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On Some Customs of the Aborigines of the River Darling, New South Wales.

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- From the SOCIETY.—Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society. May, 1883.
- Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. December, 1882; January, 1883.
- Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Extra number to Part I, 1883.
- Journal of the Society of Arts. Nos. 1588, 1589.
- The Constitution of the Isle of Man. Manx Society. Vol. XXXI.
- Boletim da Sociedade de Geographia de Lisboa.
- Bulletins de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris. No. 1, 1883.
- Bulletin de la Société Imperiale des Naturalistes de Moscou. 1882, No. 2, 1<sup>e</sup> and 2<sup>e</sup> liv.
- From the EDITOR.—American Antiquarian. April, 1883.
- "Nature." Nos. 704, 705.
- Revue d'Ethnographie. Tom. II, No. 1.
- Revue Politique et Littéraire. Tom. XXXI, Nos. 17, 18.
- Revue Scientifique. Tom. XXXI, Nos. 17, 18.
- Science. No. 10.

Mr. W. GALLOWAY exhibited some bone implements and other objects found in a prehistoric shell-mound in the Island of Oransay; also a cranium and bones found in a Viking grave of the Norse pagan period at Kiloran Bay, Colonsay. These specimens were exhibited at the International Fisheries Exhibition.

The following paper was read by the author:—

*On some CUSTOMS of the ABORIGINES of the RIVER DARLING, NEW SOUTH WALES.* By FREDERIC BONNEY, Esq.

DURING my residence in a large area of country on the northern side of the river Darling, between the years 1865 and 1880, I had, as one of the early European settlers, the opportunity of knowing the aborigines in that district, before they were spoilt by civilisation. Employed by me as shepherds, and in other occupations, on a large sheep and cattle run, they were generally my companions in work during the first few years of my bush life, and over many a camp fire I have learnt much of their character and habits. The tribes that I know best are those called Bungyarlee and Parkungi, the former living about the creeks north of Mount Murchison; the latter by the river Darling above and below Wilcannia. They speak the one language called Weynebulckoo, which is also spoken by the adjoining tribes called—

Baroongee, of the Lower Paroo River.

Mullia-arpa, of Yencanyah district.

Wombungee, of Fort Bourke district, on the Upper Darling.

Bo-arlee, of the Barrier Ranges.

Tung-arlee, of the Lower Darling.

The territory of these tribes lies within lat. 29°-34°, long. 141°-146°.

As a rough estimate of the aboriginal population of this territory when Europeans first settled in it, I may say I do not think it would average more than about 100 on an area of 2,000 square miles in any part of the territory. The country, in its natural state, could not support a large population, being subject to protracted droughts, during which both food and water must have been scarce. During my fifteen years' experience there were three severe droughts, varying in duration from eighteen to twenty-two months. At such times the little rain that fell on the dry and parched ground was insufficient to replenish the water-holes, or soak the ground enough to promote a growth of vegetation. But it appears, from what some of the old natives have told me, that Europeans have not experienced the worst that the country is liable to, for they say that they once saw it in a drier state than it has been since the settlers came, and there has been stock on the country as a drain on the water supply. On that occasion their only water supply was at the few springs in the back country and at the rivers. All surface water-holes were dry; some of which would, I know, stand through a two years' drought with stock drinking at them. They camped at the springs or the rivers, existing on the half-starved animals, which were forced to drink from the same supply, and in consequence of their weak condition were killed without much difficulty. In a drought there is neither grass nor herbage in the neighbourhood of water, and the desert-like appearance of the surrounding brick-red sandhills and grey-coloured clay flats is relieved only by sundry hardy bushes and small trees, which somehow hold up against the extreme dryness and hot winds. These long droughts are generally broken suddenly by a fall of 2 or 3 inches of rain, followed by lighter rains, which rapidly improve the appearance of the country; grass and herbage become abundant, and waterfowl return in large numbers to the creeks, and the aborigines gladly avail themselves of the opportunity of moving on to fresh hunting grounds, which they can only reach when surface water is plentiful.

About the year 1850 an epidemic attacked the Bungyarlee and Parkungi tribes, killing about one-third of them. I have been told by some of those who escaped that it came upon them while the country was in fair condition, and there was ample

food and water for their wants. The disease affected the legs and quite crippled those attacked. It caused a panic among them all, and they travelled as fast as they could away from the locality where the epidemic appeared, leaving in their flight the dead unburied on their track. Those who were strong escaped by walking to the Paroo River and Upper Darling, to which countries the epidemic did not extend. About Peri Lake the mortality was great, many bodies being left on the sandhills unburied.

There is a similarity in the typical features of all the Australian aborigines, but to a close observer each tribe has its own peculiarities sufficiently marked to be distinguished from one another. The Weynebulkoo natives are in stature slightly below the average of the English. The colour of their skin in their youth is of a dark chocolate hue, which darkens with age until it is quite black in the middle-aged and old. The new-born babe is almost white, but darkens quickly, though for some time the soles of the feet and palms of the hands are white. Their hair is always quite black, that of the men rather curly, of the women straight; the men generally have long and thick beards, and the bodies of the old men are not unfrequently covered with hair. The characteristic features of all the Australian aborigines are thick lips, overhanging brow, and extended nostrils; but these are all less prominent than among the tribes farther north, in the colony of Queensland. Many of them are weak-looking people, having little muscular development in their legs and arms; their legs especially are thin, though I have met with a few remarkably well-made men among them. They have, as a rule, good hands, with well-shaped fingers and finger-nails: teeth generally very good, very white and regular; they seldom fall out, but with use wear down evenly all round until little more than stumps are left in the jaws of the old people.

Though ugly and unprepossessing in appearance they are most kind, gentle, and of quite average intelligence and morality. Dirty in their person they often are, for which the scarcity of water in most parts of their country is some excuse. The aborigines of Australia are often spoken of as the lowest type of humanity. I think this is a libel on the whole of them, and I am positive it is so as regards the tribes I know best. It is unjust to take as specimens of the race those to be seen in the civilised districts near the coast, and about townships in the interior, who have lost all the native good that was in them, and become public-house loafers, often associating with Europeans who have fallen as low as themselves. There is nothing of the nobility of the savage about them; such are certainly most

degraded creatures. To this sad end many of them come as civilisation creeps towards the interior of the country. The country having been occupied by Europeans and laid out in runs stocked with sheep and cattle, the habits of the aborigines have much changed; this probably is the cause of the rapid decrease of their number by deaths. The young now are often weakly, suffering from chest complaints; and few children are born, and fewer live to become adults. Before long the only representatives of these tribes will be some living about settlers' homes and townships, in a half-civilised state. In fact, there are now few to be found who have not been somewhat spoilt by civilisation; therefore I wish to record what I have learnt of them during their better days, and hope that others, who have had like opportunities, will do the same, so that sufficient information may be brought forward to prove their race to be better, nobler, and more intellectual than it is generally believed to be by those who have not lived among any of the tribes. All who have done so, and taken the trouble to learn something of their language, so as to better understand them, must have formed a good opinion of them.

I proceed, then, to give a description of the life-history of these tribes called Bungyarlee and Parkungi.

When a woman is near her confinement she leaves the general camp in company with another woman, and together they make a temporary camp beneath a shady tree, one or two hundred yards distant. This movement is probably made to prevent the occurrence of a death in the camp, which would cause all to move to another spot and erect fresh shelter; for after a death all desert the camp where it occurs.

It seems to have been the custom to kill many of the children directly after birth, to save trouble and privations in time of drought, when long distances must be travelled in the search for food and water, and it would be difficult in the fierce heat to transport a number of young children over a dry journey of twenty miles, and often more, without more water than can be carried in the skin bags used for that purpose. Whether the infant shall be killed or not is generally decided by the mother's brother, if she has one, and he is near at hand. If it is to be killed, that is done by a blow on the back of the head, by strangling with a rope, or choking with sand, and the body is buried without ceremony; but if it is decided that it is to be reared, the mother, as soon as possible, returns to the camp with her child, where it is carefully nursed and very well treated. Both men and women are very fond of children, and the kindest attention is shown to them by young and old alike. They are not spoilt by this kind treatment all round; one word

from the parent generally is sufficient to check a child when doing wrong, and the greatest respect is shown to parents by their children. Altogether the treatment of children by these people, after they are once taken up and nursed, is judicious and very creditable. It is strange that while the life of the newborn babe is so slightly valued at its birth, a little later it should be valued so much. If it has to be killed at the birth the work is done without any notice being taken of it, but if allowed to live, and it should die a natural death a week or so later, all the women in the camp would mourn its loss—the mother and near relations crying aloud at intervals during the day, and in the evening at sundown, either in the camp or at the grave. Mourning is worn, the same as after the death of an adult person. One mother rarely has more than four or five children, and they are sometimes not weaned from the breast until they are more than three years old. The birth of twins is not less rare than among Europeans. I know of one such case where one of the twins was killed, and the mother dying soon after, the other child, a girl, was taken charge of and suckled by another woman, and she grew up to be the worst specimen of morality I met with among the uncivilised aborigines; she was neither honest nor truthful, lacking the two virtues natural to most of them.

When a mother is about to carry her child she leans her body forward, and, taking hold of the child by its arms, swings it over her left shoulder and places it between her shoulder-blades, with its hands round her neck. She then throws a fur rug round herself and the child, and afterwards a netted bag (*numyuncka*) is drawn tight under the seat of the child, with one end brought over each shoulder of the mother, and tied together under her chin to keep the child and rug in their position; so a pouch is formed to hold the child while it is being carried about. The men generally carry children on their shoulders.

A soft cream-coloured chrysalis (*kopudger*), about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches long, which is found under the bark of trees and at the root of broom-bushes (*poontee*), is much sought after as a nutritious food for children. It has very much the taste of a raw egg.

Some boys, when about the age of ten, have a hole bored through the septum of the nose with bone needles (*poongootah*), in which they can, when grown up, wear a bone about 6 inches long as an ornament at their dances,<sup>1</sup> and both girls and boys at about the same age are marked on their chest, arms, or back by raised scars (*nincka*), which are usually straight, horizontal, or vertical lines, about 2 inches in length, and close together,

<sup>1</sup> These, generally known as corroborees, by these tribes are called *Yeneko*.

made by cutting the flesh with a stone chip (*carnee moolee*) in the winter season, when hoar frost is rubbed on to the flesh to numb it. Sometimes fine charcoal powder is rubbed into the cuts to lessen the pain and quicken the healing on young people; the scars are often very prominent, but they decrease with age.

Children are named after animals, birds, reptiles, or fish; the name is a word in their language meaning the movement or habit of one of them.

They avoid mentioning the name of a deceased person, and the word is not used in their language until it can be mentioned without causing pain to the relatives and friends, for it is from feelings of sorrow and not of fear that they do not mention the name.

When a youth is about sixteen years of age his elderly male relatives become anxious that he should be initiated into manhood, or, as they call it, "made a young man of." Considerable importance is attached to this ceremony, but the youth often tries to avoid it, for it is anything but a pleasant one to him; but plans are generally made without his knowledge for its performance. Sometimes an early morning dance is arranged, when a sham fight is got up to attract the youth's attention, and then he is caught and carried off. On other occasions, after a consultation on the subject in camp, women being present, some old men go to the youth and ask him to accompany them to go through the ceremony; should he refuse, young men catch him, put the down feathers from ducks among the hair of his head, and carry him by force into the bush while his father and the women cry aloud. When they have carried him some distance from the camp they place a small hard wood wedge on each side of one of the front teeth in the youth's upper jaw, and one of them, with a downward stroke with the pointed end of a throwing stick (*pirrah*), forces the tooth out. A string of opossum fur is wrapped round his body, and he wears a head-dress made with strips of opossum or kangaroo skin, his body and face being smeared with charcoal powder; one or two young men accompany him while in the bush, where he must remain for some time. They play with a wooden instrument called *moola-uncka*, which is a flat and oval-shaped piece of hard wood tied to the end of a long piece of twine, which, when whirled in the air, makes a loud humming noise; it is an amusement to the youths to make the noise, and by it women, none of whom are allowed to go near the youths, know where they are. Those thus treated are called *Tumba*. Sometimes, instead of knocking out the youth's tooth, they smear his body with red ochre (*keerah*). He is then called *Turlurra*. After a while some old men visit the youth's camp, where they are

met by some younger men, who arrange themselves in a row in front of the youth, with their backs to him, and face the old men, whom they ridicule and insult until the old men get into a rage and throw sand in their own faces, and then throw fighting sticks or boomerangs at the young men, which they ward off with their shields (*oolumburra*). The old men then rush forward at the young men, who seize and throw them on the ground, after which the old men retire to the camp, but return later and dance with the youth and his companions, repeating their friendly visits until the end of the ceremony. During the first two days the youth drinks only blood (*carndurra*) from the veins in the arms of his friends, who willingly supply the required food. Having bound a ligature round the upper part of the arm they cut a vein on the under side of the forearm, and run the blood into a wooden vessel (*yokudjah*), or a dish-shaped piece of bark. The youth, kneeling on his bed, made of the small branches of a fuchsia bush (*gooyermurra*), leans forward, while holding his hands behind him, and licks up the blood from the vessel placed in front of him with his tongue, like a dog. Later he is allowed to eat the flesh of ducks as well as the blood. When the necessary preparations are made men and women go from the general camp to see the youth smoked. He and one of his companions sit or stand on a heap of green boughs from the fuchsia bush (*gooyermurra*), under which there has been laid dry grass and sticks; this heap is called a *windoo*, their word for an oven. The two youths are wrapped round loosely with a rug, their heads only being uncovered. After the dry grass and sticks at the bottom of the heap are lighted, thick smoke rises through the green boughs and collects round their bodies beneath the rugs. After they have been smoked in this way the rugs are raised over their heads, so as to envelope the whole of them, the smoking continues, the youths placing a finger in each nostril to save themselves from suffocation. After a little of this they are removed from the *windoo*. The hair of the youth who is being initiated is cut short on his head and pulled out of his face, and red ochre, mixed with emu fat, smeared over his body; he wears a necklace of twisted opossum hair. The time this ceremony extends over varies from ten days to a month. The youth's companions take the tooth when it is extracted, and return it to him later with a present of weapons, rugs, nets, and such like. The youth places the tooth under the bark of a tree, near a creek, water-hole, or river: if the bark grows over it, or it falls into the water, all is well; but should it be exposed, and the ants run over it, it is believed that the youth will suffer from a disease in the mouth.

These tribes are divided into two classes, called "Muckwarra"



and "Keelparra"; the relationship between the two is called "Kengoojah." A Muckwarra must marry a Keelparra, and *vice versa*. Children belong to the same class as their mother, and when quite young are often betrothed by their parents. It is considered a very serious offence for two persons of the same class to marry, and one that cannot be forgiven. The offenders are spoken of by all as bad, and are generally despised. The loss to them of the love and respect of their friends is a very heavy punishment; illegal marriages are therefore rare.

When a young man has gone through the ceremony of initiation he is allowed to marry, if so desirous, the girl he was betrothed to when young. Accordingly, he asks the parents for her, and they, pleased that their early wishes are to be realised, at once arrange for the couple to be married in their simple way. The bridegroom is told by the principal old man in the camp that he can take the girl he wants, and at the same time there is given to him a piece of string with a knot tied in it. Should the bridegroom have a sister whom the bride's brother wishes to marry, two knots are tied in the string by the old man, one at each end of it. This the bridegroom keeps until he is able to hand it to his brother-in-law with his sister or another woman as wife; for he considers it his duty to give a wife to his brother-in-law if he can. The mother of either the bride or the bridegroom makes a camp for the young couple, and tells the bridegroom to occupy it, and when the bride elect comes into the camp she is told to go to her future husband; should she refuse to do so her relatives use force to make her, and they are afterwards considered as married. Although young women are often compelled to marry a man of whom they know little and often nothing, they generally find happiness and contentment in their married lives. Quarrels between husband and wife are rare, and they show much affection for each other in their own way. When a husband returns to the camp after an absence of several days and even weeks, the meeting with his wife appears a cold one. They take no notice of each other at first; he lays down his bundle containing his rug and other belongings, and enters into a conversation with others in the camp, while his wife takes his bundle inside his camp, and when an opportunity offers she joins in the conversation.

Once I was standing near a woman when her husband returned after a long absence. I knew that they loved each other, and asked her why she did not go forward and greet him. She replied sorrowfully, "Black fellow will not let us do like white fellow." She waited until he started for the camp, then she picked up his swag, or bundle, and followed him at a distance. It is not the custom to be demonstrative on such occasions. Brothers and

friends when meeting do not at first notice each other, but gradually draw near, and, when alongside, throw an arm round each other's neck, and so stroll about, saying kind things to each other. Naturally they are most affectionate and courteous, always careful lest by act or word they may be thought unkind, and hurt the feelings of those they love and respect.

They believe that sickness is caused by an enemy who uses certain charms called the *Yountoo* and *Moolee*.

The *Yountoo* is made of a small bone taken from a leg of the dead body of a friend, either before or after burial; it is wrapped up with a small piece of sun-dried flesh, cut from the body of another deceased friend; string made with the hair from the head of a third friend generally serves as the tie. When this charm is required to be used it is taken to the camp where the enemy sleeps and placed in the hot ashes of a fire, with a piece of string tied to it, where it is warmed and then pointed at the person to be killed, a small piece of the bone being chipped off and thrown at the sleeping enemy. The *Yountoo* is taken away, and in about five weeks laid under the surface of the ground, and a fire lit over it which burns it gradually. The person at whom it has been aimed sickens after it has been burnt a little, and dies if the doctor does not suck out the piece of bone which is supposed to have entered the sick person's body.

The *Moolee* is a rough piece of white quartz, oblong in shape, and about 2 inches long; a piece of twine, made of opossum fur, is fastened to one end with some black gum (*nynia*). In using these, one is pointed at the person to be killed, and is supposed to enter the body; the other is warmed, then placed in some fat from a dead body and wrapped round with hair from the head. The whole thing is then put in a fire and left to burn slowly; when it warms, the person becomes sick, and dies unless relieved by a doctor. It is believed that the possession of one of these charms aids a man in composing and devising a new corroborree.

Both the *Yountoo* and *Moolee* are treasured as valuable charms, and hidden from view.

A doctor, or *maykeeka*, is a man, either young or old, generally the latter, who has in some way shown that he has the power of curing sickness by sucking from the body of a patient either the chip of bone from the *Yountoo* or the *Moolee*. This appointment is not an hereditary one. The bone chip from the *Yountoo*, when sucked from the body, is thrown away; but the *Moolee* must be thrown into a water-hole, or the river. When a doctor succeeds in sucking either from the body of his patient, the cure is considered certain. He shows something

which he tells the patient and the friends he has sucked from the body.

On one occasion, when I was camped in the Purnanga Ranges, I watched by the light of a camp fire a doctor at work, sucking the back of a woman who was suffering from pains in that part. While she sat on a log a few yards distant from the camp fire, he moved about her, making certain passes with boughs which he held, and then sucked for some time the place where pain was felt; at last he took something from his mouth, and holding it towards the fire-light, declared it to be a piece of bone. The old women sitting near loudly expressed their satisfaction at his success. I asked to be allowed to look at it, and it was given to me. I carelessly looked at it, and then pretended to throw it into the fire, but keeping it between my fingers I placed it in my pocket, when I could do so unobserved; and on the following morning, when I examined it by daylight, it proved to be a small splinter of wood, and not bone. At the time the patient appeared to be very much relieved by the treatment.

During the year 1866 there was rather a large gathering of the aborigines at Karannia, where visitors from Cultowa, Marra, and Neelyambo, places higher up the river Darling, had come down to teach their neighbours a new corroborree. During an interval in one of the performances, a tall young man, who was suffering from a pain in his right ankle, limped into an open space between the dancers and the fires, and was met there by an old man, a doctor. They wrestled together until the doctor threw his patient, and sucked the ankle as the patient lay quietly on the ground; after sucking for some time the doctor rose and walked outside the circle of performers and spectators, and taking something from his mouth threw it towards the moon in the north-east. Returning to his patient he lifted him from the ground on to his feet; the patient stamped his right foot on the ground to test the strength of the ankle, as if he was trying on a new boot, and then walked away without showing any lameness.

I once saw an old woman at Momba trying to cure another one of a sickness in her stomach, by sucking the supposed poison through a string. The patient lay on her back on a rug on the ground, with a piece of string tied rather tightly round the middle of her naked body, with a loose end about 18 inches in length from the knot over the stomach. The woman doctor, squatting by the side of her patient, leant over her and passing the loose end of string through her mouth, sucked it from the knot to the end and spat saliva and blood into a tin pint pot; this was repeated many times, until the poison was supposed to have been sucked through the string from the body.

The large *moolar-uncka*, a wooden instrument before mentioned, is often used while a doctor is operating.

Over-eating, after a successful day's hunting, following as it often does a fast, causes a good deal of sickness from which these people suffer. Headache is a common complaint, and to relieve this a native ties to his forehead a small bunch of heated boughs; the fuchsia bush (*gooyermurra*) being considered best for the purpose. The same remedy is generally used to relieve pain elsewhere; an attendant holds the bunch of boughs while warm to the suffering part, and heats it again when cold.

I have found large doses of castor oil, half-a-pint or more, the safest and most effective remedy, and one that is very agreeable to the taste of the natives, who are fond of fat and oily food. On one occasion I gave between two and three drops of croton oil, in one dose, to a man who some years previously had been cured by a large dose of castor oil, when there appeared to be little chance of his recovery. When a similar attack came on he begged for castor oil, of which I had none in stock, so I gave him the croton oil instead, and with very good effect. Our medicines must be given to them in strong doses to be of any use.

A very sick or weak person is fed upon blood which the male friends provide, taken from their bodies in the way already described. It is generally taken in a raw state by the invalid, who lifts it to his mouth like jelly between his fingers and thumb. I have seen it cooked in a wooden vessel by putting a few red-hot ashes among it. When the aborigines are sick they are always despondent, and say that they are going to die; the sorrowful looks and loud lamentations of their friends around them are sufficient to make any one despondent; and as they lie in their camp naked, excepting the bandages of twine made with the hair of a friendly native, or with fibre or sinews, which are tied round the head and limbs wherever there is pain, they are miserable-looking objects.

A disease called *Tarree* is rather common among them, and generally fatal, though it has been successfully treated by a European doctor. It attacks the middle-aged and old, a hard lump forming in the stomach while the rest of the body wastes away to a skeleton; the lump grows to a great size, causing difficulty of breathing, and at last suffocation. Many of the children have large stomachs, which with several becomes quite a deformity, affecting their health and breathing; sometimes they even pine away and die. One youth under my notice, who suffered much in his childhood from this complaint, has grown up to enjoy fairly good health; but any great exertion causes troublesome breathing and coughing.

It has been reported of the Australian aborigines that they help on to death, and even kill those who are helpless and crippled. I have good reason to believe that such is not the case among these tribes. After witnessing their kind treatment of the sick under most trying circumstances, I am of opinion that they are most kind and attentive to such, and that their patience and sympathy are quite exemplary. It sometimes happens that a change of camp has to be made, and a long journey over a dry country undertaken, with a helpless invalid, who is carried by the strong men, who willingly bleed themselves until they are weak and faint, to provide the food they consider is the best for a sick person.

Some years ago there was at Karannia (now called Mount Murchison) a strong young man whose intellect was weak, and who occasionally had fits of madness, when he would leave the camp and wander alone in the bush without food or covering, and his relatives and friends were much troubled about him, and watched him at a distance as well as they could. Once his old father, a big and powerful man, went out in search of him, and found him wandering near the river; he entreated him to return to the camp with him, when the son turned upon his father with a tomahawk and cut him; the old man returned to the camp, and with tears in his eyes told me what had happened, and begged me to assist him to bring back his mad son before he perished in the bush.

At Momba, an old man named Booringooroo, suffered for several years from violent pains in his head; occasionally his reason was affected by them, and he would wander from the camp and travel long distances by himself in the bush. All showed the deepest sorrow and sympathy; the young men went after him on his tracks, and tried to persuade him to return with them to the camp; if they did not succeed they did their utmost to keep a watch over his movements, and guard him against a death from starvation in the bush. This man, I believe, was suffering from the effects of a sunstroke. Cases of lunacy are very rare. During my experience I have not met with any cases of the kind except the two I have just mentioned.

The burial of a body takes place immediately after death. The feet having been tied together by the big toes, and the hands by either the wrists or thumbs and little fingers, the body is wrapped in a rug and bound round with a rope, and the bundle tied on to a long stick called *moolairee*. Two men are selected as bearers, and one walks in front of the other towards the grave with the body hanging from the *moolairee* stick between them, an end of the stick resting on a small pad stuffed with grass, on the head of each of the bearers. Should

the friends of the deceased have any doubt who caused the death, some questions are put to the corpse, when near the grave, by one of the principal old men in the camp, while it hangs from the stick between the bearers. The old man, with a bough or boomerang, strikes the corpse, and asks such questions as these:—

Were you camped at such and such a place when you were taken ill?

Did so and so kill you?

If the answers are not given by a movement of the corpse it is carried a little farther, until it answers by moving in the direction of the sorcerer's camp; should he be in the camp where the body is it turns round, and when the right name is mentioned it moves forward rapidly, the men running with their burden to the grave. In this way they find out to their satisfaction who they must punish for the death of the deceased person.

It is not improbable that by this custom of immediate burial some bodies are buried before life has left them. A man named Cultekololudger is said to have cured himself, or come to life again before burial. He had been ill for a long time and became very thin. His relatives, thinking he was dead, prepared to bury the body; but when they were carrying it to the grave it made an unusual movement, so the bundle was opened, and the bearers were startled by Cultekololudger asking them why he had been tied up. He is now living near the Barrier Ranges.

There are no fixed burial grounds. A grave 3 or 4 feet in depth is dug at a spot chosen not far from the camp where the death takes place, the digger using the sharp-pointed stick called *pirrah* to loosen the ground, and shovelling out the loose earth with the wooden bowl called *yokudjah*. The bottom of the grave is covered with boughs from the broom bush, and then the bundle containing the corpse, having been separated from the *moolairee* stick, is laid in the grave by two men who stand in it; one of them partly unwraps the bundle so as to cut off a piece of flesh or pull the hair from the head, whichever it is decided to do. Usually a piece of flesh is cut from the thigh of a child, or from the stomach of an adult. At the burial of a very small and thin man which I witnessed, there was a discussion at the grave as to which should be done, and it was decided to pull some hair from the head, rather than take any of the flesh. This was done by one of the men in the grave, who pulled out several large locks of it. At some burials several men stand by the open grave and cut each other's heads with a boomerang, and hold their heads over the grave so that the blood from the wounds falls on the corpse at the bottom

of it; some earth is then thrown in, and if the deceased was highly esteemed a second bleeding takes place. Some sticks are placed over the corpse, and above them one long one has its ends driven into the solid ground at the head and foot of the grave by a man jumping on it: that is done to prevent the wild dogs getting to the corpse.

During the ceremony of burial there is much crying and wailing, especially by the women, each one crying in a loud tone the word signifying their relation to the deceased, commencing with a high note and gradually lowering their tone in a shaky voice, repeating the word while they have breath to spare, dwelling long on the last syllable of the word. The words most frequently heard are *ammuccē* (mother), *gumbidgē* (father), *whimberrē* (child), *matoogē* (friend). This wailing continues over the grave for some time after it is filled in, and at the camp for days afterwards; when one of the women begins to wail, others join, and the mournful chorus can be heard throughout the neighbourhood. The women generally cry at the camp or the grave each day for a week or more after the burial as the sun is setting.

The piece of flesh cut from the dead body is taken to the camp, and after being sun-dried is cut up into small pieces and distributed among relatives and friends of the deceased: some use the piece in making the charm called *Yountoo*; others suck it to get strength and courage, or throw it into the river to bring a flood and fish, when both are wanted.

After a death in camp, all leave it and pitch their camp on another spot, which is sometimes not far distant. The rugs, weapons, nets, &c., the property of deceased, are hung in a tree near to the camp for about two months, and are then washed and used by some of the relatives.

Most of the women wear mourning, and the nearest relative generally covers her head with white plaster made of calcined selenite or gypsum, and smears the same over her face and body. The head-covering, which is a thick cake, wears a long time; it is fixed to the head by the hair and a small net, which is generally laid over the head before the cake is plastered on. It requires patching only occasionally; but the thinner coat on face and body soon crumbles away, and has to be renewed every day. After wearing this for some months it is allowed to crumble away, and is not renewed. In the case of a widow, she is told by her late husband's brother, or her mother, when she may cease wearing her mourning, and the brother-in-law is sometimes allowed to take her as wife, though he may already have one. Some men are allowed two wives, but the rule is to have one only. I have seen an old woman wearing a patch of white

plaster over the crown of her head, as mourning, after the death of a favourite dog.<sup>1</sup>

An ordinary grave is covered by a low mound of earth, a few stout pieces of dead timber are laid upon it, with a heap of green boughs over them. Some have a low brush fence round them, which has an opening on one side to let the wind in, as they say, and some large egg-shaped pieces of white plaster laid round the grave between the low mound and the brush fence. The most elaborate one that I have seen was covered with a small bough shed, about 8 feet square and 4½ feet high, which had a large opening on one side; the ground outside was cleanly swept, and the green boughs on the mound inside were covered with whitewash; some women, at a camp near, attended to this grave, bringing green boughs to replace those withered, whitewashing and sweeping.

Some months after a death the brother or near relative of the deceased starts off to find the man accused of causing the death, and to fight him; other men, young and old, accompany him. When he meets his enemy he fights him with spears and boomerangs; should he wound his enemy his craving for revenge is satisfied, and he calls out *ow-oo-ta* (enough), and the fight ceases. A grand dance, or corroboree, follows in which all join and make merry together. Should he happen to kill his enemy he and his companions bury the body. It is said that they sometimes cut off the head and hold it up towards the camp to enrage the deceased's friends, and a general fight is the consequence. This, I think, seldom happens; for, as a rule, a very little fighting satisfies these people: a few blows and a little blood are enough to do that, and make them friends.

#### DISCUSSION.

The PRESIDENT observed that few departments of anthropology were so pressing just now as the collection of materials relating to the customs and characters of races, which were becoming either extinct or, as Mr. Bonney expressed it, "spoilt" by civilisation; and such materials could only be obtained in a satisfactory manner by those who had the opportunity of living among them for a considerable period, as such lengthened observation often corrected erroneous impressions, derived from superficial inspection. Mr. Bonney's communication was therefore welcome as an important contribution to this branch of knowledge. Low as the Australians were generally assumed to be in the scale of society, they evidently had a very complex and severely enforced code of unwritten

<sup>1</sup> There are generally a large number of dogs about a camp, which are used in hunting the kangaroo and emu, and are very kindly treated. The dog and its master are often to be seen sharing the same rug or blanket on a cold night.



etiquette, which served to keep up among themselves the mutual respect and order necessary to carry on the duties of social life. As this code and many of their customs evidently differ in different parts of the country, and among different tribes, it was desirable that all authentic details should be collected and recorded without delay.

Mr. PARK HARRISON also made some remarks on the subject of the paper.

The AUTHOR, replying to a question asked by the President, said that there was a decided curl in the hair of the aborigines of the river Darling, and called attention to a specimen which bound a native tomahawk exhibited on the table. In answer to the question, what decided the fate of the new-born children, and whether any preference was shown for the male sex, he replied that the fate of the children depended much upon the condition the country was in at the time, and the prospects of the mother rearing it satisfactorily, no preference being shown for the male sex. Being asked to give some information about the religion of the people, the author suggested that the subject had better not then be entered upon, as it would occupy too much time; but he hoped to have an opportunity, on a future occasion, of giving some information about it, with some other interesting information about the same people.

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The following paper was then read by the author :—

*On the DISCOVERY of some WORKED FLINTS, CORES, and FLAKES from BLACKHEATH, near CHILWORTH and BRAMLEY, SURREY.*

By Lieut.-Colonel H. H. GODWIN-AUSTEN, F.R.S., &c.

[WITH PLATE IV.]

I HAVE the pleasure to exhibit to the meeting some worked flints and rough flint implements, all obtained within a small area, where I do not think they have been found before.<sup>1</sup> The subject is, I think, sufficiently interesting to place on record with a few notes regarding them.

In the summer of 1881, when walking over the heath near Derry's Wood, not far from the village of Blackheath, with Mr. W. Weston, I noticed a piece of flint lying on the surface, which I picked up, remarking at the time it was curious to find it where no signs of former cultivation existed, on a denuded surface of

<sup>1</sup> I am told by Prof. Rupert Jones, that Major Cooper King has found flint implements at Postford, which is also in the same neighbourhood; but I have been unable to see his paper in the "Journal of the Berkshire Archæological Society." Major-General Pitt Rivers also found them in this locality.