist, supporting a narrow strip of cloth passed between the legs. But the chiefs, or head men, before strangers, adopt a more extensive apparel, according to the extent of their possessions in old clothes which they may have received in barter from the European traders. The regular London high-crowned hat is in particular demand, and a fortunate possessor of one of these may be seen strutting about with great self-complacency, though the remainder of his apparel may often consist of nothing but the string and cloth aforesaid. The hat is also found useful for carrying the different testimonials he may have received from the captains of other vessels. The dress of the women consists of a long piece of cloth, wound round the body, fastened at the breast, and extending below the knees. Trinkets ornament the nose; they perforate the lobe of the ear in a large and hideous manner (a custom also of the men), coils of brass or steel wire are worn above the ankle, or as bracelets for the wrist. Blue seems the favourite colour in the dress of the women; fancy colours, in which red predominates, are in greatest demand for the somewhat scanty attire of the men.

Their houses are in the form of a cone or bee-hive, supported on piles, so that the tallest man can walk underneath. The roof is neatly thatched; the sides are composed of bamboos, thickly and regularly laced together. Access is obtained by a bamboo ladder, which is usually pulled up at night. These houses are generally in groups of from ten to twelve in number, thus forming a succession of small villages (if they may be called so), and each has its head man, who seems to be invested with a certain amount of governing power.

At the invitation of a head man I paid a visit to one of these houses. Following my guide, and climbing the bamboo ladder, I entered a circular apartment, incidental to the structure of the dwelling. The floor was composed of laths of split bamboo, the apertures between which, allowed a delicious current of air to permeate the room. There was a fire made on a basket of sand, and a general air of cleanliness and neatness was most observable. As the guest, I was conducted to a very fair specimen of an arm-chair, evidently constructed from observations made of one of those articles on board some vessel. From the centre of the roof were suspended the wooden effigies of a man and woman in an attitude, obtained, I presume, from some vessel, which, my host dogmatically informed me, were the representations of the

first man and woman. I was pestered with inquiries of the outside world, particularly as to Queen Victoria ;—what sort of a house that august lady resided in, and as to how many sepoys she had in her dominion. A woman was suckling an infant, whilst two small boys, apparently from ten to twelve years of age, were each nursing another baby. It seems a custom among these people, that so soon as a child is physically capable, its duty shall at once be considered to carry a smaller one about, and the number of these nurses with their charges that one meets with, is rather considerable. The children are not carried as in England, but astride the left hip, as is usual in the East. Most of these people seem to possess two habitations, one near the sea, the other some little distance inland.

Their religion, from outward protestation or observance, seems very little. They believe in a good and in an evil spirit. The latter they invest with a personality, and seem to fear the most. They believe he resides in the woody interior of the island, but consider he is only to be feared if they are dishonest, untruthful, take more than one wife, or injure their neighbours. I was informed by the captain with whom I was passenger, that at certain times each village is supposed to be visited by his Satanic majesty, and that at those times a general exodus of the inhabitants takes place. A large lizard is regarded with superstition, as, on my endeavouring to shoot one, I was told that I should bring disease and trouble upon myself if I succeeded. They are very honest. On the arrival of a trading vessel, they at once swarm on board, select the various articles they require, and take them away with them, stipulating to pay a certain number of cocoa-nuts, deliverable on the beach by a certain day (each man possessing a certain number of trees), which obligations are always faithfully fulfilled. Articles were actually bartered by the captain I was with, for cocoa-nuts to be delivered on his return in about three months' time. I was informed that murder, quarrelling and robbery, were quite unknown among them. They have but one wife, and look upon in chastity as a very deadly sin. In fact, though harmless and friendly, the slightest disrespect to their women would probably be visited by murderous consequences. The head men are in the habit of saving a certain amount of money to enable them to visit the nearer ports, such as Madras, Rangoon, Calcutta, etc., and during their stay in those places, their chastity has been closely scrutinised, on account of certain astonishment being felt for the same.

There is not much movement on the shore in the early morn, and I was informed that early rising is a thing almost unknown among them. Their principal occupation is gathering and con-

veying the cocoa-nuts they barter with the trading vessels. Work seems equally divided irrespective of sex. Men and boys climb the trees and cut down the nuts. As they fall the women gather them and tie them in pairs by tearing up strips of the bark and twisting two together. These are then slung across a bamboo, and more men, women and boys, carry them to the beach. They have a correct knowledge of numbers, the cocoa-nuts always being bargained for in hundreds, and the quantities are found strictly correct. They calculate their time by moons, and at one season of the year have a grand feast. I was informed by the captain, who had seen one of these bouts, that when the men are in a state of intoxication they fight with large pigs. The animals are made nearly mad, and the combat commences. A man waits for the rush of the pig, seizes it by the ears and throws it. That the men do not always escape, I proved by observing a large scar on the leg of one of these men, and on asking him the cause, he informed me it was the effect of one of these orgies.

Their canoes are fashioned out of one solid piece, but are not made on the island, being obtained from a neighbouring island of the group, and purchased with spoons and other commodities obtained from the trading vessels. Expeditions are also made from Car Nicobar to the other islands, and considerable loss of life by shipwreck frequently takes place.

The principal articles used by the traders in exchange for cocoa-nuts, are guns and ammunition, cutlasses, tobacco, cloth, rum, plated goods, etc. The cutlasses they use for cutting down the nuts, and the guns for shooting small birds. They do not hold the stock of the gun to the shoulder, but keep the weapon at arm's length. They are remarkably good shots. They use the rum to intoxication and as a change from the toddy they make from the fermented milk of the cocoa-nut. Plated goods, such as spoons and soup-ladles, they hang in their dwellings as ornaments.

They are fond of changing names with the visitors to the island, and some of their cognomens are rather extraordinary, not only the "Blue Book", but also the "Newgate Calendar", having seemingly been searched for names of distinction for them by facetious visitors. They are changeable in their requirements; a particular commodity that they bought freely and chiefly one time, would, the captain informed me, be scarcely looked at when he next arrived in three months' time.

Pigs and fish, which they usually take by spearing, form the staple of their food; yams are also plentiful, and are largely used. They seem to believe in the efficacy of snakes and beetles as cure for disease, for on my frequently offering rewards for

those objects, I would generally be asked, "What matter with you, Distant?" They have a peculiar method of treatment for illness. Coils of bright steel wire (brought by the Kling traders), are wound round the arms, fingers and toes. One unfortunate infant I observed with its limbs literally encased with this article. They have also acquired a slight acquaintance with modern medicine, such as quinine, Epsom salts, and castor oil; the latter being in considerable request. Scent is also purchased at almost any price, one man telling me it made him smell nice, and made his wife pleased with him.

The mad are put to death, being garotted with two pieces of bamboo; this, however, is seldom necessary, and is the only cause for a death penalty that I could discover.

There is a graveyard attached to each village, generally near the centre of the same. The dead are wrapped in cloths and buried, a post being placed at the head of the grave, with certain distinctive marks upon it. I was informed that after the space of some three years, the bones are publicly exhumed, taken out to sea, and scattered to the four winds. They seem to bear affectionate remembrance of their dead.

Though acutely observant, they seldom allow expressions of astonishment to escape them. This was particularly noticeable in two Nicobar youths we carried with us to Rangoon and Penang. In harbour they would jump overboard, and swim long distances to other vessels, on board which they would clamber, to the no small astonishment of the crews. They would make their way all over these strange vessels, even inspecting the cabin to satisfy their curiosity, exhibiting no fear, asking no permission, and to an extent ignoring the presence of the crews. At Penang, we once took them on an evening visit to some friends. A short time after our arrival, shrieks proclaimed the advent of one of our Nicobar friends in the sleeping apartment of a lady, where he had strayed in his inspection of the house. Search being made for the other, he was discovered alone and asleep on the drawing-room sofa. These people are peculiarly sensitive, and cannot be treated as servants or inferiors.

In conclusion, I can only say I have endeavoured to lay before the Institute such facts as came under my own observation, or could be gleaned from information at the island. I regret that I took no exact measurements as to height, etc., and was unable to procure any skulls.

DISCUSSION.

Mr. CONWAY begged to ask Mr. Distant, if the good and the evil powers worshipped were equally important, or whether the good was faintly thought of; and whether the worship seemed inspired by any other feeling than simple fear.

Mr. DISTANT, in reply to various questions, said their canoes are outriggered, and the fish-spear and paddle are not combined, each instrument being quite distinct from the other. Indolence is a very strongly marked characteristic of these people. Their habit of not holding the stock of the gun to the shoulder, but firing the weapon held at arm's length, must simply show a strength of wrist to counteract the force of the recoil. They never, however, attempt to shoot a bird on the wing. They seem to have only a slight idea of a Good Spirit, but to believe strongly in an evil spirit. Hence their religion (such little as it is) is one of fear. They usually carry a disc in the lobe of the ear.

Mr. CHARLESWORTH and Mr. PARK HARRISON also offered a few remarks.

The Director read the following paper :

Some ACCOUNT of the WARS of EXTIRPATION, and HABITS of the NATIVE TRIBES of TASMANIA. By J. E. CALDER, Esq., of Hobart Town.

THE most interesting event in the history of Tasmania, after its discovery, seems to be the extinction of its ancient inhabitants ; and as the causes that have led thereto have been only imperfectly told, I purpose throwing a little more light on the subject than has, as yet, been made public, which I derive from authentic official documents—not generally perused by writers on the colonies—that I have had the rare advantage of studying, and which contain, also, copious accounts of their wars on the whites, and some information about their habits.

It is believed that they were never a numerous people, and at no period since the colonisation of the country, in 1803, do they seem to have exceeded seven thousand—which may be safely taken as an outside estimate of their numbers. One individual of the race is now its only living representative, a very old woman, known amongst the colonists by the name of Lalla, but whose native name is Truganini.

The gradual decrease, leading to the final extinction of the ancient inhabitants of Tasmania which is now so very nearly accomplished, is assignable to very different causes than the hostility of the whites, to which it has been so much the fashion to ascribe it ; for, up to the time of their voluntary surrender to the local Government, they not only maintained their ground everywhere (the towns excepted), but had by far the best of the fight. Tribal dissensions, causing mutual destruction (for such were their jealousies and hatreds, that they fought one another all the time they were thrashing the whites), contributed to their decrease in some degree, and the justly provoked hostility of