

Folklore of the Australian aborigines.

Mathews, R. H. (Robert Hamilton), 1841-1918.

Sydney, Hennessey, Harper and company, 1899.

<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044089113021>

HathiTrust



www.hathitrust.org

Public Domain, Google-digitized

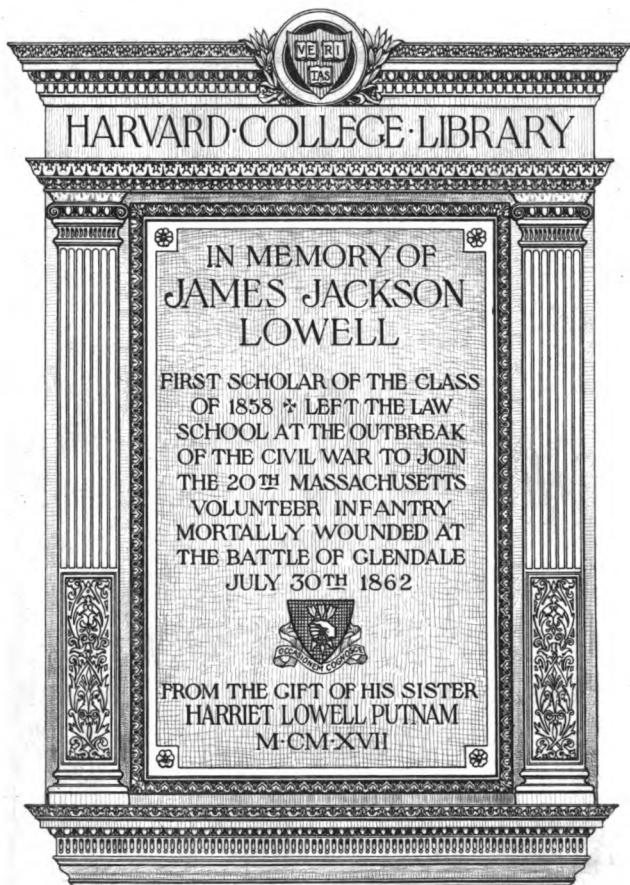
http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

We have determined this work to be in the public domain, meaning that it is not subject to copyright. Users are free to copy, use, and redistribute the work in part or in whole. It is possible that current copyright holders, heirs or the estate of the authors of individual portions of the work, such as illustrations or photographs, assert copyrights over these portions. Depending on the nature of subsequent use that is made, additional rights may need to be obtained independently of anything we can address. The digital images and OCR of this work were produced by Google, Inc. (indicated by a watermark on each page in the PageTurner). Google requests that the images and OCR not be re-hosted, redistributed or used commercially. The images are provided for educational, scholarly, non-commercial purposes.

Mathews - Folklore of the Australian Aborigines 1899

27255
24.7

27255, 24.7



Cover

27255.24.9

Folklore

of the

Australian

Aborigines



BY

R. H. MATHEWS,

LICENSED SURVEYOR.

Price, One Shilling.

SYDNEY:

HENNESSEY, HARPER AND COMPANY.

1899.

[COPYRIGHT.]

FOLKLORE

OF THE

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES.

BY

R. H. MATHEWS,

LICENSED SURVEYOR.

SYDNEY:

HENNESSEY, HARPER AND COMPANY.

1899.

[COPYRIGHT.]

~~27255.24.9~~

27255.24.7

Harvard College Library

June 24, 1919

J.J. Lowell fund

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

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—the institution of the sacred bullroarer in the ceremonial of the Keeparra—and 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

Tribes, inhabiting the Clarence River and its numerous
affluents.

I have omitted 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.

FOLKLORE

OF THE

Australian Aborigines.

—:0:0:—

I.—Arrival of the Thurrawal Tribe in Australia.

IN 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

so give them a chance to steal it, and start away across the ocean. So, one day, the starfish said to the whale: "You have a great many lice in your head; let me catch them and kill them for you." 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 would say, "Is my canoe all right?" The starfish, who had provided himself with a piece of bark to have ready by his side, answered: "Yes, this is it which I am tapping with my hand," at the same time hitting the bark, which gave the same sound as the bark of the canoe. 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.

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 fast 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: "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, "Look at my strong arm (a). I am able to pull the canoe fast enough to make good our escape!" 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.

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.

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 (*b*). 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 into one. 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—all of them being of unusual and marvelous 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

(*b*.) The Rev. W. Ridley briefly mentions this legend in his "Kamilaroi and Other Australian Languages," 1875, p. 136.

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 determined 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 Murriwunda, "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." 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.

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 Murriwunda 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, "I 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, "You watch towards the sky in the direction of the tree." 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

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: "I'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, consuming 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.

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 setting sun, where the present home of their ancestor, Byama, is supposed to be situated, at a place called Kurrilwan. 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 towards 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 Dhinnabarrada, owing to their forked feet, and never went about singly, but in little mobs, and subsisted upon grubs. Their chief occupation was making boomerangs out of the gidyertree, the wood of which has a strong scent.

It is said of the Dhinnabarrada that if they succeed in touching a man's feet they will be transformed into emu's feet, like their own. When these people saw

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, unknown 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 :— “To see Byama.” They invited him to stay and rest himself, and tried to dissuade him from going any farther, 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

himself whether he would go on or turn back. He considered 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 number of clear waterholes, in which he could see some small men walking about under the water. They kept continually calling out to each other, "Thalammea? Thalammea?" which in the Kamilaroi language means "Where are you?" 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 "shingle-backs." They used a very small smouldering fire, so that no one could find their camping place at night. For this reason they were also called Weebullabulla.

Some distance further on Yooneeara came to the edge of a large boggy marsh, called Kolliworroogla,

which seemed to stop further progress. After making a careful examination of the shore, looking for a crossing 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

after his return to his own *taorai*,¹ 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 Kuririlwan.

¹ *Taorai* is a Kamilaroi word signifying country or district.

4.—The Kurree 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 Kurree, 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 Kurree 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 to go. 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 Kurree in ancient times.

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 Kurreea 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 Kurreea, 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 Kurreea. 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 Kurreea 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

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

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 themselves into kangaroos—big strong fellows—and went in sight of Thoorkook's camp, and hopped away. The

(b) "Bullroarers used by the Australian Aborigines."—*Journ. Anthropol. Inst.*, XXVII., 52-60, Plate VI.

dogs 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.

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.

6.—The Wareenggary and Karambal.

On 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 (*b*) 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 consultation as to what was best to be done to release their

(*a*) See my paper on "The Totemic Divisions of Australian Tribes"—*Jour. Roy. Soc. N.S. Wales*, Vol. XXXI., p. 169.

(*b*) *Loc. cit.*, p. 169.

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 proposal, 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

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 grounds. 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

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.

7.—The Hereafter.

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 aborigines 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

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 appearance 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 slid 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 tribesman 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

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: "You 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

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, "Who came when that noise was made just now?" They answer him that it was only the young people playing about. This ugly old man cannot come into the camp

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 quarrelsome, 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 necessary 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

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: "Who 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 away 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.

This book should be returned to
the Library on or before the last date
stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred
by retaining it beyond the specified
time.

Please return promptly.

DUE APR 22 1980

MAY 17 1978

3913800

4206378

SEP 5 1978

OCT 28 1978

5422894

6113708

BOOK-DUE WID

JUN 16 1978

27255.24.7

Folklore of the Australian aborigin

Widener Library

003347888



3 2044 089 113 021