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JULY 30TH 1862

FROM THE GIFT OF HIS SISTER

HARRIET LOWELL PUTNAM

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Folklore

of the

Australian

Aborigines

BY

R. H. MATHEWS,

LICENSED SURVEYOR.

Price, One Shilling.

SYDNEY:

HENNESSEY, HARPER AND COMPANY.

1899.

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FOLKLORE

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## p. 3 (#9) ################################################

CONTENTS.

ARRIVAL OF THE THURRAWAL TRIBE IN AUSTRALIA

7

DESTRUCTION OF MULLION THE EAGLEHAWK

11

THE JOURNEY TO KURRILWAN

15

THE KURREA AND THE WARRIOR

20

THOORKOOK AND BYAMA's Sons ...

...

23

THE WAREENGGARY AND KARAMBAL

...

26

THE HEREAFTER

...

30

## p. 4 (#10) ###############################################

!

## p. 5 (#11) ###############################################

PREFACE.

THE specimens of Australian Folklore reproduced in the

following pages are from articles which I have contributed,

from time to time, to Science of Man. They are only a

few out of a large number copied into my note books on

this highly interesting subject during many years residence

in the back country. Those now published are examples

of the traditions respecting the migrations of the Natives

-their mythology‚Äîthe institution of the sacred bullroarer

in the ceremonial of the Keeparra‚Äîand the importance

of a compliance with the class and totemic laws of the

tribes. It will doubtless add to the value of these

traditions if the districts within which they have been

collected are stated. Nos. 1 and 7 are current among

the Natives occupying the south-east coast from Botany

Bay to the Victorian boundary. No. 2 is well-known

among the Kamilaroi people on the Barwon and Namoi

Rivers, and also among the Wiradjuri Tribes of the

Castlereagh and Macquarie, and farther to the south-east.

Nos. 3 and 4 are Kamilaroi legends told by the Natives

of the Macintyre, Barwon, Mehi, Weir and other rivers

in that part of the country. No. 5 is a legend of the

Manning, Hastings, and Macleay Tribes, but the version

is slightly different on each of these rivers. No. 6 is

met with among the Bunjellung and Koombanggary

## p. 6 (#12) ###############################################

Tribes, inhabiting the Clarence River and its numerous

affluents.

I have ommitted many portions of the stories

as told to me by the Natives, owing in some cases to

their obscene character, and in others for want of space.

I trust that gentlemen residing in districts where similar

legends are current, will copy them from the mouths

of the Natives, and either send them to me, or publish

them on their own behalf in order to preserve as much

as possible of the Folklore of the Australian Tribes.

R. H. MATHEWS.

Parramatta,

3rd September, 1898.

## p. 7 (#13) ###############################################

FOLKLORE

OF THE

Australian Aborigines.

:0:0:-

1.- Arrival of the Thurrawal Tribe in Australia.

IN

N the remote past all the animals that are now in

Australia lived in another land beyond the sea.

They were at that time human creatures, and resolved

to leave that country in a canoe, and come to the

hunting-grounds in which they are at present. The

whale was much larger than any of the rest, and had a

canoe of great dimensions; but he would not lend it to

any of his fellows, who had small canoes, which were

unfit for use far from the land. The other people,

therefore, watched in the hope that an opportunity

might present itself of the whale leaving his boat, so

that they could get it, and start away on their journey;

but he always kept a strict guard over it.

The most intimate friend of the whale was the

starfish, and he conspired with the other people to take

the attention of the whale away from his canoe, and

## p. 8 (#14) ###############################################

8

FOLKLORE OF THE

.

so give them a chance to steal it, and start away across:

the ocean.

So, one day, the starfish said to the whale:

‚ÄúYou have a great many lice in your head; let me

‚Äú

catch them and kill them for you.‚Äù The whale, who

had been very much pestered with the parasites, readily

agreed to his friend's kind offer, and tied up his canoe

alongside a rock, on which they then went and sat

down. The starfish immediately gave the signal to

some of his co-conspirators, who soon assembled in

readiness to go quietly into the canoe as soon as the

whale's attention was taken off it.

The starfish then commenced his work of removing

the vermin from the whale's head, which he held in

his lap, while the other people all got quickly into the

canoe, and rowed off. Every now and again the whale

‚ÄúIs my canoe all right?‚Äù The starfish,

who had provided himself with a piece of bark to have

ready by his side, answered: ‚ÄúYes, this is it which I

am tapping with my hand,‚Äù at the same time hitting

the bark, which gave the same sound as the bark of the

He then resumed his occupation, scratching

vigorously about the whale's ears, so that he could not

hear the splashing of the oars in the water. The

cleaning of the whale's head and the assurances as to

the safety of the canoe went on with much garrulity on

the part of the starfish, until the people had rowed off

a considerable distance from the shore, and were nearly

out of sight. Then the patience of the whale becoming

exhausted, he insisted upon having a look at his canoe.

would say,

canoe.

## p. 9 (#15) ###############################################

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES.

9

to make quite sure that everything was right. When

he discovered that it was gone, and saw all the people

rowing away in it as ist as they could go, he became

very angry, and vented his fury upon the starfish,

whom he beat unmercifully, and tore him almost to

pieces. Jumping into the water, the whale then swam

away after his canoe, and the starfish, mutilated as he

,

was, rolled off the rock, on which they had been sitting,

into the water, and lay on the sand at the bottom till

he recovered. It was this terrible attack of the whale

which gave the starfish his present ragged and torn

appearance; and his forced seclusion on the sand under

the water gave him the habit of keeping near the

bottom always afterwards.

The whale pursued the fugitives, and in his fury

spurted the water into the air through a wound in the

head received during his fight with the starfish, a

practice which he has retained ever since. When the

people in the canoe saw him coming after them, the

weaker ones were very much afraid, and said : ‚Äú He is

gaining upon us, and will surely overtake us, and

drown us every one." But the native bear, who was

in charge of the oars, said, ‚Äú Look at my strong

arm (a). I am able to pull the canoe fast enough to

make good our escape !‚Äù and he demonstrated his

prowess by making additional efforts to move more

rapidly through the water.

(a.) The native bear has very large and strong forelegs, in

proportion to the rest of his body.

## p. 10 (#16) ##############################################

10

FOLKLORE OF THE

This voyage lasted several days and nights, until

at length land was sighted on ahead, and a straight

line was made for it. On getting alongside the shore,

all the people landed from the canoe sat down to rest

themselves. But the native companion, who has

always been a great fellow for dancing and jumping

about, danced upon the bottom of the canoe until he

made a hole in it with his feet, after which he himself

got out of it, and shoved it a little way from the shore,

where it settled down in the water, and became the

small island now known as Gan-man-gang, near the

entrance of Lake Illawarra into the ocean. When the

whale arrived shortly afterwards, and saw his canoe

sunk close to the shore, he turned back along the

coast, where he and his descendants have remained

ever since.

–∞

## p. 11 (#17) ##############################################

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES.

11

2.-Destruction of Mullion, the Eaglehawk.

Long ago an eaglehawk, Mullion, had his nest in a

very large, high tree, which grew on the Barwon River,

near Girra (6). The eaglehawk used to go out and

catch a blackfellow, and carry him away to his nest to

,

feed the young eaglets and their mother. This was

continued for a long time, and the blacks were unable

to help themselves, because the tree was of enormous

girth at the base, and reached almost to the sky. It

was composed of several different trees all amalgamated

There was first a gum tree, a box tree next,

then a coolabah, then a belar, and lastly a pine tree,

making a united height of five trees, one in continuation

of the other‚Äîall of them being of unusual and marvel-

lous size. In the top of the pine tree was the large

nest, or eyry, of the eaglehawk. If a blackfellow went

hunting alone, Mullion would swoop down upon him,

and carry him away in his talons to his nest. The

bones were thrown out, and were scattered about for

some distance around the base of the tree. Two of the

into one.

(6.) The Rev. W. Ridley briefly mentions this legend in his

‚ÄúKamilaroi and Other Australian Languages,‚Äù 1875, p. 136.

## p. 12 (#18) ##############################################

12

FOLKLORE OF THE

a

head men, Murriwunda and Koomba (c), who were

very clever doctors, went to the foot of the tree and

held a consultation as to the best thing to be done to

prevent the further ravages of Mullion. They deter-

mined to try and climb up the tree, carrying a piece of

burning stick with them, and set the nest on fire.

Koomba was the first to make the attempt. He climbed

up a long way, until he was unable to go any further,

so he came down again, and fell prostrate to the ground

from exhaustion. After he revived, he said to Murri-

wunda, "I went up a great distance, but could not even

see the top from where I was. You are lighter than I

am, and may be able to reach the nest.‚Äù Murriwunda

then took the burning bark, and fastened it on the top

of his head, and started away up the tree, going round

and round the trunk in spiral fashion as he ascended.

He got to the top of the gum tree, and went on to the

box tree, next the coolabar, then the belar, until he at

length reached the pine tree. This climbing occupied

most of the afternoon, and Koomba saw small pieces

of bark from the several kinds of trees falling to the

ground, by which he knew that his friend was going

right up to the nest.

When Murriwunda reached the top of the pine

tree, he took the firebrand, which he carried in his

forehead-band, and secretly inserted it in the underside

of the eaglehawk's nest, which was of great dimensions.

(c) The Wiradjuri men at Trangie on the Macquarie River

told me that in their version of this story the names of the two

clever men were Tinban and Alloo.

>

## p. 13 (#19) ##############################################

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES.

13

He told the fire not to burn the nest until he got down

again to the ground. The work of descending the tree

was very tiresome, but was accomplished in much less

time than the ascent. On reaching the base Murri-

wunda was so completely exhausted that he lay down

upon the ground to rest. Having in a short time

recovered his strength, he and Koomba started away

towards their own camp, but he did not tell his comrade

the result of his climbing. When they got away some

distance they caught an iguana, which they cooked

and ate, and sat for awhile to rest themselves beside a

small waterhole. Murriwunda then said, ‚ÄúI could not

reach Mullion's nest; I don't know what we can do to

get rid of his incursions." Then he gave the usual

laugh which blackfellows always indulge in when they

say anything which is the opposite of the truth. Shortly

he added, ‚ÄúYou watch towards the sky in the direction

of the tree.‚Äù Koomba turned his eyes in the direction

indicated, and as the shades of evening were by this

time beginning to fall, he could see a bright blaze in

the distance like a large star, which kept increasing in

size with great rapidity. Both of them were then very

glad, and commenced to sing some of their tribal

incantations and beat their boomerangs together.

As before stated, Murriwunda had told the fire

not to burn until he had time to get out of danger. It

then commenced to smoulder, and the young eaglets

who were in the nest feeling the unusual heat under

## p. 14 (#20) ##############################################

14

FOLKLORE OF THE

them, began to move restlessly under their mothers'

wings. They said they would feel cooler if they came

out and sat on the edge of the nest. When they got

out they commenced playing, and shoved against one

of their father's spears, which was sticking into the

side of the nest. He was sitting on a branch close by,

and seeing his spear bent over, went and caught hold

of it, and feeling angry with his children for disturbing

it, he said: ‚ÄúI'll stick the spear so firmly into the nest

that you can't move it," and so saying, he caught hold

of the spear, and gave it a strong shove downwards.

The moment he did this the fire which was smouldering

underneath burst through the opening made by the

spear in a torrent of flame, and burnt them all to

death. The fire continued to burn downwards, con-

suming the branches and the barrel of the tree all the

way to the ground, and continued along the roots in

all directions. Some of the large roots, which were

only a few feet beneath the grass, were completely

consumed, leaving a cavity all along their course, into

which the top soil fell, forming sinuous depressions in

the surface of the ground like small watercourses.

Some of these hollows can be traced as far as Kuddi,

several miles from Girra, where the great tree stood (d).

(d) The natives point out what they believe to be the site of

this mystic tree. There is a natural depression in the ground,

with a few small watercourses running into it from different

directions, in which water flows in time of flood. The central

hole is supposed to be where the tree stood, and the channels

represent the roots which were burnt.

## p. 15 (#21) ##############################################

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES.

15

3.- The Journey to Kurrilwan.

A man named Yoo-nee-a-ra, the chief of a

Kamilaroi tribe whose taorai comprised the district

around Kunopia, on the Boomi River, New South

Wales, once decided upon going away towards the set-

ting sun, where the present home of their ancestor,

Byama, is supposed to be situated, at a place called Kur-

rilwan. He journeyed on, carrying his weapons with

him, and gaining his living by hunting as he went. After

he had travelled several days, still going on to-

wards the sunset, he came to a place which was inhabited

by a tribe of blackfellows who had the body of a man,

and the legs and feet of an emu. They were called Dhin-

nabarrada, owing to their forked feet, and never went

about singly, but in little mobs, and subsisted upon

grubs. Their chief occupation was making boomerangs

outof thegidyer tree, the wood of which has a strong scent.

It is said of the Dhinnabarrada that if they suc-

ceed in touching a man's feet they will be transformed

into emu's feet, like their own, When these people saw

## p. 16 (#22) ##############################################

16

FOLKLORE OF THE

Yooneeara they approached him, evidently intent upon

touching his pedal extremities. Yooneeara, having heard

that there were no bandicoots in that part of the country,

had brought a live one with him in his dilly bag. When

the Dhinnabarrada were very close to him, he liberated

the bandicoot, and it ran away through the grass. All

the Dhinnabarrada people ran after this strange, un-

known animal, and Yooneeara took advantage of this

opportunity to make good his escape.

The headman passed safely through the country of

the Dhinnabarrada, and came to a large plain where he

met a tribe called Dheeyabry. These people were half

man and half roley-poley. When they were facing you

they looked like men, but when they turned their backs

they resembled roley-poleys. The Dheeyabry asked the

traveller where he was going, and he answered them:

‚Äú To see Byama.‚Äù They invited him to stay and rest

himself, and tried to dissuade him from going any far-

ther, but he still went on. He could hear the Dheeyabry

men calling after him to come back, but he did not heed

their warning

After a while he came to a place where the March

flies and mosquitoes were very numerous, and much

larger than he had ever seen them before. He beat

them off his body and limbs as best he could with a bush

which he carried in his hand. These insects tormented

him so much that he did not know what to do; and,

almost driven to despair, he sat down on the ground near

a waterhole, and made a fire. He then debated with

a

## p. 17 (#23) ##############################################

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES.

17

>

himself whether he would go on or turn back. He con-

sidered different ways of protecting himself from these

pests, and at last decided to strip a sheet of bark the

length of himself, and large enough to go all round his

body. He cut two holes in the bark opposite where his

eyes would be, and then tied bushes round his ankles

and round his head, and doubled the sheet of bark around

his body. He now went on, and got through this fly-

infested country, when he took his armour of bark off

and put it in a waterhole to keep it soft, so that he could

use it again on his return journey.

He next came to a place where there were a num-

ber of clear waterholes, in which he could see some small

men walking about under the water. They kept continu-

ally calling out to each other, ‚ÄúThalammea? Thal-

ammea ?‚Äù which in the Kamilaroi language means

‚Äú Where are you?‚Äù These men were catching fish,

which they threw out on to the bank.

Our traveller went on, and after a time came to a

camp where there were two old gins called Ngammoo-

millamilla, on account of their remarkable teats. These

women were of great stature, and had no men with

them. They subsisted on yams and the lizards known

as ‚Äúshingle-backs." They used a very small smoulder-

ing fire, so that no one could find their camping place at

night. For this reason they were also called Weebulla-

bulla.

Some distance further on Yooneeara came to the

edge of a large boggy marsh, called Kolliworoogla,

## p. 18 (#24) ##############################################

18

FOLKLORE OF THE

}

a

which seemed to stop further progress. After making

a careful examination of the shore, looking for a cross-

ing place, he saw what appeared to be a very long log,

the barrel of a fallen tree, lying across the swamp, and

almost embedded in the mire. He ventured on along

this log, which was very narrow, until he got clear of

the boggy ground. By and bye he came to a place

where there was a large rock, under one side of which

was a hollowed out place like a cave, in which he could

see Byama lying down apparently asleep. He was an

old man of colossal proportions, much larger than the

blackfellows of the present time. Byallaburragan, one

of Byama's daughters, was sitting at a fire in front of

the cave, roasting a carpet snake on the coals, and gave

the traveller some food. The country all round the

rock containing Byama's abode was covered with tall

green trees, all leaning towards the rock and containing

the nests of various birds. There was plenty of grass

and saltbush growing everywhere, through which the

traveller could see game of different kinds running

about. A little way in front of the cave a stream of

water ran along in a hollow channel, and at a short

distance down this watercourse was a deep lagoon, with

rocky banks at one end and reeds at the other, covered

with swans, ducks, and other waterfowl.

The visitor, after having refreshed himself, and had

a short rest at Byallaburagan's fire, started homewards,

and again went through the same places and saw the

same people as he had passed on the journey out. Shortly

## p. 19 (#25) ##############################################

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES.

19

after his return to his own taorai,' he took ill and died,

probably the result of the sorcery of some of the queer

people he had seen by the way. This is why no future

blackfellows can be induced to undertake another

journey to the land of Kurrilwan.

Taorai is a Kamilaroi word signifying country or district.

## p. 20 (#26) ##############################################

20

FOLKLORE OF THE

4.‚ÄîThe Kurrea and the Warrior.

On the main road from Kunopia to Goondiwindi, on

the New South Wales side of the Barwon River, is a

large sheet of water several miles long, known as

Boobera Lagoon. Some parts of this lagoon are very

deep, and the natives aver that at one particular place

it is bottomless. In this deeper portion the Kurrea, a

, a

snake-like monster of enormous proportions, has his

abode. He belongs to the group Kupathin, and his wife

is the daughter of the bumble tree, of the group Dilbi.

The Kurrea cannot travel on the dry land, so that when

he wishes to go out of the lagoon he commences

forming a channel by tearing up the ground on the

bank, and in this manner allowing the water to flow

after him and bear him along. He is very dexterous

at this work, and can float himself anywhere he wants

The black point out many hollow channels

around Boobera, which are now dry except in time of

floods, which they believe have been formed by the

Kurrea in ancient times.

to go.

## p. 21 (#27) ##############################################

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES.

21

If any blackfellow ever went into that part of

Boobera Lagoon to swim, or sat on the bank fishing, or

paddled out in their canoes in pursuit of waterfowl, the

Kurrea was sure to come upon them and devour them.

It was a serious loss to the people to be thus deprived

of all the fish, mussels, ducks, swans and other animals,

which formed part of their daily food in this portion of

their hunting grounds.

Long ago a headman named Toolalla, of Noona.

on the Barwon, who was a great warrior, decided upon

trying to kill the Kurrea, and rid his people of their

enemy. This chief stood upon the southern bank of

the lagoon, some distance below where Boobera head

station is now built on the opposite side, armed with

the best of his weapons, and watched for the Kurrea.

He had not to wait long before the monster saw him,

and immediately swam towards him. The Noona

warrior threw several spears and clubs with good aim,

and with all his force, but they took no effect upon his

antagonist. When he had used all his weapons to no

purpose, he turned and fled across the plain. The

Kurrea gave chase, forming a channel in his usual

manner, winding about like a huge snake, and travelling

at a great pace.

He was gaining rapidly on Toolalla, who was

running for his life, but, fortunately, there was a

bumble tree growing on the edge of the plain, and he

made strenuous efforts to reach it, because he knew it

was the mother-in-law of his opponent, who dare not

## p. 22 (#28) ##############################################

22

FOLKLORE OF THE

therefore approach it (a). When the Kurrea saw that

Toolalla had reached the bumble tree, he at once ceased

his pursuit, and excavating a small water-hole to enable

him to turn his body round, he went back to the lagoon

along the channel he had made during the encounter.

There is a tradition among these blacks that in

former times their forefathers occasionally found huge

bones, believed to be those of Kurreas, in the banks of

deep, dry watercourses. It is supposed that when the

water dried up the Kurreas, having no other means of

locomotion, perished of thirst. The natives say that

the children of these Kurreas take various forms, one of

which is the gowarkee, which resembles a gigantic emu

with black feathers and red legs. It is said that they

inhabit the swampy country, near Kurrilwan, the

present home of Byama.

a

(a) It is a fixed and well-known law among the aboriginals that a man cannot speak to his wife's mother.

## p. 23 (#29) ##############################################

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES,

23

5.-Thoorkook and Byama's Sons.

There were two brothers named Byama, and both

were married; each brother's wife had a son, and both

the boys were named Wee 'rooimbrall'. One day, these

two boys, who had voices just like the sound of a bull..

roarer (b), were left together at a rocky place till their

parents came back from hunting. The rocks at this

spot were embedded in the ground and enclosed a large

oval or circular space, like the kackaroo ring at the

keeparra ceremony. Thoorkook, a bad man, who had

some animosity towards the brothers Byama, had

some large and savage dogs, and when the little boys

were alone, these dogs came and killed them both.

When Byama and his brother, with their wives and

the rest of the people, returned to the circle and found

the boys dead, there was great wailing, which was

continued nearly all night at the camp.

Next day Byama and his brother changed them-

selves into kangaroos‚Äîbig strong fellows‚Äîand went in

sight of Thoorkook‚Äôs camp, and hopped away. The

(6) ‚ÄúBullroarers used by the Australian Aborigines.‚Äù‚ÄîJourn..

Anthrop. Inst., XXVII., 52-60, Plate VI.

## p. 24 (#30) ##############################################

24

FOLKLORE OF THE

uogs followed them; one dog was faster than the rest,

and when he got a long way ahead of the others, the

two big kangaroos turned upon him and killed him,

and threw him into a waterhole. Then they hopped

away again, and got another dog separated from the

rest, and killed him also, until all the dogs were

destroyed in this manner. Then the two kangaroos

changed themselves back into men again, and went and

killed Thoorkook, and changed him into a mopoke (a),

who can only go about at night. The mothers of the

two boys who were killed were always crying for them,

and Byama changed them into curlews (wee'loowack'y).

At night, when curlews are heard screeching around

the camp, it is the mothers crying for their children.

After that the two brothers Byama were out

hunting one day. The younger brother went up a

tree, and was cutting out a grub, when a chip from his

tomahawk went whizzing through the air, making a

noise like a bullroarer, and fell near the elder brother,

who was on the ground. He at once noticed that the

noise made by the falling chip resembled the voice of

the boys killed by Thoorkook's dogs. When the

younger Byama descended from the tree, his brother

suggested that they should go hunting in different

directions during the remainder of the day. The elder

brother being thus left alone, he cut a thin piece of

wood like the chip, and tied a string to it, and on

swinging it round made the same whizzing noise.

When they both met before going home to the camp,

(a) Mopoke is the native name of a nocturnal bird, somewhat

larger than the owl, which it resembles.

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## p. 25 (#31) ##############################################

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES,

25

the elder Byama showed his brother the instrument he

had made, and stood out in an open space, and swung

it round his head, and it gave out the voice of the little

boys who had been killed. The two brothers, who

were leaders of their tribe, then decided that all the

boys who should be born in the future must be shown

this instrument to make them remember the boys who

had lost their lives by Thoorkook's dogs. It must never

be seen by women, but they may be permitted to hear

it during the ceremonial of the Keeparra.

## p. 26 (#32) ##############################################

26

FOLKLORE OF THE

6.-The Wareenggary and Karambal.

Un the Clarence River there once lived seven

young women who were sisters, named Wareenggary;

they were members of the Bunjellung tribe, and

belonged to the Wirrakan division (a). They were

very clever, and had yamsticks, in the ends of which

were inserted charms, which protected the girls from

their enemies. Every day they went out hunting for

carpet snakes, and always carried their yamsticks with

them on these occasions. A

young fellow named

Karambal, of the same tribe, and of the division

Womboong (6) became enamoured of one of these

young women, and followed within sight of them

every day, but they did not favour his suit. He

watched for an opportunity, and at length came

suddenly upon one of the sisters who had strayed a

little way from the rest, and had not her yamstick with

her, and carried her off, taking her to his own camp.

Her companions became very angry, and held a con-

sultation as to what was best to be done to release their

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(a) See my paper on ‚ÄúThe Totemic Divisions of Australian

Tribes‚Äù‚ÄîJour. Roy. Soc. N.S. Wales, Vol. XXXI., p. 169.

(6) Loc. cit., p. 169.

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## p. 27 (#33) ##############################################

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES

27

sister from Karambal, who was of the wrong division

for her to marry, being, in fact, her tribal brother.

The eldest sister proposed sending a fierce storm of

wind to blow up the trees by the roots, and tumble

them upon Karambal and kill him. The other girls

were afraid that their sister might also lose her life by

the falling trees, and one of them made another pro-

posal, that they should all go away to the west, where

they knew the Winter lived, and bring the frost and

chilly winds, and in this manner punish Karambal for

what he had done. Accordingly, they went away and

brought the Winter, and on the place where Karambal

was camped with their sister they made the cold so

exceptionally severe that he was almost perished with

the frost. The girl whom he had captured did not feel

this terrible cold, because her sisters had managed to

send her by a secret messenger the charmed yamstick

she formerly carried when out hunting with them. In

a short time Karambal was glad enough to let

Wareenggary return to her own people, who were very

much rejoiced to get her back again amongst them.

They then consulted among themselves, and determined

to go away towards the east in quest of the Summer,

so as to melt the frost and ice. They did not wish to

impose any further hardship upon their tribe than was

necessary, their only object being to rescue their sister

from her captor.

After this trouble the Wareenggary resolved to

leave the earth altogether, but before doing so they

## p. 28 (#34) ##############################################

28

FOLKLORE OF THE

went into the mountains, and made springs at the heads.

of all the rivers, so that their people might always

have plenty of water throughout their hunting

rounds. The seven sisters then went up into the sky

where the constellation known as the Pleiades still

represents their camp. They come into view every

Summer, bringing pleasant warm weather for the

benefit of their tribe, after which they go away

gradually towards the west, where they disappear.

They then send the Winter to warn their kinsmen not

to carry off a woman of the wrong totemic division, but

to select their wives in accordance with the tribal laws.

Soon after the departure of the Wareenggary

from the earth the young man, Karambal, looked

about for another sweetheart, and this time he was

determined to comply with the marriage rules of his

people. After a while he was smitten by the charms

of a young woman who belonged to the Kooran (c)

division, being that from which he could lawfully select

a wife.

She was, unfortunately, already united to

another man, named Bullabogabun, a great warrior.

Karambal succeeded in inducing her to leave her

husband, and go away with him. When Bullabogabun

discovered that his wife had eloped, he followed her

tracks to the camp of Karambal. The latter, in order

to escape the wrath of Bullabogabun, climbed up into

a very large and tall pine tree growing near his camp,

(c) Jour. Roy. Soc. N.S. Wales, XXXI., p. 16.9

## p. 29 (#35) ##############################################

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES.

29

but his pursuer observed him hidden among the

topmost branches. Bullabogabun then gathered all the

wood he could find for some distance around, and piled

it into an immense heap against the butt of the tree,

and set fire to it. The fire raged with great fury,

burning the pine tree into cinders. The flame reached

high into the air, carrying Karambal with it, and

deposited him in a part of the sky near the

Wareenggary, where he became the star Aldebaran

(Alpha Tauri), in order that he might follow the sisters.

continually, the same as he had done in his youth.

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## p. 30 (#36) ##############################################

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FOLKLORE OF THE

7.‚ÄîThe Hereafter.

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ABOUT three-quarters of a mile north-westerly from the

Coolangatta homestead, the residence of the late Mr.

Alexander Berry, is a remarkable rock on the eastern

side of the Coolangatta mountain. This rock slopes

easterly with an angle of about 30 degrees from the

horizon, and on its face are six elongated depressions,

caused by the weathering away of the softer portions of

the stone. These places are suggestive of having been

worn by the feet of many persons having used them,

like the depressions worn in pavements by much traffic.

This has given rise to a superstition among the aborig-

ines that these marks were made in the rock by the

feet of the spirits of many generations of natives sliding

from the upper to the lower side of it. This belief is

strengthened by the fact that the first two depressions

are larger than the rest; the next pair on the left of

them are somewhat smaller; and the last pair, farther

to the left are smaller still. The aboriginal legend is

that the larger marks were made by the feet of the

## p. 31 (#37) ##############################################

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES.

31

a

men; the medium size by the women, and the smaller

by the children. One of the old blackfellows, who was

with me when I visited this place, stated that always

after a death in the camp, this rock presented the ap-

pearance of having been recently used. If the deceased

was a man, the large marks looked fresh; if a woman,

the middle pair; and if a child, the smaller slides

-showed indications of someone having slipped along

them.

It was from this rock that the shade of the native

took its final departure from its present hunting grounds,

and this was accomplished in the following manner :-

A very long stem of a cabbage-tree, imperceptible to

human vision, reached from some unknown land across

the sea to this rock. When a blackfellow died, his soul

went in the night to the top of the rock, and, standing

there for a few moments, looked out towards the sea,

which is about two miles distant. Then he slided down

the hollow grooves, one foot resting in each, and when

he got to the lower side of the rock he could distinguish

the end of the long pole, on to which he jumped, and

walked away along it to the sea-coast, and onward

across the expanse of water. The pole continued over

the sea, and in following it along the traveller came to

a place where flames of fire seemed to rise out of a.

depression in the water. If he had been a good tribes-

man he would be able to pass through the flames

unscathed; but if he had been a bad man, who had

broken the tribal laws, he might get scorched and fall

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## p. 32 (#38) ##############################################

32

FOLKLORE OF THE

into the sea, or perhaps he would get through it more

or less singed.

After awhile the end of the pole was reached at

the other side of the sea. The traveller then continued

on along a track through the bush, and after a time

met a crow, who said: ‚ÄúYou once frightened me," and

thereupon threw a spear at him, but missed him, and

the man kept on his way, the crow calling him bad

names, and making a great noise. At another place he

came to where a large native fig-tree was growing, and

two men were there. One of these men was standing on

the ground, and was some relative of the traveller; but

the other man, who was up in the tree, was a vindictive

person, and would kill him if he got a chance. He

asks the traveller's friend to bring him under the tree,

but in doing so the friend warns him to take care. The

enemy up the fig-tree is gathering figs, and is squeezing

them together around a quartz crystal, which has the

effect of causing the lumps of figs to increase in size

and weight. He then calls out to the traveller to stand

out in a clear space, so that he can throw him the

bundle of fruit. The pilgrim, however, suspects his

evil intentions, and refuses to do this, but walks into a

scrubby place under the tree, and being hungry, stoops

down to pick up some of the figs which have fallen to

the ground, having been shaken off by the wind. The

enemy in the tree then throws the bundle of figs at him,

which by this time has changed into a large stone, but

he misses his mark, owing to the scrub and undergrowth

## p. 33 (#39) ##############################################

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES.

33

obstructing his view. The traveller now resumed his

journey, and the track along which he was going

passed through a narrow, rocky gorge, with scrub

growing on either side, in which were some king

parrots of gigantic size, who tried to bite him with

their strong beaks, but he defended himself with

his shield, and succeeded in getting through the

pass. Upon this the parrots set up a great chattering,

similar to that made by these birds in their haunts.

On proceeding farther on he comes to a forest where

there are plenty of trees but no under-scrub, and the

grass is green. There are plenty of kangaroos and

other native animals of various kinds. Presently he

reaches a place where there are large numbers of black

people of all ages, amongst whom are some young men

playing ball in a clear place near the camp. There the

traveller sees his relatives and all his friends who have

died before him. He sits down a little way from the

people, and when his relations see him, they come and

welcome him, and conduct him into the camp, where

they paint and dress him in the same way that he was

accustomed to ornament his person in his own country.

After that, great shouting and corroboreeing is indulged

in, and he plays amongst the rest.

Presently an old, dirty-looking blackfellow, with

sores upon his body, comes near and calls out, ‚Äú Who

came when that noise was made just now ?‚Äù They

answer him that it was only the young people playing

about. This ugly old man cannot come into the camp

## p. 34 (#40) ##############################################

34

FOLKLORE OF THE

because there is a watercourse defining the boundary of

his hunting grounds, beyond which he dare not pass.

If he were to see the new arrival he might point a bone

at him, or work him some other injury, by means of

sorcery. This is why the people give him an evasive

answer, on receiving which he returns to his own camp,

which is a little distance farther on.

If the person who died had been greedy or quarrel-

some, or had always been causing trouble in the tribe,

he would meet with a different reception at the end of

the journey. In order to describe this, it will be neces-

sary to take the reader back to that part of the story

where the crow threw the spear. If the traveller has

been a troublesome fellow, the spear pierces him and

the crow comes and picks mouthfuls of flesh out of him,

and knocks him about; after which, he pulls out the

spear and starts the man on his journey again. When

he reaches the place where the large fig-tree is growing,

there is no friend there to warn him of danger, so he

walks carelessly under the tree, and commences to pick

up and eat the ripe figs which have fallen to the ground.

The enemy up in the tree watches his opportunity, and

throws the bundles of figs, which he has changed to

stone by his jugglery, down upon the traveller, bruising

him severely and stretching him almost lifeless on the

ground. The man then comes down out of the tree,

and shakes the traveller, and stands him on his feet and

starts him on his way, bruised and bleeding from his

wounds, and scarcely able to walk. When at last he

## p. 35 (#41) ##############################################

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES.

35

reaches the forest of green trees and the camp of his

countrymen, the people shout out to him that they

don't want him there, and make signs to him to go on.

The scabby old blackfellow before referred to then

makes his appearance, and asks the usual question:

‚ÄúWho came when that noise was made?" The people

answer him that a stranger came; whereupon, the old

man calls the traveller to him, and takes him

to

his own camp. The wounds made by those clever, old

wizards, the crow and the man in the fig-tree, never

heal properly, and give the injured man a scabby and

dirty appearance ever afterwards.

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