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MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

OF THE

ABORIGINES

OF THE

ENCOUNTER BAY TRIBE,

SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

BY H. E. A. MEYER.

## ABORIGINES OF ENCOUNTER BAY.

THE Aborigines of different parts of the province are distinguished by differences of language, customs, manners, and traditions. Thus there appears to be no similarity between the Adelaide and Encounter Bay language, and the same may be said of their manners, habits, and traditions. In what follows, therefore, I am only to be understood as speaking of the manners, customs, traditions, &c., of the natives of Encounter Bay and the lower banks of the Murray. These people, who speak one language with slight variation of dialect, are divided into different tribes, as Raminjerar, Lampinjerar, Karkarinjerar, Pankinjerar, &c., and these tribes consider themselves as large families, and are more or less connected with each other by marriage. Each tribe derives its name from the district to which it belongs, and which they claim as their own property, as Ramong, the district belonging to the Raminjerar, the affix *injeri* (plural *injerar*) having the same signification as "er" in English, as Londoner, &c., &c. Although these tribes are, as just observed, related, they are nevertheless extremely jealous and suspicious of each other, and almost constantly at war.

In giving an account of these people, we shall endeavour to trace the life of one from his birth upwards.

When a woman is near her confinement she removes from the encampment with some of the women to assist her. As soon as the child is born, the information is conveyed to the father, who immediately goes to see the child and to attend upon the mother, by carrying firewood, water, &c. If there are un-

married men and boys in the camp, as there generally are, the woman and her friends are obliged to remain at a distance in their own encampment. This appears to be part of the same superstition which obliges a woman to separate herself from the camp at the time of her monthly illness, when, if a young man or boy should approach, she calls out, and he immediately makes a circuit to avoid her. If she is neglectful upon this point, she exposes herself to scolding, and sometimes to severe beating by her husband or nearest relation, because the boys are told from their infancy, that if they see the blood they will early become grey-headed, and their strength will fail prematurely.

If the child is permitted to live (I say permitted, because they are frequently put to death) it is brought up with great care, more than generally falls to the lot of children of the poorer class of Europeans. Should it cry, it is passed from one person to another and caressed and soothed, and the father will frequently nurse it for several hours together.

Children that are weak or deformed, or illegitimate, and the child of any woman who has already two children alive, are put to death. No mother will venture to bring up more than two children, because she considers that the attention which she would have to devote to them would interfere with what she regards as the duty to her husband, in searching for roots, &c. If the father dies before a child is born, the child is put to death by the mother, for the Father who provides for us all is unknown to them. This crime of infanticide is increased by the whites, for nearly all the children of European fathers used to be put to death. It is remarkable that when the children are first born they are nearly as white as Europeans, so that the natives sometimes find it difficult to say whether they are of pure blood or not. In such doubtful cases the form of the nose decides. When the child commences to walk, the father gives it a name, which is frequently derived from some circumstances which occurred at the time of the child's birth; or, as each tribe has a kind of patron or protector in the objects of nature, as Thunder, the protector of the Raminjerar, a kind of ant, the protector of the

Kargarinjerar, the pelican, a kind of snake, &c., &c., of other tribes, the father often confers the name of this protector (as the pouch of the pelican), or a part of it, upon the child. Grown-up persons frequently exchange names, probably as a mark of friendship.

Children are suckled by their mothers for a considerable time, sometimes to the age of five or six years; and it is no uncommon thing to see a boy playing with his companions, suddenly leave off and run to his mother to refresh himself with a draught of milk. When weaned, he accompanies his father upon short excursions, unless he should be delicate and unable to bear the fatigue, upon which occasion the father takes every opportunity to instruct his son. For instance, if they arrive at a place concerning which they have any tradition, it is told to the child if old enough to understand it. Or he shows him how to procure this or that animal, or other article of food, in the easiest way. Until his fourteenth or fifteenth year he is mostly engaged in catching fish and birds, because already, for some years, he has been obliged to seek for food on his own account. Thus he early becomes, in a great measure, independent; and there is nobody who can control him, the authority of his parents depending only upon the superstitions which they have instilled into him from infancy; and the prohibitions respecting certain kinds of food—for different kinds of food are allotted to persons of different ages—are enforced by their superstitions. The roes of fishes are appropriated to the old men, and it is believed that if women or young men or children eat of them they will become prematurely old. Other kind of meat they consider diminishes the strength of the muscles, &c., &c. At certain seasons of the year, when a particular kind of fish is abundant, the men frequently declare it to be *rambe* (holy); after which, all that are caught must be brought to the men, by whom they are cooked, and the women and children are not allowed even to approach the fires until the cooking is over and the fish are cold, when they may approach and eat of what the men choose to give them, after having previously regaled themselves.

The boys, besides being taught to obtain their own food, are also exercised in the use of the spear and other weapons; and when arrived at the age of fourteen or fifteen years, they take part in the wars between the tribes. A few years afterwards, when sixteen or eighteen years of age, according to the growth of the beard, he is admitted into the rank of the men, and becomes rambe, or sacred, in the following way: —

In the summer time, when the nights are warm, several tribes meet together for the purpose of fighting, and afterwards amusing themselves with dancing and singing. Immediately after the fight, the relations of the different tribes visit each other for purposes of amusement. Previously, however, the men have spoken together, and agreed to make some two of the boys into men, and for this purpose have provided themselves with grease and red ochre, which are required in the ceremony to be performed. In the midst of the amusement the men suddenly give a shout, and all turn towards the two young men, who are suddenly seized and carried away by the men. The females cease their singing and begin to scold, for from this time they are not allowed to accept any food from these young men. As soon as these latter are brought to the place appointed for the ceremony two fires are made, and the young men placed between. Several of the men are now engaged in singeing and plucking out all the hair from the body except the hair of the head and beard, and as soon as this is accomplished, the whole body except the face is rubbed over with grease and red ochre. The young men thus anointed are not allowed to sleep during the whole night, but must either sit or stand until the morning, when the men return to them, and they are then obliged to go into the bush until sundown, when they return to their male relations, but are to avoid the females, and obtain some food, for until now they have not eaten. They are now considered rambe (sacred or holy), and no female must accept any food from them, not even their own brothers, until such time as they are allowed to ask for a wife. For a year after this the two assist each other in singeing and plucking out the hair, and rubbing in the ochre and

grease; and the next year they pluck out each other's beards, and apply the grease and ochre to the face as well as to the other parts of the body. When the beard has again grown to a considerable length it is a second time plucked out, after which they have a right to ask for wives; but this rule is not without exception, for it seems that when any tribe is much diminished by deaths, the young men are permitted to marry earlier by a year or thereabout. The plucking out of the beard and anointing with grease and ochre the men may continue if they please till about forty years of age, for they consider it ornamental, and fancy that it makes them look younger, and gives them an importance in the eyes of the women, and above all, that it makes them fat, for they admire a fat man however ugly.

It must be observed that before the boys are made *Kainjanar*—for so they are called after being painted as described above—they are very much offended at having the beard touched or even spoken of, and frequently one of their fights commences in the following manner:—Two tribes having put together some of the painted ones on one side, will shake the left hand in a threatening manner, and call out to the boys of the other tribe, *Towúnde mak ngawir*—You are naked upon the cheek, boys; to which taunt they reply by throwing their spears, thus commencing the fight.

A rude kind of tattooing is practised amongst them, consisting merely in making scars without applying any colour, and for this there seems to be no particular time allotted, as sometimes boys of ten or twelve years of age may be seen with several large cuts upon the breast and shoulders, and others, several years older, without. They consider it not only as ornamental, but also as a means of alleviating pain, and giving freedom of motion to the arms, and enabling them to use the spear and shield with dexterity.

The education of the females is simple. As soon as weaned they receive the fringe, for covering the pubes, which is the only article of dress considered absolutely necessary; for the skins or mats which they sometimes wear, are worn only at pleasure, and both men and women generally go uncovered, or wear some

article of clothing given to them by the Europeans, only, as just observed, the female is obliged to wear the fringe until near the birth of her first child; and, should she prove barren, it is taken, away by her husband while she is asleep, and burned. They are given in marriage at a very early age (ten or twelve years). The ceremony is very simple, and with great propriety may be considered an exchange, for no man can obtain a wife unless he can promise to give his sister or other relative in exchange. The marriages are always between persons of different tribes, and never in the same tribe. Should the father be living he may give his daughter away, but generally she is the gift of the brother. The person who wishes to obtain a wife never applies directly, but to some friend of the one who has the disposal of her, and should the latter also wish for a wife, the bargain is soon made. Thus the girls have no choice in the matter, and frequently the parties have never seen each other before. At the time appointed for the marriage, the relations on both sides come and encamp about a quarter of a mile from each other. In the night the men of one tribe arise, and each takes a fire-stick in hand. The bride is taken by the hand and conducted in the midst, and appears generally to go very unwillingly; the brother or relation who gives her away walks silently and with downcast looks by himself. As soon as they approach the camp of the other tribe, the women and children of the latter must quit the hut, which upon this occasion is built larger than their huts usually are. When they arrive at the hut, one of the men invites them to take their places; but before they sit down the bride and bridegroom are placed next each other, and also the brother and his intended wife, if it is a double marriage. The friends and relations then take their places on each side of the principal parties. They sit in this manner, silent, for a considerable time, until most of them fall asleep. At daybreak the brides leave the hut and go to their nearest relations, and remain with them until the evening, when they are conducted to their husbands by their female friends, and the tribes then separate and go to their own districts. When married very young, the girl



is frequently away from her husband, upon a visit to her relations, for several months at a time, but should she remain, the man is under obligation to provide her with animal food (providing vegetable food is always the duty of the females), and if she pleases him, he shows his affection by frequently rubbing her with grease to improve her personal appearance, and with the idea that it will make her grow rapidly and become fat.

If a man has several girls at his disposal, he speedily obtains several wives, who, however, very seldom agree well with each other, but are continually quarrelling, each endeavouring to be the favourite. The man, regarding them more as slaves than in any other light, employs them in every possible way to his own advantage. They are obliged to get him shell-fish, roots, and eatable plants. If one from another tribe should arrive having anything which he desires to purchase, he perhaps makes a bargain to pay by letting him have one of his wives for a longer or shorter period. The Europeans and others are aware of this, and therefore if any woman whose company they desire refuses to go with them, they commonly go to the husband with some bread or tobacco, or article of clothing, who then compels her to grant what the white man desires. Miserable and degraded beings! When will they throw off these diabolical practices, and become obedient to the laws of our God ?

Their mode of life is a wandering one; but the whole tribe does not always move in a body from one place to another, unless there should be abundance of food to be obtained at some particular spot; but generally they are scattered in search of food. Sometimes of a morning two or three of the men will leave the camp to go fishing. If they are fortunate, after having satisfied their hunger they will lie down and sleep for several hours; they then perhaps get up and search for another meal, and if they have obtained more than they can consume, they return at sunset to the camp with the remainder, which they distribute amongst their wives and children if married, or if unmarried, amongst their friends and relations. Sometimes the men go out with their wives and children, when the men employ themselves, according

to the season, either in fishing or hunting emus, opossums, kangaroos, &c., while the women and children search for roots and plants. If food is not found in the neighbourhood, they remain out sometimes a month or longer, wandering about from place to place. Upon these occasions the aged and sick, who remain at what may be considered their head-quarters (the place from which the tribe derives its name), often suffer severely from want of food. Having to search for food is not the only cause of their wandering about from place to place, but also their frequent wars, and the meetings of the different tribes for purposes of amusement, and the wish of the women to visit their relations in the tribes to which they originally belonged.

These circumstances taken together make their residence at one place very uncertain. This wandering life must be considered as the cause of their having no permanent habitations, but merely huts of the rudest construction. Arrived at a place where they intend to remain for the night, the women and children proceed to obtain some branches, which are placed in a semicircle open to the side opposite to that from which the wind is blowing at the time, placed a little closer and with more care in bad weather, so as to afford some shelter from the wind and rain, and constitute the hut. Near the sea, if they are likely to remain for some time, they cover the hut with sea-weed, and the branches composing the framework being arranged something in the form of a quarter of a sphere, or the half of a bee-hive cut perpendicularly, it makes a pretty good defence against the weather. Yet the children and sick persons, no doubt, suffer considerably in bad weather, and the former, left to themselves as soon as weaned, lie huddled together to keep themselves warm.

Before the arrival of the Europeans they had two modes of catching fish—with the net and the spear—to which must now be added the hook and the line, which they have learned of the whites. They use the spear at the Murray in catching the large fish, *Mallowe*. Going into the river as far as he can to use the spear with effect, the native stands like a statue, holding the spear obliquely in both hands ready to strike his prey as it passes.

Standing motionless, he is soon surrounded by fish, and the first that passes his feet is pierced by a certain and powerful thrust. Sometimes they make use of a canoe made of bark, from which they spear the fish, and have a fire in the middle, upon which they are immediately roasted. The nets are precisely similar in texture to European nets, though made without mesh and needle, and they display considerable patience and ingenuity in the manufacture. The string of which they are made is composed of the fibres of a kind of flag. It is prepared by roasting the leaves, and afterwards chewing them; the leaf is then divided longitudinally into four, two of these are twisted by being rolled upon the thigh, and are then twisted together by being rolled the contrary way; other lengths are added until as much line is made as is required. In the operation of netting the twine is wound round a short stick which answers the purpose of a needle, and the meshes are formed and the knot tied by passing the string over and between the fingers. Thus are made long pieces or ribbons of netting twenty or thirty feet long, and about a foot broad, which are afterwards put together to make a fishing-net. The net is kept extended by pieces of sticks, placed across at the distance of about four feet from each other.

Some nets are furnished with a bag or pouch of netting, with smaller meshes placed at one end of the net, into which the smaller fish are driven as the net is hauled in. When the fish approach the shore the natives enter the water with the net, and swim about until they get the fish between themselves and the shore, they then spread out the net, those on shore directing them, so that they may enclose the fish, and as soon as this is accomplished they are drawn to the shore.

Swans, geese, ducks, and other birds, which are plentiful at the Lake, are caught with a noose at the end of a long stick, with which the native steals upon them amongst the reeds which border the margin. Shell and crayfish they get by diving, the last generally by the women; in obtaining which, one woman last year lost her life, having by some means or other become jammed between the rocks at the bottom of the sea.

In hunting the kangaroo they sometimes go a number together, and sometimes singly. When going singly, the native takes care to have his spear in good order; he places it over the fire to straighten it, sharpens the point with a shell, and bars it with pieces of quartz or glass, fixed on with the resin of the grass-tree. Having prepared his spear he takes his Koye (basket) upon his shoulder, which contains his throwing stick and other weapons of defence, and goes in search of his prey. When arrived at the place where he expects to find some kangaroo, he seems quite a different man. He is now silent; rolling his eyes from side to side, and looking in every direction, he moves forward with long strides, his body erect and arm motionless, the spear grasped in both hands, and held obliquely in front. As soon as he perceives a kangaroo he stops suddenly, and watches an opportunity to steal upon it while holding down its head to graze; when near enough he fixes the spear in the throwing stick, and taking his aim he sends it flying at his prey, which seldom escapes him. When a number go in company they endeavour to surround the kangaroo, and gradually close in upon him, and at length despatch him with their spears and sticks.

The emu is hunted in the same manner. Other tribes are said to use large nets in taking the kangaroo and emu; but it is quite foreign to the practice of the tribes of whom we are now speaking. The opossum is hunted only by some tribes.

In this district the Raminjerar are the only opossum hunters, and they manifest considerable dexterity in getting them from the hollow branches of trees which they inhabit. Before ascending a tree they examine the bark to see if an opossum has recently gone up, by the marks which their claws leave upon the bark. Having determined that there is an opossum in the tree, one commences to climb, and in a few seconds ascends thirty or forty feet without any branches to assist, and this accomplished only by means of a stick about two feet long, pointed at one end. With this stick he first makes a small hole in the bark, into which he inserts the great toe of the left foot, and then driving the point of the stick held by the right hand into the bark as high as he can,

and embracing the tree with his left arm, he lifts himself up, and now supports himself upon the toe of the left foot, and by the left arm embracing the tree; and taking out the stick he makes another hole at a convenient distance above the first, then again driving the stick into the tree he holds on by it while raising the left foot to the second hole, and lifts himself up as before, and so on until he arrives at the branches. Here arrived, he ascertains by tapping against the branch in which the opossum is, where the hollow terminates. If the hollow is of small depth, he puts in his hand, seizes it by the tail, and striking its head two or three times against the tree throws it down to his companions. If the hollow is deeper there is more difficulty. He makes a hole where he considers the hollow to terminate, and endeavours to seize the opossum; but if it has ascended, he applies fire, the smoke of which speedily drives the animal out of the top of the branch, where the native is ready to seize it.

The preparation of their food is extremely simple. Fish, crayfish, opossums, and small birds, are roasted upon the fire; roots and shell fish are roasted in the ashes; some plants, the flesh of the kangaroo, emu, &c., are prepared in the following manner: — A hole is dug and a fire kindled therein, stones are added, and when sufficiently heated, the fire is removed and grass placed upon the hot stones; the article to be cooked is placed upon the grass, covered with more grass, and the whole covered up with earth; if they think there will not be sufficient steam, holes are made and water poured in.

In proportion as these people are removed from the true knowledge of God so they are deeply sunk in superstition, as witnessed by their notions of diseases, the means adopted to cure them, and the observations in disposing of their dead. There are but few diseases which they regard as the consequences of natural causes; in general they consider them the effects of enchantment, and produced by sorcerers. They fancy that they can charm or enchant by means of two instruments, one called *plongge*, the other *mokani*. The *plongge* is a stick about two feet long, with a large knob at the end. They believe that if a person is tapped

gently upon the breast with this instrument he will become ill and die, or if he should shortly afterwards receive a wound that it will be mortal. The charming is generally performed upon a person asleep; therefore, when several tribes are encamped near each other there is always one keeping watch that they may not be charmed by any of the other tribe. Should a man have an enemy whom he wishes to enchant, and he can steal upon him while sleeping without being discovered, he thinks to throw him into a sounder sleep by striking in the air before his face as though in the act of sprinkling with a tuft of emu feathers which have been previously moistened in the liquor from a putrid corpse, and having performed the same operation upon any others who are sleeping near, to prevent their awaking, he taps gently with the plongge upon the breast of his victim. The mokani is a black stone, shaped something like the head of an axe, fixed between two sticks bound together, which serve for a handle. The sharp side of the stone is used to enchant males, the other side females. It is used in the same manner as the plongge. The ngadungge is another instrument to cause illness and death. Enemies watch each other, and search diligently for places where they have eaten ducks, parrots, cockatoos, a kind of fish called ponde, &c. If any one has eaten of either of these animals, and neglected to burn all the bones, his enemy picks them up. But if the other has been too careful to enable him to do this, he takes one of these animals and cooks it, and offers it in a friendly manner to his intended victim—having previously taken from it a piece of bone. This he keeps carefully, and fixes with grass-tree resin upon the end of a small needle-shaped piece of kangaroo bone about three inches long. This is the ngadungge, which he places near the fire, in order to produce illness and death. While in possession of this instrument, he fancies he has the other in his power. Should a man become sick, if he is satisfied that his illness is not owing to the plongge or mokani, he attributes it to the ngadungge, which he supposes an enemy of his has placed near the fire. If he has, or can obtain from one of his friends, a ngadungge giving him power over the person whom he sus-

pects, he immediately places it near the fire. If he is only certain of the tribe to which his enemy belongs, without knowing whom to suspect, he gets as many ngadungges as he can, giving power over individuals of that tribe, and places them near the fire; should he become better, his recovery is attributed to his enemy having removed from the fire the ngadungge which made him ill; and as soon as the others are attacked with illness, in consequence of the ngadungges which he has placed, he removes them also. Should he become worse and die, the ngadungges are left until the resin is melted and the pieces of bone come apart; which they think will cause the death of their enemies. If a person is convinced that the death of a friend or relation has been caused by enchantment, and he can obtain a ngadungge having power over the person whom he suspects, he places it in the thigh of the corpse, believing that this will cause the suspected person to die a lingering death. If any person should die, and his friends are ignorant of the cause, his death is attributed to sorcerers, called Melapar. They apply this name to the Adelaide and more northern tribes, and believe that they have the power of transforming themselves into birds, trees, &c. Both young and old are very much afraid of these Melapar, and, in consequence, do not like to be away from their huts after sunset. Nearly every tribe has its own doctor, who has but one remedy for every disease; but every doctor has a different one, and this is the object, animal or vegetable, which he regards as his friend or protector—thus one has a snake, another an ant, another seaweed, &c. &c. The sick man may either go to the doctor, or send for him. If the doctor is prepared, he knocks against the hut with his fingers, and upon the shoulder of the patient; then squeezes the part affected between his hands, and sucks it with his mouth; having done this for a minute or two, he spits out (if this is his protector) seaweed upon the hand of the patient, which he is to keep carefully until it is dry. In the evening, the doctor and friends of the patient assemble round him, and sing as loud as they can to drive away the disease.

The doctor sits in front of the patient with two sticks, one in each hand, beating the air; and the women beat upon kangaroo skins, rolled up, held between their knees. He pretends to have sucked out the seaweed from the patient; and if anyone should hint his having previously put it into his mouth he becomes indignant, and threatens to send it with the disease into his body.

Some weeks ago I accompanied a man, whose eye was inflamed, to the doctor. The old man was sitting before his hut in company with some of his friends, with a large portion of cooked plants before him, which he appeared to enjoy very much. Having learned the purpose of our coming, and knowing that I would watch his movements, he sat for some time as if in silent contemplation, and then said in a low tone, "I am not able to suck to-day; I have eaten too much of this (pointing to the plants), and there is much wind upon my stomach—I will come to-morrow. " The next morning the doctor came, and after sucking the eye it became much better, which, doubtless, it would have been without his assistance. There is another man in the same tribe who cures a kind of large boils, which the natives are very subject to, by sucking out the matter and swallowing it, saying that it is his *ngaitye* (friend or protector).

They have several different modes of disposing of the dead, depending upon the age and sex of the deceased. Children, still-born, or that have been put to death immediately after birth, are burned. If a child dies a natural death, it is carefully packed up, and the mother or grandmother carries it about with her for several months, or a year; after which it is exposed upon a tree until the bones are completely cleaned, after which they are buried. Young and middle-aged persons are buried in the following manner: —As soon as the person is dead, the knees are drawn up towards the head, and the hands placed between the thighs. Two fires are kindled, and the corpse placed between them, so as to receive the heat of the fires and of the sun. After a few days the skin becomes loose, and is taken off. Such a corpse is then called *grinkari*. This custom may explain why



this name has been applied to Europeans, from the resemblance between their colour and that of the native corpse after the skin has been removed.

After this, all the openings of the body are sewn up, and the whole surface rubbed with grease and red ochre. Thus prepared, the corpse is placed upon a hut, so arranged that the head and arms can be tied. It is then placed with the face to the east and the arms extended, and a fire is kept constantly beneath. It remains thus until quite dry, when it is taken by the relations and packed up in mats, and then carried from one place to another—the scenes of his former life. After having been thus carried about for several months, it is placed upon a platform of sticks, and left until completely decayed. The head is then taken by the next of kin, and serves him for a drinking vessel; and now his name may be mentioned, which, if done before, would highly offend his relations, and is sometimes the cause of a war. This may be the reason of there being several names for the same thing. Thus, if a man has the name *ngnke* (which signifies water), the whole tribe must use some other word to express water for a considerable time after his death.

If a man is killed in battle, or dies in consequence of a wound, he is supposed to have been charmed with the *plongge*. And in addition to the above-mentioned ceremonies they hold a kind of inquest over the corpse to ascertain to whom he owes his death. One of the nearest relations sleeps with his head resting upon the corpse until he dreams of the guilty person. As soon as this is ascertained, which is generally after the first or second night, he orders wood to be brought to make a kind of bier, upon which the corpse is placed. Several men then take the bier upon their shoulders, and the dreamer, striking upon the breast of the corpse, asks: "Who charmed you?" He then mentions the name of some person. All remain quiet. After he has asked this question several times, and mentioned several names, he mentions the name of the person he saw in his dream. The bearers then immediately begin running as if mad, pretending that the corpse has moved itself. The corpse is then erected as above

described, and all the friendly tribes come to lament. The nearest relations cut their hair and blacken their faces, and the old women put human excrement upon their heads—the sign of the deepest mourning. If the supposed guilty one should come to the lamentation, the dreamer looks narrowly to his countenance, and if he does not shed tears is the more convinced of his guilt, and considers it now his duty to avenge his relation's death. The person who sews up the apertures of the corpse runs some risk if he does not provide himself with good string; as if the string should break it is attributed to the displeasure of the deceased, who is supposed to make known in this manner that he has been charmed by him; also, if the small quill used as a needle should not be sufficiently sharp to penetrate the flesh easily, the slightest movement, caused by pressing the blunt point into the flesh, is supposed to be spontaneous motion of the corpse, and to indicate that the sewer is the guilty person.

Rather aged persons are not treated with all the ceremonies above mentioned, but are merely wrapped up in mats and placed upon a elevated platform, formed of sticks and branches, supported by a tree and two posts; and after the flesh has decayed, the bones are burned; the very old are buried immediately after death.

As the mythology and traditions of other heathen nations are more or less immoral and obscene, so it is with these people.

The sun they consider to be a female, who, when she sets, passes the dwelling-places of the dead. As she approaches, the men assemble, and divide into two bodies, leaving a road for her to pass between them; they invite her to stay with them, which she can only do for a short time, as she must be ready for her journey for the next day. For favours granted to some one among them she receives a present of a red kangaroo skin; and, therefore, in the morning, when she rises, appears in a red dress. The moon is also a woman, and not particularly chaste. She stays a long time with the men, and from the effects of her intercourse with them, she becomes very thin, and wastes away to a mere skeleton. When in this state, Nurrunduri orders her



From a Sketch by J. H. K. K. K.

Stage bearing dead bodies.

to be driven away. She flies, and is secreted for some time, but is employed all the time in seeking roots which are so nourishing that in a short time she appears again, and fills out and becomes fat rapidly. The stars were formerly men, and leave their huts in the evening, to go through the same employments which they did while on earth. Some are remarkable amongst them, as Pungngane, Waijungngari, and their Ningarope. The first was born naturally, and the others were made as follows:—Ningarope having retired upon a natural occasion, was highly pleased with the red colour of her excrement, which she began to mould into the form of a man, and tickling it, it showed signs of life, and began to laugh. He was thus a Kainjani at once from his colour, and his mother took him into the bush and remained with him. Pungngane, his brother, had two wives, and lived near the sea. Once when he remained out a long time, his two wives left the hut and went and found Waijungngari. As they approached he was asleep, and the two women placed themselves on each side of the hut, and began making the noise of an emu. The noise woke him, and he took his spear to kill them; but, as soon as he ran out, the two women embraced him, and requested him to be their husband. His mother, enraged at the conduct of the women, went to Pungngane, and told what had happened. Very much enraged, he left his hut to seek that of his brother, which he soon found; but there was no one there, as his wives and brother were out seeking for food. Very much vexed, he put some fire upon the hut, saying "*kundajan*" meaning—let it remain, but not burn immediately. Waijungngari and the two women arrived in the evening, and, lying down to sleep, the fire began to burn and presently to fall upon the skins with which they were covered. Awaking with fright, they threw away the skins and ran to the sea. Out of danger, and recovered a little from his fright, Waijungngare began to think how he could escape the wrath of his brother, and threw a spear up to the sky, which touched it, and came down again. He then took a barbed spear, and throwing it upwards with all his force, it remained sticking in the sky. By this he climbed up, and the two women after him.

Pungngane seeing his brother and wives in the sky, followed, with his mother, where they have remained ever since. To Pungngane and Waijungngari the natives attribute the abundance of kangaroo and the fish called ponde. Pungngane caught a ponde, and dividing it into small pieces, and throwing them into the sea, each became a ponde. Waijungngari multiplied kangaroos in the same manner. They have many similar histories of the stars. The milky-way, they say, is a row of huts, amongst which they point out the heaps of ashes and the smoke ascending.

They do not appear to have any story of the origin of the world; but nearly all animals they suppose anciently to have been men who performed great prodigies, and at last transformed themselves into different kinds of animals and stones! Thus the Raminjerar point out several large stones or points of rock along the beach, whose sex and name they distinguish. One rock they say is an old man named Lime, upon which women and children are not allowed to tread; but old people venture to do so from their long acquaintance with him. They point out his head, feet, hands, and also his hut and fire. For my part, I could see no resemblance to any of these things except the hut. The occasion upon which he transformed himself was as follows:—A friend of his, Palpangye, paid him a visit and brought him some tinwarrar (kind of fish). Lime enjoyed them very much, and regretted that there were no rivers in the neighbourhood, that he might catch them himself, as they are a river fish. Palpangye went into the bush and fetched a large tree, and thrusting it into the ground in different places, water immediately began to flow, and formed the Inman and Hindmarsh rivers. Lime, out of gratitude, gave him some kanmari (small sea fish), and transformed himself into rock, the neighbourhood of which has ever since abounded in this kind of fish. Palpangye became a bird, and is frequently near the rivers. The steep hill and large ponds at Mootabarringar were produced by the dancing of their forefathers at that place. At the present time it is customary for two hundred or three hundred natives to meet together at their

dances (or corrobories as they are called by the whites). At sunset a fire is made, to give light. The women sit apart, with skins rolled up and held between the knees, upon which they beat time. The young men are ornamented, after their fashion, with a tuft of emu feathers in the hair; and those who are not painted red, ornament themselves with chalk, by making circles round the eyes, a stroke along the nose, and dots upon the forehead and cheeks, while the rest of the body is covered with fanciful figures. One commences singing, and if all cannot join (for the songs are frequently in a different language, taken from some distant tribe), he commences another song. If the song is known to all, the women scream or yell out at the top of their voices, and the men commence a grotesque kind of dance, which to us appears sufficiently ridiculous and amusing. It is upon an occasion like this that they represent their ancestors to have been assembled at Mootabarringar. Having no fire, this dance was held in the daytime, and the weather being very hot, the perspiration flowed copiously from them and formed the large ponds; and the beating of their feet upon the ground produced the irregularities of surface in the form of the hills and valleys. They sent messengers, Kuratje and Kanmari, towards the east, to Kondole, to invite him to the feast, as they knew that he possessed fire. Kondole, who was a large powerful man, came, but hid his fire, on account of which alone he had been invited. The men, displeased at this, determined to obtain the fire by force; but no one ventured to approach him. At length one named Rilballe determined to wound him with a spear, and then take the fire from him. He threw the spear and wounded him in the neck. This caused a great laughing and shouting, and nearly all were transformed into different animals: Kondole ran to the sea, and became a whale, and ever after blew the water out of the wound which he had received in his neck. Kuratje and Kanmari became small fish. The latter was dressed in a good kangaroo skin, and the former only a mat made of seaweed, which is the reason, they say, that the kanmari contains a great deal of oil under the skin, while the kuratje is dry and without fat. Others

became opossums, and went upon trees. The young men, who were ornamented with tufts of feathers, became cockatoos, the tuft of feathers being the crest. Rilballe took Kondole's fire and placed it in the grass-tree, where it still remains, and can be brought out by rubbing. (The operation for obtaining fire is as follows:—A split piece of the flower-stem is placed upon the ground, the flat side uppermost, and the lower end of a thinner piece pressed upon it, while the upper part is held between the palms of the hands, and an alternate revolving motion given to it by rubbing the hands backwards and forwards till it ignites).

They tell a number of other stories concerning the origin of the sea, heat, &c., &c.; but it will suffice to mention the cause of rain and the origin of languages—Near the Goolwa lived an old man named Kortuwe, with his two friends, Munkari and Waingilbe. The latter, who were considerably younger than Kortuwe, went out fishing, and as they caught kuratje and kanmari, they put the kuratje, which are not so good as the kanmari, aside for Kortuwe. The old man perceiving this, commenced a song, *Annaitjeranangk rotjer tampsatjeranangk* (in the Encounter Bay dialect it would be, *Ngannangk kuratje tampsin*, "for me they put aside the kuratje"), upon which rain began to fall. Kortuwe then went into his hut, and closed it with bushes, and Munkari and Waingilbe were obliged to remain outside, and got wet as a punishment. The three were transformed into birds, and as often as Kortuwe makes a noise it is a sign that rain will soon follow.

Languages originated from an ill-tempered old woman. In remote time an old woman, named Wurruri, lived towards the east, and generally walked with a large stick in her hand, to scatter the fires round which others were sleeping. Wurruri at length died. Greatly delighted at this circumstance, they sent messengers in all directions to give notice of her death; men, women, and children came, not to lament, but to show their joy. The Raminjerar were the first who fell upon the corpse and began eating the flesh, and immediately began to speak intelli-

gibly. The other tribes to the eastward arriving later, ate the contents of the intestines, which caused them to speak a language slightly different. The northern tribes came last, and devoured the intestines and all that remained, and immediately spoke a language differing still more from that of the Raminjerar.

All this happened before the time of Nurunduri, with whose departure from the earth the power of transforming themselves, and making rivers, hills, &c., ceased. As, with Nurunduri, a new epoch commenced, as much of his history as can be told with decency here follows: —He was a tall and powerful man, and lived in the east, with two wives, and had several children. Upon one occasion his two wives ran away from him, and he went in search of them. Wherever he arrived he spread terror amongst the people, who were dwarfs compared with him. Continuing his pursuit, he arrived at Freeman's Nob and there made water, from which circumstance the place is called Kainjenauld (kainjamin, to make water). Disappointed at not finding his wives, he threw two small nets, called witti, into the sea, and immediately two small rocky islands arose, which ever since have been called Wittungengul. He went on to Ramong, where, by stamping with his feet he created Kungkengguwar (Rosetta Head). From hence he threw spears in different directions, and wherever they fell, small rocky islands arose. At length he found his two wives at Toppong. After beating them they endeavoured again to escape. Now tired of pursuing them, he ordered the sea to flow and drown them. They were transformed into rocks, and are still to be seen at low water. Discontented and unhappy, he removed with his children to a great distance towards the west, where he still lives, a very old man, scarcely able to move. When he went away one of his children was asleep, and, in consequence, left behind. Nurunduri, when arrived at the place where he intended to remain, missed him, and making fast one end of a string to his maralengk, he threw the other end towards where he supposed his son to be, who, catching hold of it, helped himself along to his father. This line is still the guide by which the dead find their way to Nurunduri. When a man



dies, Nurunduri's son, who first found the way to his father by means of the line, throws it to the dead man, who, catching hold of it, is conducted in like manner. When he comes near, the old man, feeling the motion of the line, asks his son who is coming. If it is a man, the son calls all the men together, who, by a great shouting, arouse the half-stupefied man. When come to himself, he silently and sadly approaches Nurunduri, who points out to him where he is to reside. If he belongs to the Encounter Bay, or one of the Goolwa tribes, he is allowed to live in Nurunduri's hut; but if of one of the more distant tribes, at a distance off. Before he goes away to the place pointed out to him, Nurunduri carefully observes his eyes. If tears are flowing from one eye only, it is a sign that he has left only one wife; if from both, two; if they cease to flow from one eye while they continue to flow from the other, he has left three wives; and according to the number he has left, Nurunduri provides him with others. Old people become young, and the infirm sound in the company of Nurunduri. This is what the poor uninstructed people believe; therefore no fears about the future, or concerning punishments and rewards, are entertained by them.