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Folk-Tales of the Aborigines of New South Wales. (Continued)

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the temptation to please a prospective client or a present benefactor might often be too great for the narrator.

Mr. Gomme pointed out that the two collections exhibited dovetailed into one another, and that the genuine folklore character of the modern mascot was confirmed by its resemblance in idea and nature to the ancient amulet.

Mr. Calderon suggested that the tendency to revert to amulets was probably due in great part to literary promulgation. The attention given to such objects by the halfpenny press led to their diffusion amongst readers.

Mr. Hildburgh drew attention to a penny weekly, *The Mystic*, and the advertisements therein of "The Mystic Millinery, Luck Millinery and Astrological Fashions Co., Ltd.,"<sup>1</sup> and explained that the "Japanese mascots" shown were figures of puppies given by relatives to a baby boy as symbols of health and vigour, after its first visit to a temple.

The President said that from his experience the modern belief in amulets as aids to luck was genuine and widely spread.

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#### FOLK-TALES OF THE ABORIGINES OF NEW SOUTH WALES.

(Continued from p. 227.)

#### IV. ORIGIN OF THE BAR IN THE MURRUMBIDGEE RIVER AT BALRANALD. (*Wathi-wathi Tribe*.)

About two miles below the town of Balranald, there is a low rocky bar across the bed of the Murrumbidgee river, which is only visible in dry weather when the stream is low. The aboriginal name of this bar is Bangonjee-butthu. Its formation is accounted for by the following native legend. A large tribe of blacks were camped on the edge of a sandhill in the locality, and one hot summer afternoon a number of little boys went into the river for a bathe, and all of them got drowned. The

<sup>1</sup> The same weekly also advertises £400 per annum for "Scholarships for children founded on their Horoscopes," for which "A number of well-known and skilled astrologers will be engaged to cast the horoscopes according to the data supplied, and their decision must in every case be considered final."

river was in partial flood at the time and the bodies were not recovered; but in the course of some months, when the water subsided, the bar became visible, and the natives believed that it was composed of the bodies of their children.

V. A WOMAN'S WAISTBELT A CURE FOR HEADACHE.  
(*Kamilaroi Tribe.*)

The wife of the crow was persuaded by the bat to leave her husband and run away with him. So one day the crow went out hunting with his friend the crimson-wing parrot, and on returning to the camp Mrs. Crow was not there, but they soon discovered the tracks of the run-away pair. The crimson-wing said to the crow, "I suppose you are going after the bat to punish him." The crow replied that he did not intend to fight, but that he would go and have some talk with the bat upon the matter, and asked the crimson-wing to come and listen. In a day or two they overtook the fugitives, and the bat prepared to defend himself. The crow addressed him and said, "you can keep my wife, now that she has gone away from me, but I have come to ask you for the *Kummillera* (apron) which she wears in front, and also for her *wan'gin* (waistbelt)." The wife took off these articles of dress and handed them to the bat who gave them to the crow. The crimson-wing and the crow then started back to their own camp, the latter using the *Kummillera* to brush the flies and mosquitoes off his face. Next day the crow had a headache, caused by the fatigue and worry of the journey, and he bound his wife's waist-belt round his head. He explained to the crimson-wing that he always cured a headache by this means, which was the reason he had taken so much trouble to recover the *wan'gin*.

VI. HOW THE KAMILAROI ACQUIRED FIRE. (*Kamilaroi Tribe.*)

At one time the crow was the only one who was acquainted with fire and its uses. When the other people had been eating game, blood was always observed around their mouths and jaws, but nothing of that kind was ever noticed about the crow's face. Being questioned on the subject, he said he always cut

his meat into small pieces with his stone knife, but his answer was not considered satisfactory. He was invited to a corroboree where some comical fellows were to perform. After a number of clever dancers had taken their turn, without disturbing the crow's equanimity, the shingle-back and sleepy-lizard danced along by the camp-fires, singing:

“Yamburgain bumbaingo nyi dhu-u-ra  
Gunaga bid-yeringga bumbul guna-guna.”<sup>1</sup>

All the time they were performing, the ordure was trickling down their legs, and when they gave a special jump there was an extra discharge of it. This so completely engrossed the crow's attention that the sparrow-hawk, Gur-gur, came up beside him, catching hold of the little bag containing the fire, and running away with it. When the crow saw what had happened, he rushed after Gur-gur, and in the scuffle the fire got jerked out of the bag, speedily igniting the dry grass and leaves. The crow tried his best to prevent the fire from getting away by stamping upon it with his feet, and when that did not succeed he lay down full length and rolled over and over among the burning grass, but all his attempts to recover possession of the fire were unavailing. It spread through the whole country, so that all the people had their share of it, and have used it ever since for cooking and other purposes.

The crow got so saturated with blackness by rolling so much in the burnt grass, that he has retained that colour to the present day. The whitish rings round a crow's eyes show where the skin was scorched on that occasion. (Most of my Australian readers will know that when a blackfellow is burnt severely, a white patch usually remains where the skin was injured.)

## VII. THE EMU AND THE CROW.<sup>2</sup> (*Burranbinga Tribe.*)

The emu and the crow were man and wife, and lived in a *gurli*, or hut. One very wet day they remained indoors, and the emu, who was always addicted to kicking his legs about,

<sup>1</sup> Rhyme unsuitable for translation.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. K. L. Parker narrates a somewhat similar story, told among the Yualäi tribe, in her *Australian Legendary Tales* (London, 1896), pp. 73-74.

lay on his back on the floor to pass the time, and kept kicking at the roof. After a while he struck a weak spot, and made a hole, through which the rain beat into the *gurli*. He was too lazy to go and repair the damage, but sent the crow, his wife, out in the wet to patch the breach in the roof. The emu continued his play of kicking upward, and presently made another hole in the roof, which the crow had likewise to go out and repair. This continued for some time till the crow became exasperated, and taking a piece of bark, scooped up some hot coals from the fire, and threw them on the emu's chest, as he lay on his back disporting himself by kicking at the roof of the *gurli*. This burnt his breast so severely that even to the present time there is a callous, dark patch on the breast of a cock emu. Moreover, emus continue the old habit of kicking upward with their legs when they are rolling themselves in the sand or elsewhere to clean their feathers.

#### VIII. HOW BOOLABOOLKA LAKE WAS FORMED. (*Mailpurigu Tribe.*)

Lake Boolaboolka, in the county of Livingstone, New South Wales, was made in the following manner: A blackfellow stood on some rising ground, near where the lake is now situated, and tried to throw his boomerang, but it fell to the ground at a little distance. He then lit a fire, at which he warmed the weapon to make it lithe. He manipulated it, putting the proper bend upon it, and threw it again. This time the boomerang went and tore up the ground, and formed Lake Boolaboolka, and came whizzing back towards its owner. While it was gyrating in the air near him, he blew strongly upon it with his breath, and it went to one side of the lake, and started off along the ground in a winding direction, and dug a watercourse. Then the boomerang came back to the thrower as before, and he blew upon it again, and it went and excavated another watercourse. Every time the weapon returned to its master, he imparted fresh vigour to it with his breath. These exploits of the boomerang were repeated until all the watercourses and gullies which now flow into Lake Boolaboolka

were made. Then a thunderstorm arose, accompanied by much rain, which flowed along the watercourses prepared for it, and filled the newly-made lake.

Some days afterward, the Lake-maker was sitting under a shady tree on its banks, when he espied a number of strange blackfellows approaching it to make their camp. He took up his boomerang and threw it with all his might in their direction. This magical weapon spun round and round among them, striking each one upon the chin, cutting a triangular piece out of their beards, whereupon every man became a musk-duck, and swam out into the water. This accounts for the fork in the beard-like appendage of the musk-ducks which now inhabit the lake.

IX. THE NATIVE CAT AND THE FISHERMEN. (*Mailpurlgu Tribe.*)

In ancient times the Native Cat, Pupilla, was a renowned sorcerer and warrior of the Mailpurlgu tribe, and belonged to the Kilpungurra cycle. He had his camp in a hole in the ground on the bank of the Darling river, about twenty miles above where the town of Menindi now stands. It was close to what the white people call "Albemarle Station," but I forgot to enquire the aboriginal name.

One day a family of strange blacks came to the river to catch fish, and at night they made their camp in the vicinity of the cat's home. At early dawn next morning, the Native Cat was roaming along, and, finding the fishing nets lying near the bank, he carried them away with him to his camp, and hid them there. Then he sat at the mouth of the hole and awaited results. When the strange blacks went to the river to resume their fishing, they found their nets had been stolen, and followed on along the tracks of the purloiner. When they came close to his abode they saw one of his legs projecting above the surface of the ground. Several strong men sneaked noiselessly up, and, catching hold of the leg, applied all their strength in endeavouring to haul the cat out of the hole. He was too strong for them, however, and, drawing his foot out of their grasp, retired to the bottom of his den. All the

blacks, men and women, began peering down at him, and tried to throw spears, but he spat or belched a dense smoke out of his mouth, which prevented them from seeing him. This smoke comprised several colours, and ascended into the sky and formed the rainbow. When the smoke cleared away, the men and women came to the brink again and looked down. In those old times the women had beards the same as the men. The cat immediately belched forth fire, which reached to the surface. When the men saw the flame ascending they turned their faces quickly away, but the women were so intent upon watching this new manoeuvre of the cat that the blaze singed their beards clean off, and they never grew again, which explains why the women have no beards at the present day.

When the men saw the way their wives and daughters had been disfigured, they made open war upon the Native Cat, who fled away towards the setting sun, till he got clean out of their reach. There he made a camp, and lived upon nardoo seed. After a time he made up his mind to return to his own haunts, and punish the people who had driven him out of it. One morning he started on this homeward journey, carrying with him the stones he used for grinding the nardoo seed. Although he travelled a long way, he found himself at night back at his western camp. Next day he made another attempt, but again discovered, as the evening drew on, that he was approaching the place he started from in the morning. Every day for many years past he has repeated his efforts to reach his native place, but each setting sun has found him back at the starting-point. It is supposed that if the Native Cat were to succeed in returning to Albemarle, he would kill all the blacks there.

R. H. MATHEWS.

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#### TURKS PRAYING FOR RAIN.

AGRICULTURAL people realise their absolute dependence upon God's good gift of rain, especially if, as in Turkey, the mountains have been despoiled of their forests and the rainfall is scanty.