

THE
ABORIGINES
OF
CENTRAL AUSTRALIA,

Vocabularies of the Dialects spoken by the Natives of Lake Amadeus and
of the Western Territory of Central Australia,

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DEDICATED

TO

SIR SAMUEL DAVENPORT, K.C.M.G.

THIS little work is humbly inscribed to Sir Samuel Davenport. The contents of it were gathered by the author whilst constantly travelling through the bush of Central Australia in charge of the native police. The author is not ambitious to see his name in print, but as an Australian native, and being constantly in the midst of blacks, he took notice and jotted down what he thought would be interesting to many in years to come.

It has been said that the Australian aborigines are fast dying out. If that be true, this little *brochure* will help to preserve the language of the natives of the western territory of Central Australia. Those two admirable institutions, the Australian Natives' Association and the Geographical Society, will no doubt be pleased to see that the author, who has no pretensions to literary merit, has tried to do something for his countrymen, and has also tried to preserve the language of the aborigines, so that it may be compared with the dialects spoken by natives in other places to see if there is any similarity between them, or, on reading the book, some resemblance of their habits and ceremonies may be found. It may be interesting to some people to know that in eight years the author used nine pocket-books alone to jot down words, &c, of the aboriginal dialect. They were used for that purpose whilst travelling through the bush, and anything fresh was jotted down whilst on the back of a camel.

I have kept back a great many words that were appertaining to indecency, as I am of opinion that the vocabulary could be made interesting without them. The native children from their infancy are taught to utter bad and indecent language ; consequently they know no better. They are also taught to be cruel to little birds, lizards, insects, &c. This I could never suffer, and many a little black youngster have I rebuked for cruelty, in his own language, so I am aware that I was properly understood.

Your obedient servant,

W. H. WILLSHIRE.

THE ABORIGINES OF CENTRAL AUSTRALIA.

INTRODUCTION.

There are few of the aboriginal races which inhabit the unsettled regions of the world which disappear more rapidly and completely than the aboriginal inhabitants of Australia when they come into contact with white men. The manners and customs, the religious or superstitious rites practised by them, as well as their language are matters of great interest, and they well deserve both attention and record at the hands of those who may possess the opportunity of observing them, although only in a cursory and incomplete way. Unfortunately the pioneers of civilisation who seek their fortunes, and not unfrequently risk their lives, in the wilds of Australia are too busily employed in surmounting the natural difficulties which beset them in their enterprises, and too much absorbed in the promotion of their own interests, to be able to devote much leisure to such matters, even if they had the inclination to do so. Their rude and active life is incompatible with literary pursuits, and that patient and persevering investigation necessary to extract from the aborigines of this great continent reliable information relating to their laws, customs, and rites is rarely found amongst the pioneers. The wandering habits of the tribes, and their general distrust of the white people, add to the difficulty of observing them closely, or of obtaining a sufficient knowledge of their dialects to reduce them to a written form. Efforts have been made in South Australia to preserve some record of the tribes which formerly populated it, but for the most part this has been done by private persons.

In the elder and more settled colonies, where the blacks have almost entirely died out, steps have been taken to collect and preserve the few and imperfect records of the former denizens of the Australian land which are still in existence. These are at best meagre and unconnected; moreover, nothing is known of the people who inhabit the unexplored portions of the continent, and very little of those tribes whose country, in comparatively recent times, has been thought to afford suitable openings for the enterprise of white settlers.

In central Australia, although the transcontinental telegraph line passes through it, and railway communication is being steadily extended into the interior, by far the greatest portion of the aboriginal tribes remains in its primitive condition. There are

some camps of partially civilised blacks to be found in the neighborhood of the few and widely separated telegraph stations and cattle homesteads ; and from the natives who live there something may be learned of the local aboriginals' language, as well as of the religious and other rites practised by them. It is only by persistent inquiry and the most patient investigation that anything reliable can be extracted from them on these subjects.

The author of the following sketches and vocabularies was stationed for seven years in central Australia, where he had charge of the native police contingent at Alice Springs, which he had to form and organise. This duty rendered some study of the natives' habits and some knowledge of their forms of speech indispensable. The labor of compassing this was certainly congenial, but the process extremely slow. Whenever opportunity presented itself—by the camp fire, under the shade of huge gum trees, by lonely waterholes or native wells, or in the precipitous gorges of the Macdonnell Ranges—rough notes were taken. But, although this operation extended from weeks to months and from months to years, the author did not contemplate the publication of the information that had been accumulated by him. He learned, however, in 1886, from one of the Adelaide newspapers, that the Geographical Society of Australia was anxious that all the knowledge relating to the aboriginal races that could be collected from reliable sources should be made public, and that everything that could be done in the way of preserving their language deserved the utmost encouragement. The society trusted that every one in the colony of South Australia who was in a position to aid in this work would contribute his store of knowledge to the general stock. It was believed, if this were done, in the course of time some fairly complete vocabularies of Australian dialects might be compiled. This encouraged the author to persevere in his investigations, and to arrange, as well as he could, the materials he had collected, with a view to their publication on his first return to civilised regions.

CHAPTER I.

Before dealing with the author's experiences with the aborigines it may be pardoned if he dwells briefly upon the conditions under which his observations were made.

It will then be seen that, whilst the position he occupied as a member of the Mounted Police Force of South Australia, entrusted with the supervision and regulation of the affairs of an enormous tract of unsettled country, apparently afforded him favorable opportunities of studying the mode of life and condition of the aboriginal natives, in reality it threw serious obstacles in the way of a systematic investigation of the facts at which he desired to arrive.

Being called away from one part of the country to another, between which the distances required to be travelled over were immense, and where the calls were often sudden and unexpected, he was frequently compelled to drop his inquiries at uncertain and embarrassing points. The thread of his inquiries was then often broken, and could not be gathered up again probably for months afterwards, when the inquiries previously initiated were of necessity gone over again.

If, then, the present narrative appears to be disjointed and incomplete, as it is in many instances, these circumstances are deserving of some consideration in the minds of those who may look critically upon the value of the statements now laid before them.

In December, 1881, the writer was sent up to the Alice Springs telegraph station to take charge of a police camp which had newly been formed at a place situated on the Todd, a fine gum creek at a distance of 1,036 miles, by the mail route, from Adelaide. At that time the camp was without an officer in charge, Mounted Constable Shirley, who had been stationed there, having been removed to Barrow's Creek, 200 miles further north.

Shirley afterwards lost his life whilst engaged in an expedition in search of a man named Radford, who was reported to have been murdered by the blacks. His party consisted of five white men—Messrs. A. M. Giles, J. Hussey, A. Phillips, J. G. Phillips, and John Reece, a black tracker called Barney, and another black boy. The whole party, with the exception of Mr. Giles, telegraph stationmaster at Tennant's Creek, and Barney, the black tracker, perished from want of water.

The melancholy duty of searching for the bodies of those who had succumbed fell to the lot of the author, who, after searching for a fortnight, discovered and buried the remains of the Phillips and Shirley. This occurred in 1883. When the murders on the Daly river took place, in 1884, the authorities determined to form a native police corps in central Australia, and the task of collecting and organising it was entrusted to the writer. After some trouble the corps was established and equipped at a cost of about £600, and was employed on the Roper and Daly rivers for about ten months; Mounted Constable Wurmbrand in the interim taking charge of the police camp at Alice Springs.

The writer (in 1885) handed over the control of the native corps to Mounted Constable Power in the Northern Territory, and returned to the Alice, taking with him only a black boy from the Peake, who was picked up in the Territory, and who was anxious to return to his own country. Two days after reaching Alice Springs this lad died from some internal disease.

Shortly afterwards the police camp was moved from the telegraph station to the Heavitree, four miles south of the Springs, where it has since remained.

A police station has now been erected there, for hitherto it had been a "camp" only, the officers' quarters consisting merely of "wurlies" constructed of boughs. The stores were kept in a large tent intended for survey purposes only. Here another corps of the black troopers was organised. It consisted of six boys in regular pay with a number of temporary auxiliaries.

There are about 200 natives constantly camped on the Heavitree. Though often called away on duty to places hundreds of miles distant (the writer had no European within miles of him), no depredations were ever committed on the stores; it was quite sufficient to leave a blackfellow in charge of them to ensure their safety.

CHAPTER II.

The Alice Springs telegraph station and the waters which give it its name are situated on the Undoolya Station, occupied by the Barrow Creek Pastoral Company. The homestead is just twelve miles east of the overland telegraph line. The country is well watered with creeks containing large permanent waterholes or ponds. Other supplies of this indispensable adjunct to settlement are also found in the abrupt and precipitous gorges of the Macdonnell Ranges, which in detached groups running north and south extend over a considerable belt of country lying both east and west of the telegraph line.

This region has attracted considerable notice in consequence of the ruby and mica discoveries made to the east of the Alice. A brief sketch of its general features and characteristics may therefore possess some interest.

The greater part of the country is hilly, with extensive flats running between the ranges. The soil appears to be formed from the decomposition of the rock as it weathers away. The hills are apparently composed of red and brown sandstone, with occasionally a white soft rock, from which the natives cut out pipe bowls. The rainfall in the country is good. During the eleven years previous to 1885 the average rainfall was 11.312in., and in 1885 it amounted to 16.92in. The vegetation is therefore abundant, and the feed much superior to that which is found in the drier regions lying further south. Saltbush and cotton-bush are abundant, but the bluebush is not met with. There are, however, many varieties of luxuriant grass and succulent herbage—for instance, the red Flinders grass, Mitchell's grass, &c, besides geraniums and creepers. Large timber is found in the valleys and the beds of creeks. The trees are principally gum and box. The summits of the steep and almost inaccessible ranges are largely covered with spinifex, but patches of mulga are found on their sides. Game generally is plentiful. There are kangaroos and euros in abundance; rock and bush wallaby are met with in considerable numbers, and there are dingoes in packs, but all red in color.

Birds are most numerous; indeed, feathered game is even more plentiful than the common animal game of the country. Teal, widgeon, black duck, wood duck, and the small white-crested grebe haunt the numerous and splendid waterholes in the beds of the creeks in immense numbers. Black and white cockatoos, bronze-winged pigeons, parrots of various descriptions, ring necks, blue bonnets, and goolahs furnish the natives with food in abundance. The blacks snare them in numbers, although the former are not learned enough in the sportsman's arts to contrive nets for the purpose of securing them.

On one of my expeditions I camped to give my camels a spell. My boys shot two euros, so we had plenty of fresh meat in our camp. I went out for a walk with my rifle, and about a mile from the camp I discovered a bower bird's playhouse. This is the second one I have seen during seven years' travelling in the bush. I dare say there are men who have been in the bush twice as long as I have been and never saw a bower bird or its playhouse. The bower bird is coffee-colored, combined with dapples; has a blue neck, and a topknot of five little feathers that lay back; it keeps up a constant chatter, altering its voice occasionally. The playhouse is made on the ground. They select a good thick clump of grass, and make an avenue through it straight and level; then they collect all the little white bones, and little pieces of white quartz, and wild berries, and make a heap of the above collected things at each end of the avenue. A pair of birds only do all this. Then they start to play. One starts from one end and one from the other, and so on, passing each other in the avenue, each having a bit of white quartz or a bone in their mouth. They drop it and pick up another, and keep on carrying these stones, bones, berries, &c, until they are tired; they then fly to a tree and sing all kinds of different tunes. In the native language the bower bird is called "kear-ka."

The fertility of the soil and the natural richness of the country may be judged from the flourishing condition of Hermannsburg, the Lutheran mission station at the head waters of the Finke river, about ninety miles west of Alice Springs. There is a splendid garden there, with vines and fruit trees of various kinds, and an abundance of vegetables, such as turnips, carrots, cabbages, lettuces, besides pumpkins, melons, &c.

There are large numbers of blacks employed about the station, whom the missionaries feed with garden produce, and occasionally a bullock slaughtered for beef. On the mission reserve there are about 4,000 sheep, and about one-tenth of that number of cattle and horses. The reserve comprises an excellent tract of country, 901 square miles. It has a frontage of twenty-five miles to the Finke river, and sheep thrive well upon it. The wool produced there, however, is not of much advantage to the missionaries, for the cost of cartage is so high as to prevent them from making any profit out of it, the

rate in 1887 being £31 per ton to Hergott without back loading. The sheep are shorn by a teamster, who receives the wool in payment for his labor, and he takes it down country when he goes for stores for the stations in the Alice Springs district.

It may be expected that the extension of the transcontinental railway will in time render sheep farming a profitable pursuit, but at present it does not pay in central Australia, although the missionaries, four of whom, with their wives and families, reside at Hermannsburg, are in a prosperous condition, and want for nothing. This, however, is not more than they deserve, for they are kind and hospitable in the highest degree to strangers and others who come in their way.

CHAPTER III.

The country comprised in the district which surrounds Alice Springs is at present used almost exclusively for horse and cattle breeding stations.

Some slight notice of these may not be devoid of interest; at any rate it will enable the reader to form some idea of what "a neighbor" means in central Australia, and how the pastoral occupation and settlement of the far interior progresses.

The Undoolya run, on which the Alice Springs telegraph station and the Heavitree police camp are located, carries about 7,000 head of cattle and has its head station about twelve miles east of the Alice. Idracowra, also a cattle station, occupied by Messrs. Grant & Stokes, is about 110 miles south of the Alice and is managed by Mr. R. Coulthard. Owen's Springs, in charge of Mr. J. Gall, J.P., for Messrs. Elder & Co., lies forty miles southwest of the Alice, and is also a horse-breeding station. The natives in this locality are much addicted to cattle killing, and otherwise have a bad name. Mount Burrell, belonging to the same proprietors, is a horse-breeding station, managed by Mr. A. Breden, and is about seventy-five miles south of the Alice. Bond's Springs, twelve miles north of the Alice, leased by Willoughby & Gordon, is a cattle station managed by Mr. R. Taylor. Anna's reservoir, 120 miles north of the Alice, managed by H. C. Trew for Messrs. Murray & Spence, is also a cattle station. The blacks here are exceedingly troublesome; they are very fond of beef; they once carried their hostility so far as to bum down the station. About £1,600 worth of stores were destroyed in the fire. There is another cattle station, called Glen Helen, 115 miles from the Alice in a westerly direction at the head of the Finke river, about twenty-five miles from the missionary station at Hermannsburg; Mr. R. Coulthard is the manager. The blacks in this country destroy a great many cattle by spearing them in the gorges of the ranges.

The Erldunda station, owned by Messrs. Warburton & Tomlin, is managed by Mr. R. E. Warburton. It is used for cattle and

horse breeding. It is situated 160 miles south-west of the Alice. In this district the blacks are very bad indeed. They not only kill the cattle in great numbers, but occasionally attack the stations. Not very long ago Erldunda was "stuck up" by natives, but they were repulsed by Mr. Warburton, and two of the attacking party were subsequently captured by Mounted Constable Wurmbrand and the native troopers.

The Tempe Downs cattle station, carried on by Mr. R. V. Thornton for Patterson, Chewings, & Co., is 175 miles north-west of the Alice. The blacks in this neighborhood are greatly addicted to cattle spearing. Henbury cattle station, managed by its owner, Mr. E. W. Parks, is 100 miles south-west of the Alice: is in a quiet neighborhood, cattle spearing not being resorted to to any great extent by the blacks who live in the vicinity. The foregoing will give some idea of the progress of settlement in central Australia up to 1888.

As the transcontinental railway is now completed to Angle Pole, and adventurers have become, to some extent, attracted to the ruby fields, and gold has been discovered in the region outlined above, it is probable that the existing state of things will before long be changed. A greater increase of the European population may be looked forward to, and with it a considerable extension of pastoral enterprise and settlement.

CHAPTER IV.

Those who are unacquainted with the aborigines of Australia, more especially with those who inhabit those portions of Central Australia over which the observations here condensed have been made, may not agree with some of the conclusions to which the writer's intercourse with them has led him.

The circumstances under which he was able to work out the objects he had shaped for himself prevented him from giving an exhaustive account of the aborigines, and therefore to describe minutely the details of native life and of such traditions amongst them as could be relied on. Nevertheless, with all the disadvantages which are inseparable from constant changes of camp and long absences from the centre of action, the facts recorded can be relied upon. They are from first to last personal experiences, and no other source of information has been accessible.

The aboriginal native in his "wild" state is a different being from the black who becomes partially civilised. The partial civilisation which they acquire is the outcome of the settlement of the country. This may be noted by a study of the native tribes, some of whose members frequent the country in the neighborhood of the telegraph stations on the overland line. They see with their natural keenness of observation that white men provide for them-

selves for the future and not for the day, and if they can obtain by asking "tucker" and tobacco, they will take as much as they can obtain, and do as little as possible in return.

The inexperienced settler satisfies their wants as far as he can, but he is not long in finding out that the natives who live in this way are not industrious, and are cunning and self-seeking. So far as these remarks may extend, it is certain that the average native is not a reliable adjunct to settlement. Few will remain permanently in any one spot, or leave their tribes so as to depend altogether on what they may get from new settlers. The restlessness of the natives is invincible. They never remain long in any spot, but wander about from place to place in search of food or water, but returning always after such expeditions to some specially arranged locality. Some of the missionaries on the Finke have complained that white men at times have enticed their boys and girls to leave their station. It would be difficult, however, to state how many of such complaints could be clearly established. Natives do follow white men, but when they come to any place of which the natives are "tired," or to which they are unwilling or afraid to go, or to stay in, they do not remain. In these cases no white man who travels the bush can be certain of them. Nearly all the records of the habits of the natives tell the same tale. The more attempts are made to overcome this instinct, the stronger the feeling becomes. They will leave a place under such circumstances, and take the first favorable opportunity of indulging their roaming propensities. They go away from places where they are well treated and well off in every respect merely because they are asked to remain there. They move away to some other station, and stay there for a few weeks or months, when they again disappear to revisit their old quarters. There is little doubt that the blacks who were said to have been enticed away from Hermannsburg by white men left for no other reason than that mentioned above.

There was a native woman named "Yunda," whom the writer had promised the Rev. Mr. Kempe to send back to the mission station. She was most unwilling to go, and she cried and begged of him to allow her to remain where she was. It was only after much persuasion that she could be induced to return. It was a matter of duty on the part of the police to assist the missionaries as much as possible.

The natives in the locality to which these notes refer are classified amongst themselves into four divisions or groups, and these divisions and distinctions are found in every large camp. They are called "Pultarra," "Coomarra," "Perula," and "Aponunga." There are no means of ascertaining how these subdivisions originated. They were doubtless designed to obviate those evils which arise from close intermarriages. The subdivisions alluded to are not peculiar to the tribes in this region,

but are common to all or nearly all the tribes about whose customs anything certain is known.

When a "Pultarra" is made a man, and becomes capable of matrimony, he must look for a "Coomarra" girl to take for his lubra. If no one should be available or obtainable in his own camp, he sets forth (Coelebs) in search of a wife. In like manner a "Coomarra" man can only take a "Pultarra" lubra to wife, unless he does not hesitate to commit a crime which amongst the aborigines is regarded as incest. The "Perulas" and "Aponungas" stand in a similar relation to each other as the "Pultarras" and "Coomarras," and are able to intermarry.

The Australian natives of this region, like some African tribes, have their descent on the female side, and probably for a similar reason. There never can be any doubt as to the maternity of a child, whilst the paternity may always be a very open question. The family groups mentioned above are perpetuated, not hereditarily or in direct line, but by intromissions.

Thus the children of the "Pultarra" mother are neither "Pultarras" nor "Coomarras," but are "Perulas," whilst the children of an "Aponunga" mother are not "Aponungas" or "Perulas" but "Coomarras," and so the lineage and family groupings are continued. At the age of seventeen the youths, who up to that age are designated as "Apamurrikas," undergo the rite of circumcision. They are then called "Arilla," and are eligible to become husbands. In the course of a few days the newly made "Arilla" begins to look out for a wife. When he has fixed upon some girl of the requisite family, he makes his proposals in due form—not to the girl, but to the old men and women of the tribe. If they are propitious, well and good; if not, he does not exhibit much concern or disappointment, but takes up his weapons and moves away to another camp.

In this way he continues his pilgrimage until he is able to secure a suitable consort. If he should not succeed in securing a wife in the formal and regular fashion, he is driven to the hazardous course of stealing one. When this happens it is by no means an unusual occurrence that his act gives rise to a *casus belli* between his tribe and the tribe whose rights have been outraged, which ends in a more or less sanguinary encounter between them. Events of this kind not infrequently form some of the topics which are celebrated at corroborees or otherwise amongst the tribes concerned.

The "Apamurrikas," when they reach a certain age, are subject to a further operation, the apparent object of which is to check an undue increase of population, or perhaps to maintain a certain physical standard of the future race. The former seems to be the more probable reason. This practice obtains amongst many of the tribes in the interior, and has been described by other writers on the aborigines of this continent, so that it is not necessary in a

sketch intended for the general reader that the details of the custom should be minutely described.

The natives of central Australia, like all other savages, and like many civilised human beings as well, are enormously superstitious. It is interesting to note how greatly the younger men are kept under the influence of the old men of the tribes, who play upon their fears, and how the latter, with supreme and cunning selfishness, have made use of superstition to secure for themselves special privileges, and the best of the game which is obtained for food.

The system of "taboo" which prevails in the islands of the Pacific obtains to a large extent in central Australia. The youths of both sexes are forbidden to eat turkey, kangaroo tail, or any dainty that is scarce or difficult to procure. The girls are made to believe that if they should eat of turkey or kangaroo tail the moon will cause their breasts to swell and bleed. On one of my journeys one of the native constables shot a turkey, and I shot one also at the same time. We camped at a large waterhole, and the native constables began to clean and cook the turkeys. I had three young lubras in my party, belonging to the native constables. The turkeys being cooked, one of the native constables informed me that the "queis" were not allowed to eat turkey. This I was aware of before; anyhow, I gave one of the "queis" a good-sized lump of turkey, which she ate on the quiet.

The "Apamurrika" is enjoined to abstain from similar food under penalty of remaining beardless for his life. A black boy of about eighteen years of age, who travelled with the writer from Port Darwin to the Alice, objected on these grounds to eat turkey, but in order to conquer his superstitious fears he was compelled to eat, and was watched whilst he slowly worked his jaws through the worst portion of a turkey that had been shot. The breasts and the choice portion of the bird had been appropriated by others, whose palates were not quite so indiscriminating as those of the aboriginals generally. The boy stated that "Arlta" only (that is young men who had been circumcised) could eat turkey, but after having violated the selfish law of the old men, he laughed when he found out that no evil consequences followed upon his proceeding. What effect the belief in a personal devil may have upon civilised people it is not necessary to discuss. It is certain, however, that the blacks in this country possess it in an intense degree. They take fright at his tracks, or what they suppose to be his. Two lubras and two little girls came across the footmarks, &c, of camels, about a hundred and fifty miles east of Undcolya, and forthwith rushed back to their camp, crying out that the devil was loose and stalking about. A fortnight later the writer fell in with several blacks and their lubras, and was gravely warned by them that "Aruonya" (the devil) was about. They accompanied him for two days to show his tracks, and following them up the party came to a tree marked D.L., 15 (in diamond), which at once indicated to me that one of David Lindsay's camps had been struck.

When a blackfellow dies, after the burial is over his friends and relations never speak of him again. If a white man should do so they show signs of great fear, and beseech him in the best English they can command, "No you call him." This dread may perhaps denote some belief in a future life, as well as in the power of the deceased to revisit this world, and to make matters unpleasant for the survivors if the names of the departed should be uttered after he has been laid to his final rest.

If an aboriginal should grow ill the others of his tribe will assert that some other black has "given him a bone," and all the blacks believe he has a bone in him. If the sick man should die, the individual who may be suspected of having administered the bone is certain to come into trouble. A party is organised to hunt down the culprit, and to kill him, if possible.

It may be thought that savages such as the Australian aborigines are would be easily astonished and surprised by the objects which are presented to them when they visit civilised towns and ports. When the blacks who accompanied the author of these pages across the northern half of this great continent came to Port Darwin, whatever astonishment there was, was not displayed by the blacks. Some surprise on their part was expected; but neither the unaccustomed big waters, the steamers, the ships, nor the houses, seemed to put them in the least degree out of their ordinary demeanor. They were completely unimpressed, to all appearances, and unimpassioned.

In order to test them further, a monkey was bought and brought down to the natives on a man's shoulder. The animal had its hands full of bananas, and it was busily engaged in devouring the fruit. The trackers were fairly taken by the beast; they literally roared. Two of them were somewhat scared, for they thought that Jacko was the devil. They soon divested themselves of this idea, and of all the supernatural ideas they might have connected with the new phenomenon, and they employed all their spare time in cultivating the monkey's society. They would squat down in front of it, and exchange grin for grin with it by the hour at a time. It almost led me to believe that they respected the brute. The animal was taken back to Alice Springs, a thousand miles away, on a pack horse, and he arrived in safety; but whilst his owner was away someone placed him on a horse and fastened him on with a chain, in order to test his riding capabilities. The result was that the unfortunate animal's brains were dashed out against some rocks.

The author had very bad luck with all the animals he brought back from the trip to Port Darwin. In addition to the monkey, a valuable dog brought back to the Alice died soon after arriving there. Worse, however, followed, for the black boy, Jack Harrison, a native of the Peake survived the journey from Port Darwin to the Alice only by a few days.

Another circumstance worth recording is that the "Aralta" draw peculiar designs on flat upright rocks ; rude imitations of waterholes, with emu or kangaroo tracks all around them, also straight red bars with black borders, and octagon-shaped figures divided into sections, with black dots and kangaroo tracks in each, red ochre and charcoal being the ingredients of the aboriginal palette. These drawings are intended to illustrate the state of affairs at permanent waterholes during the dry season, when kangaroo and emu hang about the water, and the blackfellows lie in ambush to spear them. Rude imitations of the moon and the stars appear in these illustrations, signifying that it is only when they appear that the animals will come to drink. These drawings are called, by the Alice Springs natives, "En-dull-inga," and they are "taboo" to lubras, as will be seen.

In March, 1883, when coming from Ouraminna, through the Emily Gap, three lubras followed close behind the writer's tracks, saying that they were going to Alice Springs. Just as the entrance to the Gap was reached, five blackfellows appeared and ordered the lubras to go over the range, as no women were allowed to go through the Gap. The range was 500ft. high, and as the lubras had walked twenty-five miles that day, the blackfellows were told that they should follow through the Gap. At first they assumed defiant and bellicose attitudes, but they were cleared out and passed on, followed by the lubras, who picked up some rags, bushes, and grass, and made coverings over their faces, and walked blindfolded, led by the sound of the horse's footsteps and the black boy's voice through the Gap. When they had passed the place in the Gap which is adorned with "En-dull-inga" drawings, they said that no women or boys were allowed to look at these rude pictures, which may be seen on the rocks in some gorges and around rocky waters.

Infanticide is a common practice with the natives ; indeed, it is probable that it is committed by at least 60 per cent. of the lubras. One of the police camp lubras, engaged in carrying water from the well for garden and domestic purposes, stated that she had had three " queis" and two " weis," and that she killed three of the five children on the days of their birth. Her words were : —" Me bin keepem one boy and one girl; no good keepem mob. Him too much wantem tuckout. Another lubra kill 'em piccanniny all day along bush. 'Spose him ketch 'em more than two, no like him. Too muchee mob one fellow mother."

One of the pioneers of the overland telegraph line related that he once called a lubra up from the blacks' camp to sweep out his two rooms, and on her arrival noticed that she was *enceinte*. All at once she knocked off sweeping, went off to some rocks about seventy yards distant, disappeared, and in a short time came back to her sweeping. In the interval she had given birth to a child, and murdered it. Several other cases of child slaughter can be

authenticated, but none of so rapid and business-like a character as the one cited above.

Notwithstanding the denial of the missionaries, there is no doubt as to the fact that cannibalism is practised by the natives to some extent. The Hermannsburg missionaries declare that the tribes about their station are not cannibals. Perhaps they are not, or perhaps they keep their practices from the missionaries; but, if the statements of natives themselves are worthy of credence, the tribes between Alice Springs and Powell's Creek *are* cannibals.

George King (who afterwards died of thirst on the plains north-east of Tennant's Creek) declared that while looking for horses thirty miles east of the Tennant's Creek station he came across a small mob of blacks, mostly lubras. He rounded them up in order to ascertain if they had seen any horse tracks, and then discovered that two old lubras were carrying portions of a cooked child. He dismounted and examined the parts carefully, finding them to be legs, with the feet on, and arms, well burnt. The lubras explained, "No bushy tuck out sit down; father bin kill 'em the "quei" (little girl). Only eat 'em piccaninny when big fellow hungry."

The same thing has occurred as far down the country as Charlotte Waters ; this is spoken of by the blacks themselves. The particular form of infanticide which the lubras most affect is to fill the infant's mouth with sand, and strike it on the head with a stone or yam stick.

CHAPTER V.

Their style of hunting is as follows : The natives go with their lubras to the best kangaroo grounds, well knowing that the kangaroos have little "pads" or tracks along which they habitually travel. Small brakes or ambushes of boughs are constructed close beside the "pads," in which the natives crouch with spear and boomerang in readiness. The lubras then go to "round up" the kangaroos, getting on the further side and driving them towards the ambushes. The kangaroos of course take to their "uworras" or pads, the lubras coming along steadily behind. The animals do not hurry themselves, but hop gently along, sitting up at intervals, looking around, and sometimes commencing to feed, offering excellent "pot" shots with the spear to the concealed natives ; but more frequently the animal is speared whilst hopping past the " break." Immediately the blackfellow rises as the kangaroo comes within easy range, the spear is launched with lightning-like rapidity, and away goes the "Arrura" with the shaft sticking out of his body and occasionally tripping him up, for the barbs—formed of pieces of sharp mulga strongly secured with kangaroo tail sinew—keep the weapon firmly in the wound ; the hunter, following up his game with the relentless persistence of a bloodhound, until at length, exhausted by loss of blood, the kan-

garoo " sits up," and the native can approach near enough to launch another spear or administer the *coup de grace*.

As to "beef-hunting," the natives, when inclined that way, generally lie in wait behind bushes near the "pads" of cattle leading into water. When a beast comes by, a sharp strong mulga spear hardened in hot ashes and scraped to a fine point with stone knives, is thrust into its belly. The native seizes the wounded animal's tail and holds on till it drops exhausted or gets away, but there are other blacks stationed along the "pad" ready to pick up the running and repeat the spear thrusts if necessary.

Many of the station waters in this country are in gorges in the ranges, and there the cattle killers have splendid opportunities of exercising their spear-throwing powers and keeping their "eye in" at moving target practice. The beasts are practically hemmed in as between stone walls, and as the spears are thrown downwards they are driven with great force into the unfortunate beasts, which have no chance of escape.

When an animal falls the natives take what meat they want, and generally go to the tops of the ranges, which are between 300ft. and 400ft. high, to cook it; not because they prefer airy situations for their meals, but because they do not want such visitors as native police, or station hands, to drop in and take " pot luck " without warning. A watch is kept, and if any such unwelcome intruders are seen below, the natives pack up some cooked bullock and make for the most inaccessible parts of the ranges. Sooner or later, of course, the stockman discovers the slaughtered beast. The crow is safe to point out the carcase to him, and the tracks of the cattle killers are picked up and followed. It may be days before the police can be informed of the facts, and when on the track of the marauders they may go ten or twelve days without overtaking them. The tracks always lead to water, but very often only to scanty rock holes which will not supply the horses ; sometimes good permanent waterholes are found, and then again little native wells, affording a very small supply, for what is not enough for ten horses is plenty for a large mob of blacks.

Tracking is a matter which has caused the police many days' anxiety, and consequently is one in which they take a deep interest. The native police start from the scene of a murder or from the carcase of a slaughtered beast, as the case may be, on the tracks that are generally some days old. The offenders may be quite unknown to the black troopers, but when once they have seen and scanned the tracks they can identify the natives who made them; and if any offender *is* known his track at once reveals his name. The tracking goes on day after day, from water to water, until the traces becomes fresher, and at last appear only one day old. The ranges are carefully scanned with field glasses for the smoke of camp fires, or other indications of aboriginal life. Still on the track, the next discovery is the last night's camp, with fires still

alight. The chase gets warmer now, and as children say in their "hide and seek" game, the pursuers are presently "burning'." New ashes and bits of cinder that have dropped from the firesticks which wild blacks carry from camp to camp appear on the tracks, which are fresher, and are clear of the grass and leaves which are blown over old footmarks. Then a very lean dingo or two is seen (wild dogs always follow blacks from camp to camp, and the natives catch and tame their pups). Soon, then, a few very old lubras appear in sight, carrying young pups, and "Pichis" vessels, hollowed out of pieces of timber and used for carrying small supplies of water. The route taken by these old women indicates the locality of the offenders, and the pursuing party abandons the tracks and divides, one section galloping off at full speed to get round the fugitives and cut off their retreat, while the other section spreads out and closes in. This is called "rounding up," and when the operation is complete, and the natives are effectually "bailed up" they commence the usual string of lies and evasions.

The offenders invariably lay the blame on some tribe which lives in an opposite direction, even though the black police may have tracked them from the scene of the murder or outrage to the very spot where they are bailed up, often with the stolen beef in their possession, or with the clothes of the murdered person on their bodies, or with knives, tomahawks, towels, and blankets which they have taken from their victims, or from a "looted" hut or camp. But sometimes the "rounding-up" process cannot be accomplished; the natives take to the ranges, and a hot pursuit follows. When half way up the ranges the natives generally throw away their weapons if hardly pressed; sometimes they retain their spears and boomerangs, but not often; and it is only after one of these chases that there is a chance of collecting native weapons, by going back over the ground when the scrimmage is over. The blacks for 100 miles both east and west of the Alice will fight like demons at first, and it behoves the pursuers to keep a sharp look out for flying spears, both on their own account and on that of their horses.

At Powell's Creek the author was once very nearly scalped by a boomerang. He had bailed up in a sandy creek a big powerful blackfellow, carrying two boomerangs and a shield. When within thirty yards he let fly one boomerang and promptly followed it with the other, which took a round turn and came back in rear at the author's head. That blackfellow "knocked him out" in two rounds and then cleared. There was another warregal blackfellow higher up the bank who looked on grinning. Perhaps he was the "referee," and awarded the fight to his mate, but he did not stop to deliver his decision, leaving summarily for a thick mulga scrub in the vicinity, with a promptitude which prevented any inquiry as to his verdict. However, he was in too great a hurry to take his spears and stone knives with him, and the defeated party was left in the possession of the field and of the booty, such as it was.

CHAPTER, VI.

The blacks select very peculiar names for their children. One, a lubra, was named "Yerra Quasha." The first word means an "ant" and the second "water"—the combination giving the woman the name of the "water ant." Another was called "Opera Inyenta Arinya," which being interpreted means "one gum tree in a gorge." One blackfellow is called "Egive Ecnurra" (big-boned), another "Bullara" (the rainbow), a third "Earlia Quasta" (an emu egg). Others are styled "Paira" (a frog), "Ericha" (the eagle), "Urippa" (the spider), and "Adunpa" (the iguana). A "quei" (girl below marriageable age) at Alice Springs rejoices in the almost unpronounceable name of "Arilltomurrelltannia," which means "rain that blackfellows cause to come by making a corroboree." Anna's reservoir is called "Ungola"; a blackfellow is "atwa"; bullocks are "bailaqua"; and killing is called "indinnika." When the words are strung together we get the following sentence :—"Ungola atwa bailaqua indinnika"—that is to say, "The Anna's reservoir blacks killing cattle." A wild black will understand the sentence immediately, and probably answer "Itcha" (No). "Hunga" means "you"; "alidgera" is "walk"; "Otorri-orra" is "Alice Springs"; and thus we get "You walk Alice Springs" (Hunga alidgera Otorri-orra). "Appa jebba" means "Come back"; "Hunga ungutala," "You thirsty." "Polipa" is "shoulder," and "marma" is "pain"—my shoulder pains. "Ec-nurra" is "long," and "alta" is "hair"—long hair. "Upmoa" is "snake," and "iperta" is "hole"—snake hole. "Ourapilla" is "black," and "yeranda" is "cockatoo"—black cockatoo. It is, however, needless to dwell further on this subject, as the native names of birds, trees, animals, and places can be found in the appended vocabulary.

The chief thing in speaking the language is to put the words together and say them quickly. It should also be remarked that, in pronouncing native words, they almost invariably end with a vowel sound; and those words in the vocabulary which do not end with a vowel the stress must be put on the "er" or "ar," which is their last syllable. Of course this is the author's way of spelling, but it is founded on long study of the native peculiarities of pronunciation.

Many of the words in the native language represents two things. Thus, "ericha" is an "eagle" and also "the arms"; "arrurer" means "the breast" and also "the kangaroo"; "poora" stands for both "tail" and "lightning."

On first coming to Alice Springs, in 1882, it seemed that every blackfellow had a different language, because if one boy told the name of a thing as so-and-so, another boy would give a different name for the same thing. It was hard to understand who was

right. For instance, " arunga " means " euro," and " arrurer " is "kangaroo," and as the natives say them they sound alike; " arrurer " also means " sit down " ; " apurta " means a " stone," and " inyenta " is "one," and a big stony hill the natives call "apurta inyenta"; "ec-nurra" is "big," and "goobita" is "small"; " atwa ec-nurra " means " a big man." and " ara-gudgea goobita " is " a small lubra."

The Alice Springs natives place all their attributive phrases after the name of the subject; and in this they only follow the practice of all Australian natives, as far as known. The vocabulary appended has been compiled from the lips of natives of the Alice Springs district, and therefore would not fit in with the Barrow Creek or Charlotte Waters dialects.

It is not intended in this little work to give anything like a comprehensive or general account of the aboriginal tongues. All that it is professed to do is to give the results of personal researches on the subject, prosecuted under considerable difficulties and with steady persistence during six years spent among the natives of central Australia. Nature did not apparently intend the author for a philologist, and his excuse for this little contribution to native literature is the almost virgin nature of the subject, and the call which has been made upon those who know a little about it to place the information they have gleaned at the service of the public.

CHAPTER VII.

It may be interesting here to give a brief account of the murderous attack made by the aboriginals of Barrow's Creek on the telegraph station at that remote inland spot in the early days of the overland telegraph line's existence. It is based upon the statements of Mr. S. Gason, now of Beltana, who was stationed at Barrow's Creek as a mounted constable at the time of the attack.

Barrow's Creek is about 1,240 miles distant from Adelaide, lying some forty miles north of Central Mount Stuart, and in 1873 its telegraph station had not long been opened, the nearest stations to it being at Alice Springs, 200 miles south, and Tennant's Creek, 150 miles north. The station was a substantial stone structure, built in the form of a hollow square, an open quadrangle occupying the centre, access to which, and to the rooms ranged around it, was afforded by a large galvanized iron gate. There were no doors, and the windows, though protected by iron bars, were not glazed. The roof of the structure was of galvanized iron ; but a little hill adjacent afforded a vantage ground whence spears could be thrown into the open central quadrangle. Loopholes had been pierced in the walls through which to discharge firearms in case of attack, but they were placed so high up in the wall as to be practically useless. Dense scrub of bastard mulga and undergrowth encircled

the station, but it had been cleared away all round for about twenty yards from the walls, leaving, however, ample ambush ground for a native "surprise party," as the effective range of the native spear, when thrown with the woomera, is about fifty yards.

The attack was made on Sunday evening, February 23rd, 1873, and without the slightest warning. There were at the time eight individuals at the station: Mr. Stapleton, in charge (killed); Mr. E. Flint, operator; James Maddox, blacksmith; Alexander Murdoch, and John Franks, linesmen (latter killed); Samuel Gason, mounted, constable; Si Jim, Chinese cook; and Jimmy, a black boy from the Peake. Mounted Constable Gason had only a week before arrived at the station, and Mr. Stapleton had two months before succeeded Mr. Watson as stationmaster, having come down the line from the Katherine (1,770 miles north of Adelaide). The natives had been troublesome while Mr. Watson was in charge of the station, having occasionally cut the telegraph wires, burnt down the poles, and speared the station horses. The Postmaster-General had given directions that every effort should be made to conciliate natives, thinking that by kindness they could be diverted from practices which threatened to materially interfere with the utility of the line. These instructions were carried out; the natives, who were numerous in the locality, were allowed to congregate about the station; they were presented with a quantity of clothes, and some flour, and, in addition, were from time to time given a variety of trifling articles of small value which struck their fancy. So far, however, from this treatment securing the friendship of the natives, it had the effect of stimulating their cupidity, and they only awaited a favorable opportunity to possess themselves of all the treasures which the station contained. On Saturday, February 22nd, they judged that their opportunity had come, for on that day a line repairing party of eleven men under Mr. Tucker started northward from Barrow's Creek. There were some 200 natives about the station on that day, and apparently they concluded that weakened by so large a withdrawal of its garrison, it would fall an easy prey to them. No attack was made that night, the policy of the natives being to let the outgoing party get far enough away from the station to prevent it being recalled.

It was on a Sunday evening; 8 o'clock supper was over, and all the people of the station were outside the building, sitting on the outer ledge, and watching the dusk deepen into the darkness of a moonless tropical night. Mr. Stapleton was sitting on an empty keg about fifty feet from the gate, by which alone access to the station could be gained, and which was round the corner from that side of the building where the men were congregated. Suddenly, without a sign or sound of warning, a shower of spears came from the dense scrub, tangled undergrowth, and long grass which encircled the station. Wild yells rang through the evening air, and dusky forms

showed themselves by scores between the white men and the station gate, inside which were their arms and ammunition. The blacks, whose camp was half a mile distant, had stealthily advanced through the scrub, making a detour round the station, and by attacking from the further side, cut off their intended victims from their fortress and armory. Mr. Stapleton got his death wound in the first volley. A spear struck him over the hip, penetrating the abdominal cavity and puncturing the bladder, and he also got a graze in the side from a second spear. Mr. Flint was badly speared in the thigh, and Mounted Constable Gason was crippled by a heavy blow on the hip from a missile club. The spears rattled against the walls and roof of the station; the yells of the blacks rose higher and shriller; and in the blackness of the night, unarmed and shelterless, the white men thought their last hour was come. All sprang to their feet and rushed—not in the direction of the gate, whence the spear volley came, but round the opposite corner of the station, expecting the blacks to follow. But the natives were playing a waiting game. They did not pursue, but massed themselves opposite the gate, waiting for their prey. Some superstitious dread or timorous fancy prevented them from entering the station, as they could easily have done, thus scaling the doom of their victims. When the fugitives rounded the third corner of the station and made for the open gate they found the natives ranged eight or nine deep about 15ft. from the entrance, with spears poised in readiness. There was nothing for it but to run the gauntlet, and Franks was the first to make the rush. A volley of spears greeted him as he ran through the gate, and, pierced through the heart, the impetus of his rush carried him through the quadrangle to the station kitchen, where he fell dead on the floor. Mr. Flint came next, and the fugitives stopped for a second to give a yell, which provoked a second shower of spears, and between the volleys all made their way into the sheltering enclosure without sustaining any further serious wounds, though the black boy Jim was grazed on the head by a spear, and received several scratches on the body, besides getting a spear through his fingers.

The natives, still afraid to trust themselves inside the building, kept up their volley of spears through the open gateway, the barred windows, and, from the little eminence adjacent, into the quadrangle. Mounted Constable Gason got his rifle and revolver and commenced firing through the loopholes, though not, so far as he could ascertain, with any effect; the uninjured members of the party also fired, and when the spear showers slackened the wounded were attended to. Mr. Stapleton knew he had got his death wound, and, after terrible sufferings through the night, died painlessly on Monday at 8 p.m. Mr. Flint had a terrible spear wound in the thigh, but while lying on the sofa in the operating room "spoke" Alice Springs and Tennant's Creek

stations with a pocket instrument which Mounted Constable Gason connected for him at the open window where the station instrument stood. In half an hour word came from Alice Springs that there was no force available there to send to the rescue, neither was there at Tennant's Creek. The only chance of rescue was to recall Mr. Tucker's party, and that could only be done when he should connect and "speak " by pocket instrument, which might not be for days. So passed an anxious vigil, and when day dawned parties of twenty or thirty blacks were to be seen all around. Spears came every now and then, but under cover of a brisk fire the body of Franks (which was rapidly becoming decomposed) was taken outside the station and buried in his blankets. The dying stationmaster, aroused by the firing, asked the cause, and on being informed, said—" You need not trouble much about me. Bury me in my blankets. Give my love to my wife, and send my papers down." He died at 8 that evening, and next morning was buried as he had directed, under cover of a fusilade from the station, the blacks still lying around, and immense numbers of spears being hurled at the station, some with flint and others with wooden barbs, and some plain pointed. Still the natives did not cut the wires, which was what the party most feared, nor did they spear any of the horses belonging to the station. Constant watch was kept day and night against surprise, as well as to catch the first signal of coming help. Plenty of water and provisions were in the station, and an abundant supply of medicine. The late Dr. Charles Gosse was hourly consulted in Adelaide by wire as to the treatment of Mr. Flint's wound. His thigh had swollen up to an enormous size, the natives having poisoned their spears by steeping the barbs in the decomposing entrails of kangaroo. On the third day the symptoms were so bad that Mr. Flint was not expected to live, and it was feared that mortification was about to set in, but he lay resolutely in his blankets opposite the doorway, revolver in hand, to lend his aid if necessary to repel the hourly expected rush of the natives. However, he pulled through ultimately, and for fourteen years subsequently remained on the line, and was at the time of his widely regretted death from typhoid fever, in 1887, stationmaster at Strangways Springs.

On Wednesday Mr. Tucker "spoke," and was informed of the attack. His party of eleven men promptly turned back; they were eighty miles from Barrow's Creek, and their equipment comprised only two saddles. The bare-backed ride was, however, rapidly ridden, and at 10 o'clock on Thursday night they arrived at the Barrow's Creek station, having been attacked twenty miles to the northward by the natives, who saluted them with a volley of spears, which wounded several of the horses, as they went through a belt of dense scrub. There was rejoicing in the station when the jingle of hopples and quart pots was heard in the darkness

of the night, and the beleaguered party knew help was at hand ; and for the first time that night since the attack was made they slept.

Next morning a party of thirteen men sallied out to hunt for the murderers, but they had vanished. The arrival of the rescue party was the signal for their departure, and though their tracks were followed, and some of their camps found, the dense scrub proved a secure fastness, and the murder of Stapleton and Franks remains unavenged. The only casualty which the natives were known to have sustained was the loss of a man who was seen to fall to a rifle bullet on the Wednesday succeeding the attack. Natives were constantly seen and fired at during the siege, but the intervening scrub diverted well directed bullets, though probably the fire of the besieged produced more effect than they were aware of.

Such was the attack on the Barrow's Creek telegraph station over eighteen years ago, but though the " Warregal" blacks of central Australia not unfrequently attack stations, waylay solitary travellers, and spear cattle and horses, there has never since been an attack of equal magnitude, or attended by such fatalities. Now that there is an effective native police contingent in the heart of the continent, it is certain that murderers could not escape with similar impunity as those who made the attack at Barrow's Creek.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ABORIGINES OF LAKE AMADEUS AND THE GEORGE GILL RANGES.

The George Gill Ranges lie at about 150 miles S.W. of Alice Springs. They were discovered by Ernest Giles, the explorer, in 1872. They are very high, and they are fairly well watered. There is good grass country around them, with cotton-bush and saltbush plains, in which numerous large clay pans afford water in most seasons. The quondong, the wild orange, the fig, and other trees flourish in this region, and at certain times furnish food for the natives.

The creeks in this country are the Palmer, the Peterman, and the Walker ; these are the principal watercourses. There are others also, which contain large permanent waterholes in which reeds, rushes, and ferns abound ; they afford shelter to game of various kinds, and in consequence the aborigines are more numerous than they can be in poor country, such as that at the Peake and Charlotte Waters.

The police patrol party in this country is constituted by the writer and six native constables. The first camp was formed at the Boggy Waters, on the Finke, that being the central place for the surrounding cattle stations. At twelve miles north there is

Ellery's Creek, a cattle station; at twenty miles north-west, the Lutheran missionaries are located ; the Glen Helen station is fifty miles north-west; the Tempe Downs station lies sixty miles south-west ; the Henbury is forty five miles south. At fifty miles north Owen Springs are situated ; Alice Springs are ninety miles north, and at 100 miles south, Idracowra. There are many other stations further north and further south. Henbury is a cattle station, owned and managed by Mr. E. W. Parke. It is the best of all in this region. The Finke runs through it. It is splendidly grassed, and is better watered than any of the stations in the country. In dry seasons other stationowners make arrangements to bring their stock there to water.

The next two stations in importance, and probably in value, as far as regards feed and water, are the Tempe Downs and Erldunda. The former contains many very beautiful spots. The character of the country may be imagined when Mr. Giles, who discovered it, thought it proper to name one part of it the " Vale of Tempe," another the "Vale of Amber," and a third "Glen Edith."

There is good country at Erldunda. It contains many large claypans, and there are several springs upon it. Cotton-bush plains and sandhills, which abound in excellent feed, constitute a large portion of the station. Messrs. Warburton & Tomlin are the owners, and are most hospitable and considerate to any wayfarer who may come to their quarters.

Glen Owen, owned by Grant & Stokes, is situated at the head of the Finke river, twenty-five miles above the Lutheran mission station. It is in the Macdonnell Ranges, and is managed by Mr. James McDonald, one of the pioneers of settlement in central Australia. The country is good, and fairly well watered. The next station is that of the Lutheran missionaries. They have good gardens, and appear to be comfortable. They are exceedingly kind to travellers. They are assiduous in their care of the blacks, but they are quite aware that the natives kill cattle, and are a source of constant trouble to all the settlers whose stations surround that of the missionaries.

It is well known that the half-civilised natives who camp at the head stations start away in small parties to kill cattle, and they return to the stations in the night. The loss of a few beasts occasionally does not trouble the station managers. The real grievance is the fear they instil into the herds. They become so terrified at the sight of anyone on foot that it is most difficult to collect them when they are wanted. It entails an immense deal of labor and galloping about upon the stockmen to steady the cattle down after they have been molested by the aboriginals. When the natives kill a beast they cut the carcass up into lumps and cook it on stony ground. They burn the outside of the meat well, whilst the interior parts of the lumps are quite raw. The women fill up their " Pichis" and carry the meat along, following in the wake of their lords and masters.

The aborigines of this portion of Australia, like the other tribes of which the writer has had experience, are most restless. They wander about in small parties in search of places where they can find game. They are always in a state of nudity, and for the most part are in poor condition. Some of the younger members of the tribes—males and females—are good looking, and remind one of the Israelitish type of face.

In 1885, while searching for the remains of a white man on the Mitchell Plains, north-east of Tennant's Creek, the writer came suddenly upon three young blacks and their three lubras, who were out hunting. On rounding them up, and examining their features closely, the conclusion became almost irresistible that they were of Jewish descent. They pointed out the direction in which water could be found. Just as the police party was about to depart one of the lubras ran to the side of one of the black trackers and begged in her own language to be taken into Powell's Creek, saying that the tallest of the blacks had stolen her from her parents. This was duly translated, and the requisite permission was given for her to travel with the party, but with the condition that she was not to be kept when she arrived there. On reaching the creek it was found that she had been stolen, as she had stated, by the natives with whom she was discovered.

This stealing of lubras is a common practice amongst the aborigines in this part of the country, as it is in other parts. Possessing nothing, the men are often unable to procure wives in any other way. Girl-stealing, however, is not regarded as a trifling matter. That, and incestuous traffic amongst them, are the circumstances which cause the most serious quarrels amongst them; and the fights which arise in consequence are mostly fought out to the end.

The natives, especially in the Macdonnell Ranges, subsist to a large extent on wallabies, iguanas, and "parenthees." Those last are hideous-looking saurians, with green and black spots upon their skins. They vary from 3ft. to 6ft. in length. It requires a strong effort of will on the part of a white man to overcome his repugnance to them when set before him as food, but once it is conquered—and their disgusting appearance renders it somewhat difficult to do this—they are eagerly sought after. In reality they are excellent eating, and are naturally in great request amongst the blacks. A large fat snake, called by them the "Un-ditrika," found in the country is another article of food. It is not venomous, and is looked upon as a great delicacy. When properly cooked the flesh strips off the bones in long white flakes like fish, and is really delicious. This they devour greedily whenever they can secure one as a prize of the chase.

The ingratitude of the aborigines is well known and understood by all the white people who may have anything to do with them. They have few and limited ideas, and are destitute of anything

like sentiment. They attach themselves to the whites from motives of self-interest only, and, as a rule, they will return evil for good. Anything like a feeling of reciprocity is out of the question amongst them. They will avenge an injury when they can do so in security, and they will injure those who befriend them if they think it is to their advantage to do so.

After a residence of seven years amongst them, and after spending over £300 of his own money in feeding and clothing them, over and above what was allowed by the Sub-protector of Aborigines, the writer has been deserted by all of those whom he had endeavored to attach to him. The business of the camp had at such times to be carried on by three or four new native constables brought into service to replace those who had gone away. The old assistants left in haste in the darkness, taking with them all their lubras, and some others. Their nomadic restlessness may account for this to some extent.

Natives of both sexes have been known to leave the police and other stations, where they were well fed and abundantly supplied with clothing, and go to spots many miles away, where food was scarce in the extreme. In one case they made a journey of sixty miles into a region where food was so scarce that the natives there had been driven to procure old dry bullock hides, burn them, and having pounded them up, to use the powder as food ; they often did the same with bones. It need hardly be averred that they are cannibals, and sometimes eat each other. An instance came under the writer's notice not long ago. A large mob of natives, not very far from the camp, had arranged to kill and eat a fat lubra. They had dug a hole, and had half filled it with live coals, with the intention of roasting her alive. Providentially the police party, with the author in charge, came upon the scene in time, and the projected feast did not take place. It was a strange thing that the party should arrive at a place that had not been visited for eight months on the night, and at the very hour, that such a diabolical orgie was about to commence. It would have been the duty of the police to prevent its occurrence at all hazards.

From a very long experience of the blacks, and careful observation of their character and habits, the author cannot speak much in their favor. They are ungrateful, deceitful, wily, and treacherous. They are indolent in the extreme, squalid and filthy in their surroundings, as well as disgustingly impure amongst themselves.

A small mob of natives, wild blacks, were brought together at the police camp in the beginning of August, 1889. The author was desirous of establishing a new police station, and to attract the natives to it by kindness. In stock there were 400lbs. of flour, 2cwt. of sugar. 30yds. of dress material, 301bs. of tobacco, and other things, such as pipes, necklaces, belts, handkerchiefs, &c. These were served out and given away both to old and young. The liberality displayed to them was unlimited, for the goods

distributed being the writer's private property were not disposed of under any official regulations. By the second week in September, out of sixteen natives, only five remained at the camp, and they seemed to be entirely oblivious of the fact that the author had given them anything. But if they are heedless of occurrences of that kind, they are not so in other respects. If they have attacked or murdered a white man, or have been guilty of spearing or killing cattle, they are careful to keep out of the way of the police patrol party. They will evade them for years if they can. They do not forget that they will be made accountable for their misdoings, and they take refuge in the ranges, where they are difficult to get at. The worst are those who do know better, that is, ex-constables and boys who have been with white men on stations.

It would be a profitless task to endeavor to discover whether the natives ever were superior to what they are now. If they were they have lost all the good qualities which their progenitors might have possessed, and have sunk down into a dirty, mean, and thriftless condition. Their females exhibit the worst types of unchastity. They will crawl on their hands and knees through the long cane grass to cohabit with other blacks who have no right to their companionship.

Although both sexes were treated with the greatest kindness at the police camp for years, they all deserted it in one night. There was no one left but the writer and one black boy to look after six bull camels all one season, and ten horses, five of which were colts. These animals had to be hunted up every morning, and besides this, there was wood-carting and cooking to do, apart from the endless odd matters about a camp which need looking after. If they had been ill-treated in the camp, or by any of its members, there would not be much ground for complaint. These facts are mentioned only to show how utterly destitute of any grateful feelings the aborigines now described invariably show themselves to be. Eventually other blacks were got to supply their places, mostly by riding to other stations and obtaining a boy here and there. Their behaviour was not remembered against them when they were encountered again. It would have been useless to do so, having regard to their wandering propensities and their degraded intelligence. The males continually quit their camps in the morning with dogs and spears, and return in the evening with what they have secured during the day. The civilised boys much prefer this mode of living to staying with the whites altogether.

On the 9th of November, 1888, the native police party, with the writer in charge, were tracking some natives for cattle killing. At about 2 in the afternoon they entered a most lovely spot. It was a kind of amphitheatre, nearly circular in shape, with a row of large caves all round. Higher up there were smaller caves receding from the larger ones. On entering these caves it was

seen that the walls were covered with drawings made with red ochre and bordered with charcoal. The drawings were not altogether inartistic, but there was something about them that provoked curiosity to find out what they meant.

It must here be stated that when a boy reaches the age of fifteen or sixteen he is compelled to undergo the operation of circumcision. About a fortnight later, when he has recovered from the effects of this ordeal, another rite is performed upon his person. The urethra is split down for about three inches from the glans. These ceremonies are looked upon amongst the natives as of the greatest importance. They assemble from all parts to participate in them, and to celebrate their performance by a corroboree. For each boy who is thus made a man one of these drawings is executed.

In describing the habits and practices of savages—especially such savages as those who inhabit the central regions of Australia—it is difficult to convey a clear idea of their inner life without to some extent trenching on the borders of strict propriety. The truth, however, must be placed on record, with as much circumspection as the facts of the case permit. There is no reason assigned for adopting the horrible practice which has been mentioned above. It may have been handed down to the present generation from a period of which there are no accounts amongst the tribes ; but it is not improbable that it was intended to prevent a rapid increase in population in tracts of country in which food has never been very abundant, and in which it must be growing scarcer year after year. Whatever the reason, the practice is severely carried into effect. No boys can evade it in the long run, for if not performed upon them in their own country the inhabitants of other districts will do it for them.

Commerce with the opposite sex is difficult under the circumstances, and in order to overcome the difficulty the females are subjected to mutilation of a frightful character, with a view to the permanent enlargement of the parts which are operated upon. The incisions internal and external are made with sharp stones or stone knives, and the operators are always the old men of the tribes. The exact details of the procedure are so abominable that it would be impossible adequately to describe them in language fit for the general reader. The performance of these mutilations inflicts permanent injury upon the victims. Some of them do not survive the ordeal. Those who do, as soon as they are convalescent, are sexually at the mercy of all who may get hold of them.

In the circle of caves mentioned above there were numerous drawings, the greater portion of which denoted that these ceremonies had been carried out upon as many of the boys as girls. In many of the pictures the moon and stars were depicted, and also the tracks of emus and kangaroos, besides snakes and iguanas and other symbols, which were unintelligible, and beyond the scope of a white man's imagination.

Whilst engaged in examining these pictures, one of the native constables called out to the author to come and see what he had discovered. On entering the new cave a most ghastly spectacle presented itself. On the floor of the cavern an old black woman was lying. Her finger nails had grown to great length; she had no hair; her skin was hanging all in wrinkles, and her eyes were sunken in. Her legs and arms were like bamboos, they were so shrunken. It was a horrible sight, and the woman strongly suggested the idea of "She," as she appeared at the end of Rider Haggard's story. The miserable creature had been abandoned by the other blacks of the tribe. Two smouldering fires were just alight in the cave. When she was spoken to in her own dialect, she replied by making a kind of hissing sound, and endeavored to point out the direction in which her former companions had gone. Under the writer's directions, the corporal of native police procured food and water, which was placed close to the poor wretch, and the lads were made to eat bread in front of her, so as to enable her to understand it was food. After a further look round the caves, the party proceeded on its journey, following the blackfellows' tracks, which went to the west.

In the afternoon the tracks appeared more fresh, and it was apparent that those who had made them knew that they were being-followed. At sundown a camp was formed on a dry stony plain, but the party was supplied with water, which had been brought on in kegs. A fresh start was made at an early hour next morning, and it could be seen that the fugitives carried firesticks with them, as every now and then charcoal and ashes were found along the tracks. At noon a small black object was noticed crawling along amongst the bushes. On riding up to it, a little girl was discovered; she was lame, and by her own account too much so to be able to walk, so her father and mother and the other natives who were with them had decided to leave her behind, informing her at the same time that the police would not harm her. It was clear from her story that the blacks knew who were sought, and what the police were about. As the party moved onwards the child was taken with it, otherwise she must have perished, as her feet were very sore and useless for locomotion.

The party journeyed on until near sunset. All the intervening time was spent in crossing a most inhospitable plain. As the party approached a range of hills, on nearing a gorge, about fifty wild blacks were discovered ascending the slope. They had observed the party before they themselves were noticed. The party hastened forward, and were called upon in their own language not to go away ; at this they halted on the crest of the range and some of them sat down. Others busied themselves in fitting their spears into their " wommeras," and otherwise preparing for action. The native contingent also got ready, as it becomes necessary in en-

countering hostile natives to be prepared. The spears of the natives are not very effective out in the open, and of course would be of little avail against the Martini-Henri, with which the police are provided. It is the rule with the police patrols never to commence hostilities. If there ever is any trouble they must not be the aggressors, and must take care not to bring it about themselves.

The police party began to unpack their baggage, but whilst thus engaged the defiant gestures of the blacks and their general demeanor soon showed that they intended to make an attack upon the camp. They were all yelling and jabbering at once. One miserable bony-looking old native, who appeared to exercise authority over the others, intimated that he was about to take possession of all the property in the camp, and was urging upon his naked companions the absolute necessity of destroying the party first. By this time they had come close up to the camp. They motioned to the party to go away. The mob of blacks was so much larger than was suspected at first, that it now became necessary to be on the alert and be ready for all contingencies. The spot on which the camp was made was an extremely wild one, and the party had nothing to depend upon but their own prudence and caution. At the instigation of the old black general a young man ran backwards. This meant that in running forward to throw his spear, he might give it an additional impetus. One of the native constables, evidently disliking the prospect of being struck through with the black warrior's spear, dodged behind a box tree, but only just in time. That spear being thrown, a shower of others followed it in quick succession, so that it became necessary to fire in self-defence. The young man who began the attack was probably hit, but this is only a conjecture. However, the blacks all cleared away from the camp and left the neighborhood. It was necessary to keep a strict watch all through the night to avoid a surprise. The little lame girl, in reply to questions put to her, gave full information regarding the blacks, their country, and the waters in it; and from that time the travelling became less hazardous and more easy. Her native name was "Miss-pa." This the author converted into "Mizpah," and endeavored to convey to her its signification through one of the boys with me, who understood it. He had been associated from time to time with the blacks who had been with the missionaries. A few of the wild natives came back, and were hovering about the camp during the night, for no good purpose, it may well be believed, but the occasional report of firearms showed them that the party was not asleep and could not be surprised. In the morning the party was left to itself and proceeded on its course to the eastward.

Since the first portion of the notes which form the groundwork of the present production were jotted down, the writer has travelled all round the George Gill Ranges, and has been close up to Lake Amadeus. During his journeyings he has come in contact

with many of the wild tribes, and has camped with them sometimes for three or four days in succession. His intercourse with them has assured him of one fact, and that is that the blacks in those regions are cannibals. The information is derived from the blacks themselves by means of questions put to them by the native police. It seems that it is a common thing for the elder natives to kill and eat a young man or young woman, as the case may be, when times go hard with them.

A few months back, when Mr. W. H. Tietkens was out exploring round Lake Amadeus, he was compelled to leave behind him a camel, which by reason of eating some poisonous bush, or from some other cause, was unable to travel. The natives stated that they saw the camel, and being pressed with hunger they ran alongside of it, and kept on spearing it in the sides until it fell exhausted and died. Whether or not the camel was that which belonged to Mr. Tietkens, the writer is not in a position to say. The natives ate the camel. It then transpired that these savages, about three days before they saw the camel, had killed and eaten a young man who was in good condition. They were very much frightened, and probably nothing would have been said about the circumstance if they had been left to themselves. A clue to the murder was obtained through a little boy attached to the police party, and then they were questioned closely. They admitted that they had killed the young man, and that they devoured one half of his body raw, and then cooked the remainder as they would cook a kangaroo, namely, by digging a hole in the ground alongside the fire, putting the body in and covering it up with hot ashes and coals. In all parts of central Australia they are, or at least have been, cannibals, especially during very bad times, when it is very difficult for them to obtain sufficient food to sustain life.

As previously stated, the police camp is on the Finke river. Its occupants are the police patrol party, whose duties are to visit the various stations, and to see that the wild natives do not interfere with the white settlers or their stock. This the officer in charge has done to the best of his ability, and as one of the results his camp was attacked by a mob of wild blacks from the westward on the 9th of January, 1890. They managed to drive one long spear right through the body of one of the natives at the camp, named Peter, who was kept there to carry wood and water as required. His viscera protruded through the wound, and he died on the following afternoon. The spear was thrown into one of the wurleys with the intention of killing one of the active native constables. In this they failed. When daylight broke, their tracks, or rather the impressions of their feet, were plainly seen in the soft ground. Every one of them was identified by the native constables, who, as they examined the footprints, called out the names of the natives to whom they belonged. A few days after the party started out to follow them up. After undergoing many privations, such as the

want of water, meat, &c, the natives were seen in a mob with the two men who had actually murdered the boy.

It was impossible to arrest them on account of the deep gorges and steep ranges in which they had taken refuge. About 400lbs. of fresh meat was found in their camp, and on a small plain there were two fat bullocks which they had recently killed. The settlers hardly know what to do in this kind of country, where the wild natives kill their cattle wholesale, and sometimes murder white men and the civilised black boys who are employed on the stations. Unless they have adequate protection they must act for themselves, for otherwise there is nothing before them but to abandon the country and leave it to the blacks. The writer has known an instance in which fourteen head of cattle were killed in sheer wantonness in less than a week, and the good beef left to rot in the sun. It is hardly safe now to chastise the blacks, or to punish them in any way. In the Cadelgo murder case, one of the most efficient and energetic officers in the South Australian mounted police was called severely to account for taking the necessary precautions to keep his prisoner properly chained up in order to prevent escape. This one of the missionaries called cruelty.

It is not desirable to dwell upon this subject. It cannot be denied, however, that it is extremely hard upon those energetic settlers who form homesteads and locate thousands of cattle in the country to find that the wild natives kill them almost every day in the year. They sit on the ranges and watch the stockmen going about, and as soon as the stockmen pass on in one direction they descend from their vantage ground and destroy the cattle in another direction. This is what the squatter has to endure in the western territory of central Australia. Any serious repression of these outrages becomes impracticable, when the views and the influence of the missionaries are widely opposed to those of the squatters and the police.

The blacks are extremely cunning in the way in which they enlist the sympathies of the inhabitants of the mission stations. If a white man happened to be out shooting emus or kangaroos, and blacks happened to be in the near vicinity, they would be likely to go to the missionaries and say that they had been shot at. If a blackfellow deserved and got a good thrashing for stealing tobacco or rations, &c, he would at once complain to the missionaries. Their sympathies would at once go with the oppressed native, and the circumstance would be reported in some direction so that something might arise out of it. Hence it is that the natives kill cattle wholesale at their pleasure, and occasionally murder the whites. Too much reliance is often placed on the assertions of the blacks. In some cases it is easy to find out from a blackfellow anything that may have occurred. If, however, the black catches the drift of the questions asked him, he will answer

one way or another, quite irrespective of the truth, and tell anything that he may think will satisfy his questioner. The natives all draw largely upon their imagination. If a black tells another black something, the listener will believe or does believe that he saw the affair himself, and this is not unfrequently the evidence on which the missionaries have to rely. No reliance can be placed upon the statements of the aborigines, at least of central Australia, more especially if they are subjected to close questioning. In such a case they become confused, and their story becomes a puzzle that nothing can be made of.

The natives, it need scarcely be said, are in the highest degree superstitious. A lubra at my camp was lying in an almost moribund state. Another lubra brought her father, an old man, to doctor the sick woman. On the way the old fellow must have picked up some sticks and put them into his mouth. When he came close to his patient he knelt down and commenced sucking away at her side, where she complained that the pain was. In a few minutes he produced several small pieces of wood out of his mouth, and showed them to those who stood near at hand. When he had succeeded in drawing about six small pieces of wood, as he said, out of her side, he told her that she would soon be all right. The lubra had such faith in the old cheat that the next day she was considerably better, and two days later she resumed her work of carrying water at the camp.

The blacks are generally very timid in the dark. If a boy or girl should be wanted to go a short distance after nightfall they say they are frightened—"Debbil debbil come up." The native name for devil is both "Mar moo" and "Coo-coo-loora." The older natives are particularly influenced by their superstitious dread of the darkness, so that a white man who wants anything done at night has mostly to do it himself. They will not move if they can help it, but hang on, arguing, or trying to induce some other blackfellows, who are not any more willing than they are, to accompany them. If any noise is heard after nightfall the terrified beings all crowd together in one "wurley."

The natives of Lake Amadeus, and even west of the Finke river, know and understand the four cardinal points of the compass. How this knowledge came into their possession it is impossible to say. The native equivalent for the north is "all-in-yarra"; for the south, "ole-byra"; for the east, "coc-a-rarra"; and for the west, "wee-loo-rarra." The discovery of this fact is valuable, and has proved of the greatest service when interrogating the natives with regard to places the patrol party intended to visit.

The country inhabited by the blacks of whose habits the foregoing sketch has been made contains thousands of square miles of saltbush and cotton-bush. These may be regarded as the main stay of the settlers. In those places where saltbush does not grow the cattle become subject to "red-water." The absence of salt in

the indigenous herbage is really a deplorable circumstance. Cattle and horses cannot get on without it; indeed, the horses would often come into the camp and lick the dry sweat off the surcingles and girths, so badly did they feel the want of salt. At the police and telegraph stations, at the hotels, and other places lumps of salt are provided for the animals to lick; but this expedient is but a poor substitute for the salsolaceous properties of salt and cotton bush. There are thousands of square miles of most excellent pastoral country in the western territory of central Australia which have not yet been taken up, and much of the country that has been taken up has not been stocked. As far as the writer is able to judge, the Tempe Downs Pastoral Association are the only people in the region who have gone to work properly in making improvements in a systematic way, and if the wild aborigines were not so much given to cattle killing, it would soon become a profitable concern.

CHAPTER IX.

Much has been written by the Lutheran missionaries upon the outrages committed by white men taking black women from the aboriginals, and upon the maddening effect this procedure has upon the males. Statements of this kind do not deserve much consideration when the habits of the natives are properly understood and weighed. It is a common practice amongst the native tribes to capture and steal females one from the other. Such acts, as already stated, are as often followed up by acts of retaliation, not because of any moral injury that has been inflicted upon the blacks who have lost one or more of their women, but because they have lost one or more of their slaves, for the largest portion of the hard work and of the privations of the tribe fall to the lot of the women. When they desire to propitiate one another their women are for the time exchanged, and when they are favorably disposed towards any white men they may encounter the first thing that is done is to place the women at their disposal. Moreover, the lubras themselves will go to the whites; indeed, willing or not, the men compel the females to go after them, and will follow white travellers on foot for miles with their women if the least inducement is held out. There are more females than males amongst the tribes, and if the whites were to take away many more than the number that has gone with them it would be much better for the women themselves. At least they would be fed and clothed and humanely treated, and that kind of treatment is what they never would receive at the hands of the males amongst whom their lot was cast. All the efforts of the missionaries can never stop the practice. No one can pretend not to recognise the almost impossibility of controlling the "social evil" in cities and places where civilisation reigns. How then can it be arrested in a wild

country amongst savages who do not understand what feminine virtue signifies, and whose practices amongst themselves are of the most lewd and debasing character? The blacks have a general tendency to attach themselves to white people, and this tendency is much increased by the knowledge, amongst the women at least, that white men treat them with kindness.

There is no desire on the author's part to underrate the exertions of the missionaries. He has already borne testimony to their general kindness and hospitality. He wishes only to point out briefly that as long as the South Australian Government provides rations for the blacks when in want of food at the various stations in the interior all is done for them that can be of any benefit to them. The managers and overseers will gladly distribute them amongst the old, infirm, and sick, and that is all that can reasonably be required.

As far as regards moral instruction, the missionaries appear to have a hopeless task before them, for as long as the old men of the tribes instil into the minds of the young the visible existence on this earth of the " Mar moo " and " Coo-coo-loora," and saturate them with the notion of the " taboo " and the " bone," it is difficult to see how the missionaries can do any permanent good with them. They cannot eradicate the superstitions which have been instilled into the children from their earliest days, and which are firmly rooted in their weak and uncultured minds.

The best policy to adopt with regard to the blacks is to leave them alone. They are far better off if they are allowed to come and go to and from the stations as they feel inclined. It is a shameful thing, bordering indeed upon the practice of slavery, to compel them to remain in particular places from year to year. The writer has seen lubras chained up at one place because they gratified their desire for change by going away to a neighboring cattle camp. The parties concerned were told that they ought to allow the aborigines to go about as they liked. It is their nature to wander frequently from place to place, as the fancy seizes them ; and if they do go away, and are left alone, they are certain eventually to come back again. The coolness of the individuals to whom on one occasion these views were expressed was remarkable. The reply given was that " it was necessary to keep the natives from growing wild." What else are they? What else have they ever been ? It would be far more easy to tame and domesticate the kangaroos and euros that run about the country than to complete the same process with the blacks within their own boundaries. All attempts to detain them permanently at the stations must end in failure. Those who come about the police camps are allowed to move about as they think fit, and when they come back after such a length of absence as they have been disposed to indulge in, they are in good spirits and are quite contented. Those who wish to see a number of blacks who seem really happy should pay a visit

to the interior police patrol camp. The women and children are healthy and fat, because they have the run, in reason, of all that the officer in charge has at command. They are especially amused with the animals that are collected there, comprising pigs, goats, cats, dogs, horses, and camels. They are never interfered with, and roam about at will.

There is a proverb that " a blind pigeon will sometimes find a pea." That may be the case in the country in which the saying-took its rise, but in central Australia it is all that the most wide-awake native can do to find a living for himself, without being compelled, in disgust and chagrin, to confine himself to one locality. Moreover, it is well known that the natives do not, improve under the restrictive system. The half-educated black develops into a scheming systematic loafer, who is not contented with food and clothing, as his less instructed brother is, but begins to want money—as if it would be of any service to him away from some of the haunts of white men.

A person whose duty it is to track up blacks who have committed depredations has many perils to encounter for which allowances are not made in some quarters. Anything that sounds like harsh treatment of the natives is certain to exercise the missionaries. Their intervention in many cases does more harm than good. Yet the missionaries themselves do not appear to have too much confidence in the natives, because they always carry firearms, such as revolvers, if they go away a few miles from their own station. They have been seen in the police camp armed, and they have—at least one has—borrowed cartridges at that place. Doubtless the precaution was necessary. But if in their case it becomes so, some regard should be had to the necessities of those who are obliged to go amongst the wildest of the tribes to bring offenders to justice, and who literally carry their lives in their hands.

At the police camp things go otherwise. The blacks like the place. A short time back a rather comely young blackfellow came there and announced that he wanted a certain young girl for a wife. The young woman was quite willing, and the blackfellow stated that the girl's mother had given her to him. He was directed to attend on the following morning and bring "the lady" with him. They made their appearance soon after breakfast. There were plenty of orange trees at hand, and there was an abundance of quondong stones in the camp ; so there was no scarcity of materials for ornamentation. The pair (the lady attended by some camp lubras) came forward, and with some kind of ceremonial they were married. The bride was decked out with orange blossoms, and a necklace of quondong stones was placed around her throat. The ring used on the occasion was a piece of rush, but it answered the purpose. After treating them to an extempore exhortation, they were declared to be man and wife, and they retired to enjoy their honeymoon in a wurley beneath an old gum

tree at a little distance away. They were seen a month or two afterwards whilst the patrol was on its way to Tempe Downs. The man was busy stuffing some fat and sand into the gut of an emu. What the purpose of this was was not clear. At any rate, the recent bride looked very dejected. Perhaps her spouse had been rather hard upon her, as black husbands always are on their wives. Those who believe that marriages are made in heaven must admit that whilst the marriages under such circumstances cannot be failures, it is the way in which they are fulfilled on earth that weakens the illusion.

Before these pages are brought to a close it is necessary, in view of some statements that have been advanced as the narrative proceeded, to notice a paragraph that appeared in the *Observer* newspaper of February 22nd, 1890. It said that Mr. G. W. Rusden, the historian, had pointed out that few of the aborigines of Australia were cannibals. It must be stated that that gentleman can know very little on that subject. From most of the accounts of the blacks that are extant it is certain that all the tribes on the continent are tainted more or less with this revolting practice. The author knows of many cases where they have eaten children. One of the latest occurred whilst the commission of inquiry into charges brought by the missionaries against the police on the Finke river was making its investigations; that was in July, 1890. A native woman killed her child, cooked, and ate it. This took place not more than 400 yards away from the spot where the magistrates and police were attending the inquiry, which it may here be said ended in nothing. The Lutheran missionaries are aware that the child was killed and eaten, but the police did not know of it at the time it was done. Has Mr. Rusden ever lived amongst the aborigines of Australia? If not, why does he criticise the remarks of Mr. Carl Lumholz on this point? Another person, who enjoys the designation of the Rev. C. L. Marson, who had been in the colony only a few months, wrote to his friends in England stating that "the blacks are a race much oppressed and maligned. I long to see more of them. I have only spoken to seven of them as yet, and I have had one to tea." Few but himself could show where the maligning and oppression came in.

There always will be persons who write on subjects of which they know nothing. The above instances are illustrations of the fact. It is not because many of the settlers live outside of the boundaries of civilisation that they are necessarily cruel to the blacks. Bushmen as a rule treat them very kindly, and the blacks in return fetch wood and water for them, and bring up their horses and camels to the stations, and do other little services, for which they receive food and clothing. With few exceptions, the two races live together in peace and amity.

The author cannot conclude this little work (as other book authors are wont to do) by thanking others for the assistance

given to them in collecting such information as it contains. He is indebted to himself alone. The blacks of whom he made his inquiries thought that he displayed very bad taste and sense in endeavoring to pry into the mysteries of aboriginal customs. The chief reason for collecting and recording the facts contained herein was that the author thought that the Geographical Society was anxious to collect all the information that could be obtained respecting the natives of the soil before they disappeared for ever. They have been described as they were found, lazy, treacherous, and impure, and on the Finke river, where they ought to be better, they are worse than the other tribes which live in the surrounding country.