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Folk-Tales of the Aborigines of New South Wales

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described in the notes on the heart and the lunar crescent, which, however, hardly appear to be standard types. They also are of silver, but they do not include so many symbols as the Virgin-surmounted charm, five symbols appearing in one of them (Fig. 25), and four in each of the three others (Figs. 19, 20, 24). It is curious that in two of these latter (Figs. 19, 20) the symbols are all profane, the heart, to which a religious conception is sometimes attached, being lacking; and that in the other (Fig. 24) the symbols are sacred in character, with the exception of the pentangle. It is interesting to note that neither in any of the compound amulets mentioned, nor in the *cimaruta*, does a representation of a horn, otherwise a favourite protection, occur.

The only Spanish amulets which I have found which resemble the Portuguese compound amulets are the combined crescent, *figa*, and four-petalled flower, which may be related to the *cinco seimão*; and the elaborate jet ithiphallic hands upon which appear a lunar crescent, or, more seldom, a lunar crescent and a heart.¹

W. L. HILDBURGH.

FOLK-TALES OF THE ABORIGINES OF NEW SOUTH WALES.

THE following stories have been obtained by me personally from old natives whom I have been acquainted with in different parts of New South Wales. In 1899 I published seven aboriginal stories,² and in 1904 a number of myths and traditions current among the natives of New South Wales and Victoria.³ I have a considerable number of all sorts of legends still in MS., awaiting publication.

R. H. MATHEWS.

I. WHY FISHES INHABIT THE WATER. (*Kamilaroi Tribe*.)

In olden times there were some people who had the form of different kinds of fish, but they always roamed about and hunted

¹ "Notes on Spanish Amulets," p. 457, and Pl. VII., and pp. 459, 460, and Pl. V.

² *Folklore of the Australian Aborigines* (Sydney, 1899), pp. 1-35.

³ *Journ. Roy. Soc. N.S.W.*, xxxviii. pp. 278-286 and 337-376.

on the dry land the same as other folk. One day they were camped beside the Barwan river, under a shady tree which grew on the top of a steep bank, at the foot of which was a large, deep waterhole. A heavy thunderstorm came suddenly, and almost extinguished their fire. Immediately after the rain, a strong, piercing wind arose, and everybody became very cold. An old man, Thuggai, the yellow-belly, told his children to try and re-kindle the fire. As they did not succeed, he asked Biernuga, the bony fish, to have a try. Then he invited Kumbal, the bream, and some others, but they all failed, because the wood was very wet on account of the recent heavy shower. There was among the people a Ngūlamanbū, a little fish about four or five inches long, and he said to the yellow-belly, Thuggai, "Ask my father Gūddhu, the cod-fish, to light the fire for us. He is a clever conjurer and I am sure he will succeed." Thuggai accordingly made the desired request. Gūddhu then placed some pieces of bark on the almost extinguished fire, and began to blow the few remaining live coals vigorously with his breath, which caused the fire to show signs of reviving.

All the people immediately crowded close to Gūddhu on the windward side, keeping their backs towards the cold wind and their faces in the direction of the fire, in the hope of soon being able to warm themselves. When Gūddhu observed this, he asked them to get farther back and give him more room. They then all went round to the leeward side, which allowed the wind to play freely on the smouldering embers; which caused the bark and wood to gradually ignite. Gūddhu added plenty of fuel, because he wished to make a good fire which would warm everybody.

On the leeward side there was a very narrow space between the fire and the top of the steep bank already mentioned, which was only of sufficient width to afford standing room for the occupants. At that moment there came a sudden, strong gust of wind which fanned the fire into a large sheet of flame and compelled all the people, including Gūddhu himself, to step backwards to escape being scorched, whereupon they all fell headlong down the bank into the water. The strength of the gale increased and swept the fire also down the bank into the

river. The people who were swimming about gathered around the fire, which continued to burn under the water, and they have remained there ever since. This is why it is always warmer under the water on a bleak, chilly day than it is in the cold air on the surface.

II. WHY THE OWL HAS LARGE EYES. (*Wirraidyuri Tribe.*)

Away back in the traditionary times, Weemullee, the owl, and Willanjee, the cyclone, were two young men who were great friends. Although they hunted and had their meals together, and slept in the same camp, and chatted to each other, Willanjee was invisible to his companion. Weemullee, however, was always trying to see Willanjee and kept constantly staring in his direction, which caused his eyes to gradually grow larger and rounder. When they started out hunting together, Willanjee's weapons and other accoutrements were carried along just as any blackfellow would carry them, but the bearer was not visible. When the two hunters were stalking kangaroos, Weemullee would see Willanjee's spear poised in the wommera, and thrown at the kangaroo. He would hear Willanjee's voice calling out that he had secured the game; and when the two men rushed up to give the animal the *coup de grâce*, Willanjee's club was acting in good form in an invisible hand. All this greatly puzzled Weemullee, besides having the great charm of mystery, and he was for ever straining his eyes in a vain endeavour to see his peculiar friend.

One day these two mates were out hunting as usual, and had caught some iguanas and black ducks. Towards evening Weemullee climbed a tree and caught a fat young opossum in one of the hollow spouts. Willanjee called out, "Throw it down to me and we will go home and cook our supper." Weemullee then descended from the tree and the two mates started for the camp, carrying with them their day's catch of game. The opossum was borne along by the invisible Willanjee, and when the camp was reached he made a fire and cooked the different animals in the usual native fashion. The hunters had a great feast, and when it was over Willanjee rolled himself

up in his rug and lay down by the camp fire. Weemullee's inquisitiveness had reached its climax, and he decided to make a close inspection of his friend while he was sound asleep with a full stomach.

By and by, when all was quiet, with his eyes opened to their utmost extent, he cautiously unfolded and lifted up one corner of Willanjee's skin rug. The consequence was sudden and disastrous. The moment the rug was raised, out burst the wind and scattered everything in the camp in all directions. Weemullee was swept into an adjacent hollow tree and on up inside the hole, coming out again at a top spout. He was then blown away across a plain, all the time staring and straining his eyes in the hope of seeing his queer companion. At last he caught a firm hold of a small but tough acacia tree and managed to cling to it till Willanjee the whirlwind had gone past. Ever since that terrible night's experience Weemullee's eyes have remained large and round.

III. HOW THE NANKEEN MAKES THE REEDS GROW. (*Yitha-yitha Tribe.*)

The Nankeen crane, called by the natives Warwollee, is a nocturnal bird of a dull reddish colour, and spends the day sitting among the branches of trees bounding waterholes and lagoons. When the Murrumbidgee river is in high flood in the summer months, and the waters spread out on either side over the low-lying lands and swamps, Warwollee is in great glee and utters his discordant calls during the evening at frequent intervals. The aborigines believe that the rapid growth and great height of some reeds, due to the warmth of the sun upon the flooded lands, is caused by the noise made by these birds. In prehistoric times, Warwollee was a great magician and went about among the swamps and other moist places where reeds grow, stretching them upward by pulling them with his bill. The joints which we see in reeds and rushes were caused by Warwollee, and indicate the places where he used to catch them, when hauling them higher and higher out of the ground.

(*To be continued.*)