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THE
ABORIGINES
OF
AUSTRALIA.

BY GIDEON S. LANG, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "LAND AND LABOUR IN AUSTRALIA," ETC.

MELBOURNE:
WILSON & MACKINNON, PRINTERS AND PUBLISHERS,
COLLINS STREET EAST.

1865.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.



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To the Right Honble
Lord Brougham & Vauey
THE
with the author's respectful compliments
ABORIGINES OF AUSTRALIA,

IN THEIR ORIGINAL CONDITION

AND IN

THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE WHITE MEN.

A Lecture,

DELIVERED

BY GIDEON S. LANG, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "LAND AND LABOUR IN AUSTRALIA," ETC.

*At St. George's Hall, Melbourne, July 12, 1865, in aid of the
Leichhardt Search Fund.*

REVISED AND ENLARGED. WITH AN APPENDIX.

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WILSON & MACKINNON, PRINTERS AND PUBLISHERS,

COLLINS STREET EAST.

1865.

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THE

ABORIGINES OF AUSTRALIA.

The following lecture, upon the customs, character, and condition of the Australian Aborigines, was recently delivered in St. George's Hall, by Gideon S. Lang, Esq., in aid of the Leichhardt Search Fund :—

Ladies and Gentlemen,—It is impossible in the short space of a lecture to give anything like a full account of the aborigines, and I shall confine myself to the more salient points of their character and habits, more particularly what I have seen myself in many years of intercourse with them.

There is no people about whom so little is generally known as the aborigines of New Holland, and this in face of the fact that we have been in habitual contact with them for nearly eighty years. The only writer I know who has taken a broad and comprehensive view of them, as a people, is Sir George Grey, the present Governor of New Zealand. He supplies much information that could be obtained from no other writer, of which I have taken full advantage; and except that, to a great extent, he blinded himself to the more brutal traits in their character, his account of the Australian aborigines confirms my own observations in almost every particular.* One of the most remarkable facts connected with them is, that over the entire continent, from Swan River

* Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery in North West and Western Australia, 1841. By George Grey, Esq., Governor of South Australia.

to Sydney, from Melbourne to the Gulf of Carpentaria, they are so exactly similar in appearance, complexion, customs, and language, in their weapons and manner of fighting and hunting, that it would almost appear as if they were all descended from one canoe-load of people, and these again from the same tribe. Although some of the tribal dialects differ so considerably that tribes separated by a great distance, scarcely, if at all, understand each other, the roots are the same in all, and there is more than sufficient general similarity to prove that they all spring from the same original stock, as a few examples will demonstrate :—

ENGLISH.	SWAN RIVER.	KING GEORGE'S SOUND	SOUTH AUSTRALIA.	SYDNEY.
The throw- ing stick.)	Meera	Meer	Meedlah	Woomurrer
Smoke.	Booyor	Poou	Puiyu	Poito
Water.	Kowin	Koin	Kowe	Ko-koin
The hand.	Mara	Murr	Murr ra	Mutturra
The foot.	Tjenna	Tjenna	Tidua	Tinna

Similar inferences are deducible from the almost complete identity of their principal customs. For example, their rules as to the degrees of consanguinity within which marriage is permissible, which are exceedingly intricate, are the same in every tribe.—Of course, there are points of difference between them, but they are only such as might be expected from difference of circumstance and locality. For instance, those who moved southwards towards the region of ice and snow, invented names for such phenomena, and contrived means for sheltering themselves during the winter. Towards the north the native gunyahs are of the slightest description, and invariably open on one side; while on the south they have winter huts, as close and warm as the winter habitation of an Exquimaux. The native inhabitants of the whole continent form, in fact, one people, all governed by the same laws and customs. We can easily understand how such a

system as that of China, founded upon clear and certain laws, administered by one central, despotic government, could prevail throughout a large extent of country ; but it is one of the most remarkable facts in the history of the human family, that among different tribes, scattered over a region 2,000 miles by nearly 1,500 miles in extent, possessing no written literature whatever, and traditions traceable for only a brief period—that among these isolated groups there should prevail a system of internal government almost identical and common to all. This system must have prevailed through countless generations, which it must have taken the original canoe load to spread over and occupy the continent ; yet from Adelaide to the heads of the Maranoa I have found it in operation ; and Sir George Grey mentions that those very rules and customs also exist among the separate native tribes on the northern and western coasts.

THE BLACKS IN THEIR ORIGINAL STATE.

Every tribe occupies its own territory, which is as distinctly defined as any estate in England, and is on no account encroached upon by any stranger, unless upon pain of death ; and I have known death to be inflicted in such a case without the smallest hesitation or compunction. Each tribe is separate and distinct, and, unless in a pressing emergency, intercourse takes place or meetings are held by any two or more tribes, only after preparations and arrangements as careful and punctilious as those between two German Principalities.

This tribal right to exclusive occupation is, however, modified in certain cases for the benefit of the tribes generally.

When certain articles of food, material for weapons, or the like, are produced in any particular locality, there are general laws giving all the tribes authority to resort to the place, without offence either to the tribe permanently located there,

or to those through whose country it is necessary to pass in order to reach it. As an illustration of this, I may mention the Bunna-Bunna pine ranges in Queensland. The Bunna-Bunna pine produces a very large cone, once in every two or three years, and all the tribes, from a great distance around, flock to it in the proper season. There is also the *nurp*, a sort of strawberry, which grows in large quantities over the sand-hills on a run which I took up on the Glenelg. All the neighbouring tribes had the right to go there, and did so in large numbers when the fruit was in season. A hill in the interior of the Sydney district, which produced a very hard stone, peculiarly suitable for the manufacture of stone tomahawks, was the subject of similar regulations; and so was a certain quarry of sandstone, at St. Kilda, near Melbourne, which was peculiarly adapted for grinding down and sharpening the stone tomahawks.

INTERNAL TRIBAL LIFE.

Any casual visitor to a tribe in its native state, seeing their every-day life, under the favourable conditions of fine, warm weather, abundance of food, and no war or blood-feud on hand, would be inclined to believe that the descriptions given by the poets of the freedom and happiness of the savage in his natural condition were something like reality. The blacks are then assembled in considerable numbers, the men hunting or fishing for a few hours each day, the women collecting yams, grubs, or other food in season, and all coming to camp in the evening, to enjoy endless gossip and occasional corrobories; and frequently some skilful story-teller recites in a loud, peculiar tone, either a gallant fight or a hunting adventure, collecting around him the delighted young people of the tribe. But see them in cold, rainy weather, with food scarce. Then they are the very picture of wretchedness and starvation, for nothing short of starvation will induce them to face

the wintry rain; and I need scarcely say that the greatest sufferers are the women and children, who obtain, in such circumstances, only what has been left or rejected by the men. Upon a closer examination of their laws and customs, it is soon perceived, that the existence of the Australian aboriginal is morally as well as physically remarkable for nothing so much as its unmitigated wretchedness.

ABORIGINAL GOVERNMENT AND LAWS.

Instead of enjoying perfect personal freedom, as it would at first appear, they are governed by a code of rules and a set of customs which form one of the most cruel tyrannies that has ever, perhaps, existed on the face of the earth, subjecting not only the will but the property and life of the weak to the dominion of the strong. The whole tendency of the system is to give everything to the strong and old, to the prejudice of the weak and young, and more particularly to the detriment of the women. They have rules by which the best food, the best pieces, the best animals, &c., are prohibited to the women and young men, and reserved for the old. The women are generally appropriated to the old and powerful, some of whom possess from four to seven wives; while wives are altogether denied to young men, unless they have sisters to give in exchange, and are strong and courageous enough to prevent their sisters from being taken without exchange.

The system of government is administered, in each separate tribe, by a council consisting of old and elderly men, no young man being admitted a member unless he has displayed unusual intelligence, courage, or cruelty, and prowess. In addition to the council, there are two sets of men who possess considerable influence and importance. First, there is a class privileged to go from tribe to tribe, to carry messages, to negotiate and arrange for

meetings between the various councils, and to transact much other business of a general character. These men are much honoured by all the tribes. The second class is that of sorcerers or medicine men, who also exercise great influence, and are believed to be endowed with powers of witchcraft. All the business of the tribe, both internal and external, is regulated by this council, and nominally, justice is done. Sir George Grey mentions that, for certain offences against members of the tribe, the culprit is condemned to be speared through the leg, or to stand while a certain number of spears are thrown at him from a certain distance; but this, I believe, is only in theory; or, if applied, it is only to persons of little influence, or to avoid a war with some neighbouring tribe, for which they will sacrifice any one. So far as I have seen and heard from others, a man who is sufficiently courageous and formidable with his weapons, can do anything with impunity. I shall give one out of many instances in proof of this.

Twenty years ago, the firm to which I belonged took up some country to the westward of Portland, in the bend between the Glenelg and the ocean, occupied by one tribe, the members of which had had scarcely any intercourse with white men, many not having even seen them. The most formidable individual of this tribe was a young man of great intelligence, whom we named Bully, and subsequently retained in our employ for several years. In an old native camp, which had evidently not been used or even visited by the blacks for some time, my brother discovered a skeleton only about half covered by a fallen gunyah; and, as the natives are in general very particular about burying their dead, he one day asked Bully the reason of its being left there. Bully replied that the skeleton was that of his father's sister, coolly adding that he had himself killed her. On being asked for an explanation, he told this horrible story without the slightest hesitation. He had been on an

embassy to the natives of Portland Bay district, and on returning to the camp, found that all the tribe, except his old aunt, were out hunting. To his inquiry as to where the others were, she pointed in the direction; and Bully imitated, with some humour, an old woman, suffering from disease of the lungs, coughing, and turning her head towards the direction in which the tribe had gone. Bully raised his waddy and struck her a savage blow on the temple and the side of the head, when she fell back. Then he thrust his spear through her; and he imitated the manner in which the murdered woman drew up her body and bent her head back in her last agony. Having thus disposed of her, Bully sought out and joined the tribe, and continued hunting with them all day. When they returned at night and found the dead body, there was a fearful uproar, as they at first suspected that the murderer was some enemy from a neighbouring tribe; but upon examining the ground all round, they found that there was only one track in and one out, and that track was Bully's. There was a solemn silence immediately, and every one sat down in his own gunyah. Not a word was spoken for three days. On the evening of the third day, Bully leaped up naked, with his weapons in his hands, strode back and forward in front of the encampment, avowed that he was the slayer of the old woman, and challenged the entire tribe to mortal combat. No one accepted the challenge, however, and so the affair terminated.

In the Maranoa district, as I was told by the blacks themselves, when a woman was left a widow with children, it was a common practice with the old and chief men, to inveigle away the children during her absence, and feast upon their bodies. The mother on returning and missing the children, would of course follow the track, and in spite of all precautions, when any were taken, seldom failed to discover what had occurred; but if she ventured to make much noise about the affair, the old villains would tell her

that she had better keep quiet, or else they would eat herself too. This council can, at any time, order any of the warriors of the tribe, to perform any particular duty; and so far as I have been able to ascertain, their orders are invariably obeyed, without the slightest hesitation. In every case where a white man is to be murdered, the favourite blackfellow of the victim is selected to do the deed, as having the best opportunity for doing it without danger; for whether attacking whites or blacks, their main object is to gain as much as possible with the least possible risk, having no idea of what we term fair play.

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS.

Among their laws and customs relating to marriage there are some so utterly brutal and barbarous that they will not bear relating; but there is one worth describing, being for the purpose of preventing the inter-marriage of near relatives, so peculiar and elaborate, that a professor of mathematics might find it difficult to calculate the result. Irrespective of their tribal organisation, all the blacks of the continent are divided into families or clans, of which Sir George Grey gives the names of seven. The Moreton Bay blacks led me to understand that there they were divided into four clans, but seven or eight I consider far more reliable, as it would be impossible to adhere to four, in a moderately sized tribe. All the children take after the clan of their mother, and no man can marry a woman of the same clan, although the parties be born of parents in no way related, according to our ideas. The parents have a certain amount of right as to the betrothal of their children, but unless the father be a very great warrior, she is practically at the disposal of the council, who generally think fit to appropriate the daughter to themselves. So also with brothers, who may exchange sisters with another man of the tribe, or even of a neighbouring tribe, always provided that they have sufficient

courage and strength to defend and enforce the privilege, if she is thought worth taking.

One point that is never taken into consideration by anybody is the feeling of the woman herself. She is regarded merely as a chattel; valued only as a slave to work, or as a beast of burthen, to carry the whole property of the man from place to place. Occasionally there are love passages among the natives, but at immense risk to both the man and the woman. I remember one instance of this kind, which came under my own notice about eighteen years ago. I accompanied Mr. John L. Currie to one of his out-stations, at Mount Elephant, westward of Geelong; and there we observed a young blackfellow and a black girl, who we knew at once must have eloped from their tribe. In about two hours afterwards the white woman belonging to this out-station came into the home station, greatly distressed, and informed us that two blackfellows had nearly murdered the girl, dragging her away, completely covered with blood. The girl had rushed into the hut, apparently distracted with fear, and hid beneath the bed. Two blackfellows (who on inquiry proved to be the fugitive's brother and intended husband) followed furiously and dragged her from the hiding-place. They both continued to beat her until she became insensible, when the intended husband finished by driving the point of his liangle into the crown of her head. While all this was going on, the girl's lover stood motionless about fifty yards away, spears and shield in hand, but made no attempt to rescue her. They then dragged her off, but when the girl recovered she ran off with him again, and they joined a tribe at the Pyrenees, where I heard of them years afterwards.

This was an affair between the individuals of the tribe, in which the council would not interfere, unless the relatives challenged the lover, when a duel would take place according to fixed rule; if stolen from another tribe, it then becomes a public question.

The idea commonly entertained, that the native marriage ceremony mainly consists in violently knocking down the woman of another tribe, and dragging her away, is quite a mistake. Even when a blackfellow steals a wife from a neighbouring tribe, it is generally a case of attachment formed at some peaceable meeting of the tribes, which are pretty frequent. This, however, is always discouraged by the councils of the different tribes, as likely to lead to a war between them; and any instance of the kind immediately becomes the subject of negotiations, to prevent trouble to the tribe, at the expense of the lovers.

If the lover can satisfy the relatives, by giving another woman in exchange, or by any other means, the councils do not interfere; if he fails in so doing, the penalty is a matter of agreement between the councils of the tribes, being generally a certain number of spears or boomerangs thrown at the man by a number of the relatives, one at a time. If he be worsted, the woman reverts to her own tribe, becoming the property of her father or betrothed husband, to dispose of her absolutely as he pleases.

A friend of mine was witness to a meeting of two tribes, on the banks of the Murrumbidgee, for the purpose of settling an affair of this kind. The men of both tribes sat opposite each other, forming an oval, open at both ends; within this the ordeal took place, the girl in dispute being also inside, while the lover stood at one end and his attacker at the other. It happened that the lover had the worst of it, whereupon the man, to whom she had been allotted, who had announced his intention to kill her on the spot, strode up to her with a heavy club in his hand, and stood for some minutes intently watching her; she never moving a muscle. He then swung the club slowly round his head, and with one blow laid her dead at his feet.

In another case, which occurred in the Murray district, the father came and claimed his daughter from the tribe of the

lover, but he positively refused to surrender her on any terms; so it was arranged that the father and five of his family, or clan, should each throw at him a certain number of spears, boomerangs, and waddies. The lovers were a remarkably handsome couple; the girl stood within the ring, as usual, awaiting the result with keen anxiety. During the ordeal, the lover's shield was broken, upon which the man who was then throwing stopped at once, till he was supplied with a fresh one. Man after man then took his turn, till every weapon was thrown, without inflicting any wound. When all was over, the happy lover threw an opossum rug over the bride; she was then his beyond dispute, and immediately adopted by his tribe, without any offence to hers.

PERSONAL RIGHT OF PROPERTY.

Besides the general tribal right of property in the land, it belongs to different members of families of the tribe; it is always jealously watched, and transmitted from generation to generation. During seasons when all the members of the tribe are not congregated together, each family hunts on its own ground. Sir George Grey says (vol. ii., p. 232): "Landed property does not belong to a tribe, or to several families, but to a single male; and the limits of his property are so accurately defined that every native knows those of his own land, and can point out the various objects that mark his boundary." The Rev. Dr. Lang, of Sydney, in a letter quoted (*idem*, p. 235) says: "I have often heard natives tell me, in answer to my own questions on the subject, who were the aboriginal owners of particular tracts of land now held by Europeans; and indeed this idea of property in the soil, *for hunting purposes*, is universal among the aborigines." They have also individual property in various trees. I remember once, while exploring, and suffering severely from the want of food, and particularly the craving from the want of vegetables, our black guide pointed

to a bee passing over us, loaded and evidently in straight flight for the hive. We told him to follow it, which he did, but when he reached the tree, he had scarcely got off his horse, when he re-mounted as if to go on again. We inquired the reason of this, when he pointed to a mark on the tree, evidently made by a stone tomahawk, and said that it belonged to "nother one blackfellow," and that he could not touch it—and at this time he was almost on the point of starvation, as well as ourselves. We could not afford to be so ceremonious under the circumstances however, so we insisted upon his cutting out the honey. It was deposited in the pipes formed by the decay of the centre of a large branch of a box-tree. He very dexterously cut out one side of a branch, the exact breadth of one of the pipes, leaving a good many chips in the honey. We then cut away the part in sections, and sucked the honey, native fashion, leaving behind the comb, chips, and half-smothered bees, which I need scarcely say had no sting. In reference to the grubs found in a certain grass-tree, Sir George Grey says (vol. ii., p. 289): "If two or more men have a right to hunt over the same portion of ground, and one of them breaks off the tops of certain trees, by their laws the grubs in these trees are his property, and no one has a right to touch the tree."

WITCHCRAFT.

One of the chief causes of individual suffering and general war between the tribes is witchcraft. The sorcerers or medicine-men always keep their own tribe in fear and trembling, and are supposed capable of killing by sorcery any person belonging to the neighbouring tribes. In accordance with these notions, whenever the member of a tribe dies, no matter how evident it may be that death has been the result of natural causes, it is at once set down that the defunct was bewitched by the sorcerers of some neighbouring tribe. Sometimes the son or brother decides,

out of hand, where and by whom the death was caused ; but more frequently there are great incantations and ceremonies for the purpose of fixing the crime upon some particular tribe and man ; and, according to rule, when the alleged murderer is thus magically discovered, the relations of the deceased should forthwith go and kill him. But as every one of the relatives, down to the smallest children, are liable to a retributive death, and every successive death requires another, which would lead to endless blood-feuds and incessant wars between the tribes and the clans as well, this proceeding is seldom put in practice. When it is so, all the diplomacy and cunning of the council and ambassadors is brought to bear for the purpose of arranging matters with the offended tribe ; and the avenger must be very influential indeed, if he or even the sorcerer is not made to secure peace by undergoing the ordeal.

It entirely depends upon the character and firmness of the survivors whether vengeance is carried into execution or not, but whether or no, the desire for it is deep and deadly, and all teachings of Christianity have failed to eradicate it.

About eighteen years ago, when upon an overland journey, I remained for some time at Mr. Templar's station, Nanima, near Wellington, in New South Wales, where there had been for many years, and until some three years preceding my visit, a party of Moravian missionaries, who had been very successful in civilizing the blacks. They had taken charge of the natives, almost from infancy, and trained them up apparently free from the vices and barbarities of the tribes. While at Nanima, I constantly saw one of these blacks, named Jemmy, a remarkably fine man, about twenty-eight years of age, who was the "model Christian" of the missionaries, and who had been over and over again described in their reports as a living proof that, taken in infancy, the natives were as capable of being truly Christianized as a people who had had eighteen centuries of cultivation. I

confess that I strongly doubted, but still there was no disputing the apparent facts. Jemmy was not only familiar with the Bible, which he could read remarkably well, but he was even better acquainted with the more abstruse tenets of Christianity; and, so far as the whites could see, his behaviour was in accordance with his religious acquirements. One Sunday morning, I walked down to the blackfellows' camp, to have a talk with Jemmy, as usual. I found him sitting in his gunyah, overlooking the valley of the Macquarrie, whose waters glanced brightly in the sunshine of the delicious spring morning. He was sitting in a state of nudity, excepting his waist-cloth, very earnestly reading the Bible, which indeed was his constant practice; and I could see that he was perusing the Sermon on the Mount. I seated myself, and waited till he concluded the chapter, when he laid down the Bible, folded his hands, and sat with his eyes fixed abstractedly on his fire. I bade him "Good morning," which he acknowledged, without looking up. I then said, "Jemmy, what is the meaning of your spears being stuck in a circle round you?" He looked me steadily in the eyes, and said, solemnly and with suppressed fierceness, "Mother's dead!" I said that I was very sorry to hear it, "But what had her death to do with the spears being stuck around so?" "Bogan blackfellow killed her!" was the fierce and gloomy reply. "Killed by a Bogan black!" I exclaimed; "Why, your mother has been dying for a fortnight, and Dr. Curtis did not expect her to outlive last night, which you know as well as I do." His only reply was a dogged repetition of the words, "A Bogan blackfellow killed her!" I appealed to him as a Christian—to the Sermon on the Mount, that he had just been reading; but he absolutely refused to promise that he would not avenge his mother's death. In the afternoon of that day, we were startled by a yell which can never be mistaken by any person who has once heard the wild war-whoop of

the blacks when in battle array. On rushing out, we saw all the blackfellows of the neighbourhood formed into a line, and following Jemmy in an imaginary attack upon an enemy. Jemmy himself disappeared that evening. On the following Wednesday morning, I found him sitting complacently in his gunyah, plaiting a rope of human hair, which I at once knew to be that of his victim. Neither of us spoke; I stood for some time watching him as he worked with a look of mocking defiance of the anger he knew I felt. I pointed to a hole in the middle of his fire and said, "Jemmy, the proper place for your Bible is there;" he looked up with his eyes flashing as I turned away, and never saw him again. I afterwards learned that he had gone to the district of the Bogan tribe, where the first black he met happened to be an old friend and companion of his own. This man had just made the first cut in the bark of a tree, which he was about to climb for an opossum; but on hearing footsteps, he leaped down and faced round, as all blacks do, and whites also when blacks are in question. Seeing that it was only Jemmy, however, he resumed his occupation, but had no sooner set to work, than Jemmy sent a spear through his back, and nailed him to the tree.

I never could exactly learn how or on what account a man is recognised as a wizard. No doubt the more cunning and clever use their ability to impose upon their tribe, but I rather incline to believe that they will attribute supernatural power to both man and beast, without any attempt at assumption on their part. The Glenelg tribe I am satisfied attributed supernatural power to our overseer, now a large proprietor, and to one of the pack of kangaroo dogs which always followed him, and procured them fabulous supplies of kangaroo; he could throw the spear and do every thing they did, and I do not think they would have been the least surprised if he had ridden along the top of a cloud with the dogs behind him. On one occasion;

when he had been long absent, I was watching a horseman approaching at some distance, and turned to ask them who it was, but the instant I saw their faces my question was unnecessary, as for no man but him could they have such awe and fear as were painted on their faces ; and yet he was kind to them. Often have I seen Ranger, a cross between a greyhound and mastiff, sitting solemnly with his nose stuck up with sulky dignity, while half-a-dozen blacks sat round addressing him as if he had their fate and fortune at his disposal. The most remarkable instance, however, I have heard of was that of a child of six years old, taken to the Lower Murray about twenty years ago. She was very fair and blue-eyed, with long bright flaxen hair, which struck the blacks very much ; they came far and near to see her, all touching and examining her hair, and though the father told them she was his daughter they had evidently doubts about her being human ; they did whatever she told them, and the old blacks solemnly talked to her and consulted her. On one occasion, when she told one of a number who were standing about to bring some fish and ducks, there was some hesitation, when she addressed them with great warmth, stamping her little foot and waving them away with her hand ; every one of them went then and brought enough game to smother the household. On one occasion her father saw a more than usually earnest consultation held under a tree on the bank of the river. The Murray blacks, be it said, are the finest I have seen ; out of a party of twenty-two whom I measured, seven were over six feet, two of them six feet two, all splendidly made and powerful, one of them having carried to an out-station a two hundred pound bag of flower on his head, two miles without resting. About a dozen of them, nearly all grizzled and old men, squatted round the child, sitting bolt upright after their fashion, like so many ebony

Herculi, carrying on a solemn discussion, all addressing themselves to her. They at last broke up, when she turned towards the hut, but one of the blacks turned round and addressed her earnestly, holding up his hand as if in warning. The father, who had been watching them from the hut without being seen, asked what the discussion was about, and what Nadgeree had said to her as she left; she refused to tell him, but he insisted, and threatened to punish her; when she told him the subject was the late murder of Mr. Beveridge, and Nadgeree had warned her not to tell him. The information thus obtained was the first clue to the arrest and execution of the murderers.

INTELLECTUAL CAPACITY.

The intelligence of the Australian aborigines is generally regarded as of the lowest character, but I have had reason to form a very different opinion. No one, seeing them merely as idle wandering vagabonds among the white men, can judge as to what they are in their natural state. In their subtlety as diplomatists, and their skill and activity in war and the chase, I consider them quite equal to the American Indians. The great weir for catching fish, on the Upper Darling, called Breewarner, is, both for conception and execution, one of the most extraordinary works recorded of any savage tribe, and, independent of another described by Morrill, the shipwrecked mariner, who passed seventeen years among them, is quite sufficient to prove their capacity to construct works on a large scale and requiring combined action. This weir Breewarner is about 65 miles above the Township of Bourke. It is built at a rocky part of the river, from 80 to 100 yards in width, and extends about 100 yards of the river course. It forms one immense labyrinth of stone walls about three or four feet high, forming circles from two to four feet in diameter, some opening into each other, forming

very crooked but continuous passages, others having one entrance only. In floods as much as 20 feet of water sweeps over them, and carries away the tops of the walls; the lower parts of the walls, however, are so solidly and skilfully built with large heavy stones, which must have been brought from a considerable distance and with great combined labour, that they have stood every flood from time immemorial. Every summer this labyrinth is repaired, and the fish in going up or down the river enter it, get confused in its mazes and are caught by the blacks by hand in immense quantities. Everything they have to do they do in the very best manner; and I have observed that for every contingency that arises they have some simple remedy. I remember on one occasion, while exploring with a small party, coming to a waterhole nearly dried up, yet out of which it was indispensable to supply ourselves and the horses that evening and the next morning, as we had a long journey before us, without a chance of water. Our horses were as thirsty as ourselves, and would not feed without drinking; while, on the other hand, if allowed to drink, they would stir up the mud, rendering the water unfit for our own use. While puzzling ourselves as to how we should manage, having only a quart pot each, our two black boys were apparently amusing themselves in the bed of the creek, but, before many minutes, we found that they had solved our difficulty in a fashion of their own. They had first sunk a hole in the mud, close to the edge of the water, then passed a reed from the new hole to the waterhole, striking the water at a point below the scum on the top and above the sediment at the bottom. By this means, they drew off an ample supply of water for ourselves, and then let the horses drink. And so I have always found the natives ready with some peculiar plan for whatever emergency might arise. White men generally set them down as stupid, because they cannot readily understand what is said in English;

but a blackfellow, when attempting to hold a conversation in English, seems a very different being from what he is while engaged in his own ordinary pursuits. A notable illustration of this was old Squeers, at the Glenelg, whom we all regarded as the most stupid savage of our acquaintance.

Our overseer's wife fell ill of fever ; her starving infant was crying incessantly, and " Old Squeers " was selected to take charge of it. There he was, acting as nurse most patiently for several weeks ; but one morning, we found that the entire tribe, Squeers and all, had vanished. We subsequently learned, that Squeers could stand Tommy, the infant, no longer, so he had bolted, and taken the whole tribe with him. On a subsequent occasion, I saw him standing upon a height directing the young men on the lake below, by a skilful imitation of the cries of various birds, how to trap wild fowl among the reeds, where the young men could not see them. He was then in a state of unusual animation, so that I was induced to make inquiries, and ascertained that both as a fighter or warrior and hunter, he was regarded as a leading man among his own people.

The blackfellows have a considerable knowledge of astronomy. One native, who accompanied me on an exploring expedition in the Moreton Bay district, acting as guide, divided the heavens into constellations almost identical with those of our own astronomers, and named them after various animals. He mentioned one constellation, which was not then in sight, pointing correctly to the angle of its position below the horizon. But, perhaps, the highest form of their intelligence is exhibited in their poetry and corroborees, regularly composed operas, accompanied by characteristic music ; also in their names, not only of individuals, but sometimes of places, the latter being also very descriptive. I knew one black girl named Morigona, the meaning of which is " clear bubbling spring," she having been born while her mother was camped at a fine clear spring. There is " Yarra

Yarra," the river at Melbourne, literally "running running," or for ever running. "Yarralumla (erroneously spelt Yarrowlumla), the name of a stream on Limestone Plains, and of the property of the Hon. T. A. Murray, "running water." The following names were obtained by Mr. John Currie, from a very intelligent black at Queenscliff, a few years ago, and are very expressive :—

Ballarat, Balladurk, Ballarine (corrupted Bellerine), were favourite and extensive camping places, Balla signifying elbow, or the attitude of reclining on the elbow.

Boona-tall-ung, Point Nepean, signifies "kangaroo" hide, descriptive of the angular shape of the point, like a stretched hide.

Woorang-alook, Swan Island, describes the rushing sound of the surf through the narrow opening between the Island and mainland.

Euro-Yoroke, St. Kilda, the name is given from the sandstone found there, which they used to fashion and sharpen their stone tomahawks.

Koort-boork-boork, Williamstown, signifies "clumps of sheoak," the country being formerly dotted with them.

Yowang, Station Peak, signifies "big hill."

Bunning-yowang, corrupted Bunninyong, "big hill like a knee," "bunning" signifying knee. The hill, seen from certain directions, resembles a man lying on his back with his knee drawn up.

Warrenyeep, corrupted Warraneep, "emu feathers," from the peculiar appearance given to the hill by the ferns and foliage upon it.

Burrumbeet (Lake), "muddy water."

In hunting, the blackfellows will walk up to a kangaroo or an emu, in an open plain, in broad daylight, and spear it, though the animal may be watching them suspiciously all the time. The trick of the American Indians of imitating logs, I have seen them do with such exactness, as completely to deceive me, when my very life depended upon my watchfulness. While exploring with one man and a black-fellow during a most virulent black war, we were sleeping on a plain, when I was disturbed, and sat up to look round.

It was clear moonlight and I imagined I saw something move in a small clump of box, about 100 yards away. After hesitating as to whether it was the shadow of the branches moved by a gentle breeze, I got up and walked close up to the clump with my carbine cocked in the hollow of my arm, looking carefully round. I remarked that there were more logs than usual for a dozen growing trees, but was satisfied I had only seen shadows, and turned away. Next morning the black said there had been a hunting party looking at us during the night, so I took him to the clump where there were only two black stumps, and he laughed heartily as he examined the ground and showed how each had placed himself.

On another occasion when I had left Surat with Dick Walker,* Comr. Mitchell sent a blackfellow after us with a letter, warning us that a strong party were out to cut us off. When saddling at mid-day, in open ground of course, we placed the horses so that they should look opposite ways and give warning, as they by their ears at once do, while each of us saw round behind the other, the blackboy keeping a look out all round. While stretching over, fixing a strap, a heavy hand was laid on my shoulder, and on turning my head there stood a strange black grinning beside

* I would mention that the "Walker" so often mentioned is not Mr. Fred. Walker, the enterprising explorer, but Dick Walker, an old Border trooper, whom I engaged as my assistant in exploring, in the Maranoa district, and who possessed all the coolness, courage, and bushcraft of Cooper's Leatherstocking. He was a man of great intelligence, and of education besides, having been an officer in the Bombay Marine, but had to resign on account of an ebullition of temper. He then enlisted in the 5th Dragoons, and was transported for cutting down his sergeant in the streets of Bradford; but his police history in the colony showed no other offence, nor even breach of discipline, recorded against him. He had for years moved out as the frontier extended, so that he had very great experience with wild blacks, and during our companionship of four months which we spent almost entirely by ourselves in the bush, encountering much danger and hardship together, he related many a wild adventure.

me. He was then safe, as his warning me of his presence without striking showed he had no hostile intention, but as they creep upon a white man just in that manner when about to murder him, if I had seen him, as he crept up, I would instantly have fired, as he knew well; he might have saved himself had he instantly stood up and showed himself unarmed by stretching his arms straight out and called "bale coola," not angry or hostile; but it was a very ticklish experiment, even with tried men like us; he ran the risk to get information from our guide, which he did, as we would not condescend to show alarm by preventing him, but it very nearly cost us our lives.

Every native knows every other native with whom he has ever come in contact, by the mark of his foot, as surely and conclusively as the detective officer knows every thief of his acquaintance by his face. One day, while travelling in the Moreton Bay district, I pointed to a blackfellow's track, on a sandy road, and asked our blackfellow could he tell whose it was. He glanced at it, without stopping his horse, and at once answered, "Whitefellow call him Tiger!" We had reason to know subsequently, that it really was Tiger, a member of a different tribe, and whom our black had not previously seen for two years. On another occasion, passing through a country wholly unknown to us or our blackfellow, we came upon a large camp, apparently abandoned some days before; and we told the blackfellow to find out what tribe had been there. After examining the ground carefully he mentioned the name of the tribe, saying that he knew three of them who had visited his tribe on the Balonne some considerable time previously.

It is notable that everywhere they appear to have discovered the properties of every article fit for food within their reach, and have the power of distinguishing between the useful and detrimental portions of each. As an instance, I may mention the bi-yu, the name given to the pulp of a nut

borne by a species of palm tree, which, in its natural state, is a very violent emetic and cathartic. Sir George Grey tells us that, "The natives consider it as a rank poison; they, however, are acquainted with a very artificial method of preparing it, by which it is completely deprived of its noxious qualities, and then becomes an agreeable and nutritious article of food. Europeans who are not acquainted with this mode of preparing the nut, the stones of which they find lying about the fireplaces of the natives, are frequently tempted to eat it in its natural state, but they invariably pay a severe penalty for the mistake. The native women collect the nuts from the palm in the month of March, and having placed them in some shallow pool of water they leave them to soak for several days. When they have ascertained that the *bi-yu* has been immersed in water for a sufficient time, they dig, in a dry sandy place, holes which they call *mor-dah*; these holes are about the depth that a person's arm can reach and one foot in diameter, they line them with rushes, and fill them up with the nuts, over which they sprinkle a little sand and cover the holes nicely over with the tops of the grass-tree; in about a fortnight the pulp which encases the nut becomes quite dry and it is then fit to eat, but if eaten before that it produces the effects already described. The natives eat this pulp both raw and roasted; in the latter state they taste quite as well as a chesnut. The process which these nuts undergo in the hands of the natives has no effect upon the kernel, which still acts both as a strong emetic and cathartic. I have taken some trouble to ascertain if any traditional notion exists among the natives which would in any way account for their having first obtained a knowledge of the means by which they could render the deleterious pulp of the *zamia* nut a useful article of food, but in this, as in all other similar instances, they are very unwilling to confess their ignorance of a thing, and, rather than do so, will often invent a

tradition. Hence many intelligent persons have raised most absurd theories and have committed lamentable errors.

Their ingenuity in making nets, weapons, and indeed every article they require in peace or war, seems to be a universal instinct; but perhaps the best illustration of this faculty is the manner in which their huts are constructed on the southern coast. The huts are generally about nine feet in diameter, five feet high, and in shape resembling the half of an orange. They are built, in the first place, of sticks, not pliable withes, but dry stiff branches—the lower row set into the ground, and the rest interlaced above, in the manner of a bird's nest. Upon this they place other branches of trees, reeds, or long grass; over this again they place grass, turf, and above all sand if they have it, the top being rendered round and smooth like the Esquimaux winter hut. There is one low opening or door at one side of the hut, and in this opening is placed the fire. The largest of these huts I ever saw was on the Koorong, an arm of the sea behind the coast sandhills, between Adelaide and Portland; it was fourteen feet in diameter and quite eight feet in height inside, and rose perpendicularly at the sides, and could have accommodated an unusually large number of people. We supposed it to have been erected for the purpose of holding meetings of the council; though evidently unoccupied for some considerable time, it was in thorough repair. Every native can build one of these huts with the greatest ease, but I never knew a white man who could do so. One of our overseers, a very ingenious man, singularly skilful in overcoming mechanical difficulties, I saw over and over again attempt the construction of a hut, native fashion, under the direction of the blacks, and with a blackfellow beside him building up another, as an example; but he never got his edifice to stand the weight of the turf, and it generally fell before he had the framework completed, of course to the intense amusement of the natives.

One day I watched some black children, four or five years old, at play. They were erecting a baby hut, which was about eighteen inches in diameter and one foot in height. In making it, they imitated exactly the practice of their elders—first setting the pieces of hard, unbendable sticks, then the interlacing of the top row, the grass, turf, sand, until they completed a perfect imitation of a winter hut. I then stepped forward, placed my foot upon the top, raised myself steadily till my whole weight was upon it; but it did not swerve or sink half an inch.

EAGLEHAWK.

Among the clever natives I have heard of, the man of most versatile talent was a blackfellow in the Maranoa district. I never met this man, but heard rather more than enough about him, as he made several attempts to cut off Walker and myself. He was not only a great orator, but a diplomatist and a general, and he composed and conducted one of the best corroborees I ever heard of. He also introduced a system of tactics, by which the whites were defeated upon several occasions. He formed the blacks into a deep line, always solid in the centre; and extended the flanks or skirmishers on each side in such a manner that the white horsemen could not see all the spears flying, thus forcing them back. The moment he saw the horsemen rally for the purpose of breaking the line, the flanks closed in and strengthened the centre. Old Billy, as the whites called him—Eaglehawk, I understood was the meaning of his native name—had sufficient influence and ability to induce five entire tribes to combine and attempt the expulsion of the whites from the country; and it was only after great destruction of white men, and blacks, and many stations being abandoned, that the whites managed to hold their own. During an interval of peace the tribes gathered together near Surat, and then was performed Eaglehawk's great corroboree,

which was described to me by the commissioner and others who were present.

A GRAND CORROBOREE.

There were over 500 natives in the assemblage. The stage consisted of an open glade (which I afterwards visited), surrounded by a belt of rather thick timber, about 200 yards in length and breadth, narrowing towards the south end, across which sat the orchestra, consisting of nearly a hundred women, led by Eaglehawk himself. The leader chaunted a description of the scenes as they passed, accompanied by the women, their voices continuously repeating what seemed to be the same words, while they beat time by striking with a stick a quantity of earth, tightly rolled up in a piece of cloth or opossum rug. The moon shone brightly, lighting up the stage and the tops of the trees, but casting a deep shadow below. This shadow, however, was again relieved by several large fires on each side of the stage, leaving a clear view to Eaglehawk and the orchestra, behind whom stood the spectators, the whites being in the centre. The first act of the corroboree was the representation of a herd of cattle, feeding out of the forest and camping on the plain, the black performers being painted accordingly. The imitation was most skilful, the action and attitude of every individual member of the entire herd being ludicrously exact. Some lay down and chewed the cud, others stood scratching themselves with hind feet or horns, licking themselves or their calves; several rubbing their heads against each other in bucolic friendliness. This having lasted for some time, scene the second commenced. A party of blacks was seen creeping towards the cattle, taking all the usual precautions, such as keeping to windward, in order to prevent the herd from being alarmed. They got up close to the cattle at last, and speared two head, to the intense delight of the black spectators, who applauded rapturously. The hunters next went through the

various operations of skinning, cutting up, and carrying away the pieces, the whole process being carried out with the most minute exactness. Scene the third commenced with the sound of horses galloping through the timber, followed by the appearance of a party of whites on horseback, remarkably well got up. The face was painted whity-brown, with an imitation of the cabbage-tree hat; the bodies were painted, some blue and others red, to represent the shirts: below the waist was a resemblance of the moleskin trousers, the legs being covered with reeds, tied all round, to imitate the hide leggings worn in that district as a protection against the brigalow scrub. These manufactured whites at once wheeled to the right, fired, and drove the blacks before them! the latter soon rallied, however, and a desperate fight ensued, the blacks extending their flanks and driving back the whites. The fictitious white men bit the cartridges, put on the caps, and went through all the forms of loading, firing, wheeling their horses, assisting each other, &c., with an exactness which proved personal observation. The native spectators groaned whenever a blackfellow fell, but cheered lustily when a white bit the dust; and at length, after the ground had been fought over and over again, the whites were ignominiously driven from the field, amidst the frantic delight of the natives, while Eaglehawk worked himself into such a violent state of excitement that at one time the play seemed likely to terminate in a real and deadly fight.

RELIGION OF THE ABORIGINES.

It has been much disputed whether the aborigines, in their natural state, have any idea of a Supreme Being or a future existence. My belief is, that they have not. All their religion, if religion it may be called, consists of a fear of evil spirits, and a belief in witchcraft. The notion that, after death, they come back whitefellows, is obviously derived

from the whites themselves, as they could have no such idea before they knew that such beings as white men existed. The missionaries have fallen into error through their defective knowledge of the native language, and still more from the habitual cunning of the blacks, who have no idea of the truth for truth's sake, and who, if they expect to gain by it, will find out what their questioner wishes to be told, and answer accordingly. My brother, Mr. William Lang, and I, so soon as we had acquired sufficient knowledge of the dialect of the Glénelg blacks, carefully examined Bully, whom I have already mentioned, as, being a man of great intelligence and influence, he was certain to have been initiated into their mysteries, if they had any. We had much difficulty, at first, in making Bully understand that we wished to know whether he would be able to walk about without a body after his body was dead. When he understood the question, he assented at once, saying, "Oh, yes; we walk all about." "Well," I said, "if so, how is it that we do not see any of the dead blacks walking about?" "Oh," he replied, "they all go across the rummut," pointing to the heavy surf of the Southern Ocean, which, in their idea, is the end of the world. I asked, "What could he do there, where there was no land? How could he hunt—he could not catch the sea-birds or fish?" He seemed puzzled at this, but after some hesitation he said, "Oh, but we come back again!" This was a close approach to the theory of coming back white men, and we knew that if Bully got the slightest hint, he would deliberately adopt this doctrine. "What do the black spirits live upon, when they come back?" queried my brother. "Oh, beef and mutton," was the confident response of Bully. "Ah, you villain," I said; "and what did the spirits live upon before the white men came?" Here, finding that he was caught, Bully broke out into a hearty laugh, and, in his own peculiar way, declared that walking about without legs or bodies was all nonsense, that when the blackfellows died

there was an end of them, the same as with dogs and kangaroos. He then admitted that he had never heard anything about what we called a Supreme Being or a future state, mentioned among the tribes. But, had he said, "kangaroo and 'possum," instead of "beef and mutton," as the food of the black spirits, we should have had no means of detecting the falsehood of his statement any more than others. A gentleman of great experience also told me, that he had tried long and patiently to make a very intelligent docile black understand his existence without a body, but the black never could keep his countenance and generally made an excuse to get away. One day the teacher watched and found that he went to have a hearty fit of laughter at the absurdity of the idea of a man living and going about without arms, legs, or mouth to eat; for a long time he could not believe that the gentleman was serious, and when he did realize it, the more serious the teacher was the more ludicrous the whole affair appeared to the black.

THE DEAD.

They have certainly some idea of the dead being near them for some time after their decease, but for a short period only. Of eternity they have no conception whatever. They never mention those who have died out from among themselves, but do not appear as if they believed that those long dead continue to exist. They have peculiar chaunts which they sing in honour of the recently dead, generally just before daybreak, and some of these are very touching. I was told an instance of this by a gentleman who formed one of a party who went in pursuit of a tribe among whom were the murderers of two shepherds. They reached the black camp before dawn, and while waiting for daybreak one of the natives rose, lit a fire, and commenced to sing one of these chaunts for the dead. Almost immediately afterwards, one fire was lit, and one voice joined after another, until a

line of fires gleamed down along the edge of the scrub, and the whole tribe joined in the melancholy dirge. The scene was so strange and impressive that several of the party spoke of abandoning the attack. A hurried consultation took place, during which one of the party urged that "whether the blacks sang at daybreak or not, the shepherds had not the less been murdered." But imagination carried the day against matter of fact, and the party crept back to their horses and gave up the attack.

NATURAL DISPOSITION, MALE AND FEMALE.

After a long and careful study of the character of the aborigines, I cannot describe it as anything more or less than that of blood-thirsty savages; not more bloodthirsty, however, than the New Zealanders and Southern Islanders, before they were civilized. So far as the men are concerned, at all events, I cannot remember any occasion on which they displayed the faintest spark of gratitude or generosity. In short, their disposition is one of unmitigated selfishness. Some years ago, I was riding towards Nanima, Wellington, with Mr. Merson Templar, and as we drew near the place he told me an incident which occurred there just before he left, about four months previously. The tribe belonging to the district was camped on a high bank of the river, opposite to the height on which Mr. Templar's dwelling was situated; and at this time they had just received a friendly visit from some young men belonging to a neighbouring tribe. One day Mr. Templar and his brother were alarmed by a tremendous uproar in the native camp; and on going outside the house, they saw two blacks rushing down the bank, fiercely pursued by several others, brandishing their weapons. Being both courageous and generous men, Mr. Templar and his brother rushed down, met the fugitives, and covered them with their bodies, thereby saving the blackfellows' lives

at great risk to their own. I asked Mr. Templar whether he expected these men to be grateful. He replied that he certainly did ; adding that the man he had himself saved was then on the station. I offered to bet that the fellow would not even take notice of him. On reaching the station, we found a number of blacks lying asleep in the sun, and among them the man of whom we had been speaking. Mr. Templar pointed him out, and then called to him. The blackfellow opened his eyes, stared, and then coolly resumed his siesta. "It is evident that he does not recognise me," observed my rather mortified friend. Again he aroused the man, and asked him whether he remembered how he had been saved from such a fearful danger. The blackfellow looked up sleepily, drawled out "Yes," and again closing his eyes, was asleep in another minute. Of course Mr. Templar was disgusted with this striking exhibition of native gratitude. But so it has ever been, according to my experience of the men. With the women, however, it is very different. White men are continually being saved from intended massacre, more particularly if there is a white woman on the station, through the warnings given by the native women, always at great danger to themselves, and on one occasion within my own knowledge a woman was punished by death.

They will also make every effort in their power to save other blacks from slaughter, of which a notable instance was on the occasion above mentioned, when the Messrs. Templar saved two. Three were unable to get away, and were saved by the women, who pushed them down and threw themselves over them in a heap. The men dragged them off, beating them with their waddies and tomahawks till they were covered with blood, but as fast as they were dragged off they returned, until the ferocity of the men was allayed.

It is a remarkable fact that I never saw, and only once

heard of a native child being corrected by its parents or other blacks, and as a consequence they grow up savagely impatient of any approach to it. Walker told me one case where a native woman indeed did correct her child, a boy about five years old, but the young savage almost immediately stole his father's tomahawk, went stealthily behind his mother, and brained his infant sister. Again, a lady who had adopted a native boy, found it necessary one day to chastise him for some offence, but in an instant he seized her arm with both hands, and bit a piece of flesh clean out. On another occasion I saw a young black boy strike his mother savagely; I asked her why she did not correct him? She said meekly that by-and-by he would be a man. Having no such respect for his future manhood, I gave him a box on the ear, but had to threaten him with my pistols in order to save myself from being speared on the spot. Whether on war or hunting parties, a few boys always accompany the party, and are more cruel than the men themselves. It is seldom a white man is murdered without boys' spears being found in him. I was told by a gentleman, that on one occasion, in an encounter, he saw a fine powerful black on the ground with his leg broken by a ball, defending himself against two boys belonging to their black allies, who were dancing round him like two young demons, trying to beat his brains out. They killed him at last.

One solitary instance I must give of what may have been gratitude, though if it were so the women, I believe, deserve the credit, the men getting the benefit of the doubt. We took up a run at Lake Mundy, on the Adelaide boundary, in 1846, where my brother Dr. Thomas Lang resided. There was much sickness among the blacks, and they were constantly there receiving medical attendance. There was sheep-stealing in whole flocks, and much pursuing and some fighting all round, in which the overseer shared, but not a sheep nor a man on the station was ever molested.

PART II.

RELATIONS WITH THE WHITES.

The blacks do not at first realise the effect of the white man's settlement among them. They seem to be rather pleased at it than otherwise; and while matters go on smoothly, the natives certainly gain by the arrival of the settlers—at all events, so far as the sheep are concerned—they not at all interfering with their hunting. It must be remembered that neither the kangaroo nor the emu enter largely into the diet of the ordinary blacks. They rarely catch either, and when they do the prize is appropriated by the old men. Opossums and fish are the staple of life to the aboriginal masses. Personal safety is decidedly increased by the arrival of the settlers. Even the worst of the whites will not allow cannibalism nor child murder (both of which are universal), nor the strong to murder the weak, if they can prevent it; and they will always defend their own blacks. The iron tomahawk alone, in place of the stone one, makes as great a difference to them as the high ration and full wage of a labourer here are to the "shilling a day and find themselves" of the same class at home. With the stone tomahawk it was a long tedious business—a day's work—to climb and pound into a gum-street to get a 'possum, so that the man got only what served himself, with the bare bones for wife and children; and the skins being so few, it took such a length of time to accumulate sufficient to make a rug that they did without them altogether, and their suffering from cold was very great. I once came upon a large tribe, each carrying two pieces of bark smouldering at one end, which

they kept skimming over their bodies, just keeping clear of the skin, and occasionally making a fire to keep life heat in them. But, with the iron tomahawk, they will cut out a 'possum in from five to twenty minutes, and do so in numbers sufficient for all. With the stone tomahawk they never cut bark for a gunyah till the rain is coming without a chance of clearing, so that they and the ground also were wet before they provided cover. With the iron tomahawk bark is so easily cut, that they will put up a bark gunyah even for one night. The iron tomahawk, in fact, is house, clothing, and food for them; and is so valuable I am certain that if pioneer squatters did what I always did, distributed them liberally, many a splitter would have been saved from being murdered for the sake of his wedges.

WHY DO THEY DIE?

It may be asked, how is that, if the aborigines derive such substantial advantage from intercourse with white men, they always die out and disappear after the arrival of the whites? It is generally supposed to be from the diseases and drinking habits contracted from those who ought to be only the pioneers of civilization; and no doubt both of these influences help to hasten the end. In point of fact, however, they suffer from no disease except small pox, that did not prevail among them previous to the coming of the white men; and as for drink, they die almost as rapidly whether they become addicted to it or not. The real cause of their gradual extinction is—pulmonary disease—which, although but too destructive before, has been fearfully aggravated by the introduction of the European blanket and clothing, which although, of course, intended for their comfort, their own thoughtless mismanagement renders fatally destructive. While constantly exposed to the weather, in their natural state, their skin and nervous system were in

a great measure adapted to it ; but after they got European clothing and blankets, they become about as unfit to bear exposure to cold as the white men themselves. But they continued as careless as ever, frequently walking about naked, and at night sleeping uncovered. The natural result of recklessness like this is, that they catch cold, and die. Nearly all the squatters, at some time or other, adopt black boys, keeping them as "tigers" or horse-breakers ; and on cattle stations there are generally several, who are particularly valuable as stockmen. But in spite of all the care that can be taken of them, they almost invariably die before twenty years of age. While mere boys, they do very well, and nothing seems the matter ; but when they become young men, and wish to "shew off" before the girls of the tribe they belong to, they visit the camps, when they are on or in the vicinity of the station, wish to prove that they are as good blacks as ever, strip off their clothes, native fashion, and as a matter of course catch cold and die.

WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF FRONTIER WARS ?

That question I shall endeavour to answer.

As nearly two-thirds of the Australian continent is still to be occupied, and that I believe the most numerously peopled by the blacks, it is a matter of grave importance, and a solemn duty for both the Government and the frontier squatters to adopt some system calculated to diminish, if not altogether prevent, those fearful petty wars, resulting in such destruction of property and life.

The causes are threefold :

First. That no Colonial Government has ever recognised any policy, authority, or property, tribal or personal, among the aborigines.

Second. They have been deprived of their hunting grounds without any provision being made for them, the

country having been occupied by the white settlers with as utter a disregard of their interests, rights, and even subsistence, as if they had been wild dogs or kangaroos.

Third. From difficulties arising between the blacks and the pioneer squatters and their men.

The squatters and the blacks have been left to settle matters between themselves, and to "shake down" into peaceful joint occupation without any regulation or much interference on the part of the Government; and that very rough process and its results I shall now describe, previous to suggesting a remedy. Let me premise, however, by clearing away some popular errors.

In the first place, the idea is very generally entertained that, when the whites take up new country among the blacks, the squatters, as a body, commence the destruction of the natives as a matter of course, and without hesitation. Nothing could be more erroneous. It is of the most vital consequence to the pioneer squatter to keep on good terms with the blacks. He thereby secures all the bark required for his first rough huts and woolshed, besides valuable assistance for lambing and shearing. On the other hand, should he excite their enmity, he not only forfeits these advantages, but incurs such a heavy expenditure as would and has ruined many. He must then have two shepherds for each flock, and two hut keepers for each hut, all at exorbitant wages; and as the danger is an excuse for keeping close to the hut, the sheep are starved, and consequently there is a miserable lambing, and a very poor clip.

In the second place, it is not the interference of the white men with their women; they don't value their women enough for that. *Ut antea animadverti senioribus pertinent mulieres permultæ, junioribus, vel perpaucæ, vel nullæ, connubium profecto valde est liberum. Conjuges, puellæ, puellulæ cum adolescentibus venantur. Pretium corporis*

pæne nullius est. Vendunt se vel columbæ, vel canis, vel piscis pretio. Unius assis est Australiensis Venus. Inter Anglos et Aborigines nihil distat. Mulierum causâ, nobis conscientibus, trucidati sunt quidam, non castitalis causâ verum obliomissi. Quod si inter cæteras omnes hujusmodi gentes inter Hyperboreas, in Nova Zealandia, &c., habitantes in quæsi veris, idem hoc compertum invenies. Questio est oboli. Probatum est.

In the third place, more particularly in the case of sheep stations, the blacks are generally the aggressors, as to them such a mass of food as a flock of sheep, to be had without danger is irresistible, and a man's life is nothing. They kill the shepherd and steal the sheep, are followed and killed, and so a blood-feud is established.

The grand foundation of all the evil is the absence of any systematic provision, on the part of the Government, for the location of the blacks, when their country is occupied by the whites. Even when individual squatters have management enough to keep the blacks quiet, this renders a border war almost inevitable. Every year the white men advance, and occupy new country, often the entire area at once; and every squatter, on his own run, follows his independent plan of dealing with the blacks. Some allow them to remain quietly and come to the home station, which, with proper precautions, I believe the best system; and on cattle stations break the cattle into the blacks when breaking them into the run, which is very easily done. Others will at once drive them even from sheep runs, and shoot them down without further offence, wherever they are seen; but this is very rare, for the squatters as a body are most kind to the blacks, until war actually begins, and many of them even then.

If only sheep stations were in question the matter might more easily be managed, but the chief difficulty is with cattle, which are very often first put upon new country.

The business of the white man is to get his cattle to settle on the station—always a tedious, difficult operation. They are at first yarded and tailed like a flock of sheep, and then allowed to take up their habitat on the different portions of the run, when they divide themselves into mobs, form their camps, and frequent particular water-holes. But all this preliminary work is liable to be undone, should any natives come upon the run, as the cattle detest the smell of them, and make off; and after being speared, they scatter in all directions, take to the scrubs, and become almost valueless. The usual practice is, to prevent the blacks from coming on the run at all, so that they are not only cut off from their own water-holes, but when the country is watered by one river or creek distant from any other, they are deprived of water altogether for more than half the year; every drink is at the risk of their lives, until they are driven, as they were on the Castlereagh, to perfect desperation.

As a large extent of country is taken up at one time, and this is done simultaneously on every station, they must go somewhere, a collision takes place, and the war begins. The blacks, thus driven to sheer desperation, then kill far more white men than is generally imagined. I have known thirty-two killed, in one small district, in about two years, and little known beyond it. The blacks are mercilessly shot down in turn, often without regard to age or sex, 156 blacks having been killed in the same district in the same time; and the blacks take revenge upon all, murdering even those who are kindest to them, until the cruelties practised on both sides are so atrocious as to be almost incredible.

The squatters most anxious to befriend the blacks are then placed in a very difficult position. When white men are murdered, it is indispensable to punish the murderer; but still the ordinary law is powerless, as the blacks never leave any survivor who might give legal evidence. The frontier settlers, however, can always ob-

tain conclusive evidence from the natives themselves, and upon such testimony they are often obliged to act. The usual course is then for a party of whites, guided by blacks usually of another tribe, to start during the night, creep up close to the enemy's camp, wait till daybreak, and then commence the onslaught, in which, even when the greatest possible care is taken to avoid it, the women and children are sometimes shot. Everything in the camp is then destroyed, the blacks are scattered, destitute of the means of existence, and, of course, perfectly desperate. I must say this for the whites, however, that (although I have known brutal exceptions) whenever they can bring the blacks to a fair fight they do fight them fairly, and not unfrequently have been beaten, for the chances of such a contest are not so unequally divided as may be supposed. A blackfellow, with some eight or ten spears in his hand and some paddymelon sticks, will throw them all while a white man is reloading after firing two shots; and I have known one man to be pierced in the thigh by two spears successively, thrown at seventy yards off. The attacks of the natives on the other hand are always sudden, and so carefully arranged, that when a white man is attacked his escape is almost hopeless, while his murderers are equally certain of escaping with impunity, and the whites become so furious that they often come in time to follow the treacherous tactics of the blacks with even greater cruelty than themselves. How aggravating these atrocities are, few can conceive who have not experienced and lived in the daily and hourly risk of them. A friend told me that when he came upon two fine young men lying murdered, whom he had induced to come from his father's estate to enter his service, he could have eaten the blacks, and from that time killed ruthlessly, yet was a most benevolent man. Bloodthirsty as the blacks are, the whites have quite or more than equalled them, and I give the following cases to show how even the most benevolent

men may be aggravated to cruelty, unless systematic arrangements are made to prevent the blacks being driven to hostility; and the absolute necessity of a strict supervision being afterwards kept over both whites and blacks until they have settled down peacefully together. I know a station where a black and his gin, with two children, lived for months with the hutkeeper and stockman, no other blacks being ever seen in the neighbourhood. One day the two white men were milking the cows, and chatting together, their guns placed within reach, while the two black children played alongside. One of the men, looking over his shoulder, saw the black children passing out of the stockyard gate, each with a gun in its hand, and jumped up instantly; but they had scarcely moved when a crowd of natives swarmed over the fence on all sides. After being subjected to various indignities, they were both slain of course. On another station, a stockman, who had always been on most friendly terms with the neighbouring tribe, killed a very large fat bullock. The old women induced the tribe to kill him, and left him hanging between two rafters of the hut, with one of his dogs on each side, a spear being passed through his chest below his shoulders and those of the dogs. Shortly before I arrived on the Glenelg, in '45-'46, the blacks caught a stockman who had wantonly shot a woman; they pegged his hands and feet to the ground, as if on a cross, cut the flesh from his thighs, and roasted and eat it before his face, previously to killing him.

A man was engaged in one of the metropolitan registry offices to go up to Mount Abundance station as shepherd. The first day this man went out with the sheep, he was attacked by a party of the blacks, when he fired and killed one. Seeing that he was armed with only a single-barrelled musket, they attempted to rush him; but being an old Waterloo man, he was loaded again

and ready in an instant. They went off at once, but some of the friendly natives told the old shepherd that the others were determined not to allow him to leave the station alive. His enemies never afterwards came within his sight, but watched him keenly and perpetually; while he, during twelve months, out on those scorching plains, close under the tropics, never stood below or against a tree, never sat down, and never laid his musket out of his hand. The close of his twelve months having arrived at last, he proceeded to the home station to deliver up his sheep. His son, who acted as horse-boy, came out to meet him; and they stood together, conversing, upon a small knoll, studded with a few trees, and surrounded by open plain. The old man happening to look towards the ground, saw that his boot-tie was loose, and knelt down to fasten it. That instant he was pierced by three spears; the boy instantly wheeled about, galloped to the home station, about four hundred yards off, and gave the alarm, whereupon M'Enroe mounted his horse and galloped to the place, but found the old man dead, with a spear through his heart, and the blacks no where to be seen. M'Enroe stuck the spear down the side of one of the myall trees, where he pointed it out to me when he related this story. I glanced all around to see where it was possible for the savages to have concealed themselves, but I could perceive nothing capable of hiding even a terrier. They must have crept up among the sheep so stealthily as not to disturb them, a feat I considered impossible, even to the blacks. When I visited the station, it had been abandoned, most of the white men having been killed.

On another occasion, two stockmen left to meet two others at a certain point for the purpose of mustering the cattle, leaving the hut-keeper by himself. According to arrangement, if they met the other two the party was to be absent a couple of days; if not they were to return, and

would be home at two o'clock. The hut-keeper lay in his bunk reading, with his loaded musket beside him. Suddenly he saw the muzzle disappear from the side of the bunk, and on jumping up found that it had been seized by a blackfellow, who then sprang up from the ground and handed it to two others, who simultaneously rushed in through the door. Having derided and worried the unfortunate man in their usual style, the savages ordered him to get dinner ready, adding that they intended to burn him afterwards. He made a large damper, delaying as much as possible, then boiled and served up the meat, and when the blacks were satisfied they compelled him to make an enormous fire for the purpose of burning himself. He began to sing, dance, and go through various performances in order to amuse them, and while away the time till two o'clock. At length the hour came and passed, and he was just beginning to despair, when he saw his two white friends riding round the stockyard. He then began to fear the blackfellows would see them, and murder him before they could interfere, so he sang at the top of his voice, and with violent emphasis and gesticulation, the song, "Helen Macgregor's Gathering," and so continued till his friends rode up to the door. He put his mouth to the slabs, and cried out, "Dismount, I am in the hands of the blacks!" The men dismounted in an instant; so rapidly, indeed, that they rushed into the hut without any weapons but their knives. There they stood, three against three, and all knowing that no quarter would be asked or given, and that the first man killed on either side was death to all his companions. For a time they eyed each other silently, each singling out his man; and then they grappled. They were soon on the floor, rolling over and over—then up again, then down—all fighting desperately, and in silence. The whites had the advantage of steel knives over stone weapons; but the blacks were naked, and thus able to avoid being

grasped, while they could better fence and twist about. For a long time it was very doubtful which party would be victorious ; but at length one of the whites seized his man by the neck with his teeth, and grasped the black firmly round the waist with one arm, while with the other he passed the knife into his back, below the shoulder-blade. He then jumped up and killed another ; the third blackfellow attempted to escape up the low wide chimney, but was stabbed, and fell back into the fire which he and his comrades intended for the hutkeeper.

Every Government has hitherto tried to regulate and modify the difficulties between the frontier settlers and the aborigines, but they have in every case neglected the only effectual means—to arrange for the location and subsistence of the blacks, and to guide and restrain them through their own tribal organisation. In Adelaide the success was greatest, because there the police, when called upon, protected whites as well as blacks, and it was regarded as wanton murder to attack the blacks without calling upon the police for protection, which, under Governor Grey, and afterwards Governor Robe, and since, I believe, was generally given with mercy and discrimination. But on the Port Phillip side of the boundary, then under New South Wales, they were all for “the poor blacks ;” and any complaint would bring a black protector or his deputy, whose sole object would be to prevent the natives from being interfered with, even if they killed cattle or stole sheep before the owner’s face. The result was that the squatters often disposed of them secretly (a rope being round their own necks as it were), and the result was much unnecessary loss of life.

In Queensland there has always been more destruction of the blacks in occupying new country than in any other colony, but within the last few years it has been wholesale and indiscriminate, and carried on with a cold-blooded

cruelty on the part of the whites quite unparalleled in the history of these colonies. Among the Queensland frontier squatters now there are many men as benevolent and as anxious to civilize and save the blacks as in former years, but there are always a number of men among them, employed as well as employers, who only require suitable circumstances to develop their real character as cowardly cold-blooded murderers. When the system was in force of pure benevolence to the blacks, and a rope to the whites, even for defending their lives, these men had their own way, because those of the white men who fought only through necessity had no means of restraint but firing upon them, which on more than one occasion, within my knowledge, very nearly occurred. In Queensland now these bad whites do as they please, from all accounts, simply because it is the rule and custom to arrange the black question by killing them off. - This demoralization of the whites I attribute to the extensive use made of the native police. In former years it was the interest of every one taking up new country to get the blacks quieted with as little trouble as possible, but now in Queensland, where they have the native police to crush them out like so many ants, any more tedious way of quieting them is a useless risk and waste of time.

It is well known, and always has been by the squatters (many of whom abominate the very name of them), that when the black troopers are let loose they are completely beyond the control of their officers; and that, even in the open country, and within sight, if they can restrain them from firing upon women—which I believe the officers generally do—it is all they can accomplish. But when the wild natives, on being charged, rush into the scrub, and the black troopers strip naked and follow, with cartridge-box and firearms, they kill all they overtake, without distinction of age or sex. I have been told by spectators

of most horrible massacres ; and one of these I will relate, which struck me as being peculiarly cold-blooded. A party of blacks had been dispersed and cut off from the scrub where they usually find refuge ; and having no chance of escape, they lay down on their faces within a very small patch of low scrub in the open. On the police coming up, the officer rode round, to have a look if there were any women among them ; and seeing that there were not, he ordered the whole party to be shot ; and shot they were at once. A friend of my own, who was present, and told me, counted ten left there in their blood ! On another occasion I was told that the very extraordinary phenomenon had occurred, of seven prisoners being taken ; they were marched along with the mounted party, and swelling in the legs, had to be let go ; but one black trooper after another of the arresting party lagged behind out of sight, and then, after some time, came up together, when it was perfectly well understood, and told by themselves afterwards, that they had cut the throats of all the prisoners in cold blood.

About ten years ago I stated my determination to expose the whole system. Though the squatters acknowledged and lamented the occurrence of such atrocities, they remonstrated against doing away with the native police, and they knew it only required an exposure of their atrocities to get them disbanded by the Sydney Government, unless I could show how they were to protect their people from large bodies of blacks, exasperated to the highest degree, yet unsubdued ; and I refrained then ; but from the softened accounts allowed to appear in the press, and from private information, I know that the same system has not only continued, but has become every year more ruthless, as is perfectly well known to the initiated. My information is fully confirmed by Morrill, the shipwrecked seaman, who came into the settlements after being seventeen years among the blacks, and who has had every opportunity of knowing how the blacks were

treated. In a letter he published lately in reference to the proposed search after the lost explorer, Leichhardt, he says:—
“I am exceedingly sorry no steps were taken to trace Leichhardt when I first came in and was in Brisbane, for then I should have been happy to join such an expedition. From 1850 to 1860, *before the whites commenced destroying the blacks indiscriminately*, the northern tribes were very well disposed towards the whites.” Even with this, I should not have felt justified in denouncing the system without more exact proof, which can be but seldom obtained. But within the last few days it has been officially and unmistakably acknowledged, in the reports describing the death of Lieutenant Hill, during a collision with the blacks on the 22nd of May last, and the subsequent proceedings of the native police. This is an extract from his brother’s report: “As nearly as possible, I use Mr. Rothery’s own words:—Lieutenant Cecil Hill and three troopers rode up to my station (Pearl Creek) on the evening of Monday, 21st May. Lieutenant Hill informed me that he had come down from the Mackenzie, having heard a report that a shepherd on my run had been murdered by the blacks. I told him that an old shepherd had been murdered about eight weeks previously, and till now no police had been down. Mr. Hill and his troopers camped at my station that night. The next morning (Monday, the 22nd) Mr. Hill asked me if I had much to do. I said no. He then asked me, as he did not know the run, to show him where the blacks were camped. I said I would, and we all left the station together—Lieut. Hill, myself, and three troopers. A little before sunset we came upon the camp, which Lieut. Hill and his troopers charged and dispersed; one, I think, was shot.” There is the system sanctioned by the Queensland Government. A man is killed by blacks, and eight weeks afterwards a native camp is charged, and as many are shot as the attacking party can get at. “One, I think, was shot,” says the report. I suspect, and with

very sufficient reason, that there were a good many more. The letter goes on to say: "We then camped for the night. I wished to camp at a hut a mile off. Mr. Hill told me that I need not be afraid of the blacks returning, as they would not come near his boys. Mr. Hill and myself did not sleep. The night was pitch dark. About three o'clock the next morning (Tuesday, the 23rd) the blacks came upon us. They were on us before one in the camp were aware of it. Mr. Hill was the first to jump on his feet, with his revolver in his hand. He staggered a few paces, and then fell flat on his face." He died immediately, and his death is to be deeply regretted; but the attack of the blacks was a legitimate retaliation, carried out in the ordinary manner of native warfare. Now for the sequel, as told by a paragraph in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of June 30: "The following report from Acting Sub-Inspector O. C. Oscar Pescher, N.M.P., dated 16th June, has been handed to us for publication by the Commissioner of Police. It is addressed to G. P. M. Murray, I.N.P., Rockhampton: "I have the honour to report that on receipt of instructions contained in a telegram bearing date the 26th May ultimo, which reached me on the 28th May, I proceeded at once to Coomooboolano. I found Acting Sub-Inspector Hill having been killed by the blacks, and trooper Fred being severely wounded and confined to bed at the Pearl Creek station. On my way to Coomooboolano, *via* Cooroorah, I met with numerous fresh tracks of blacks, and followed them up towards Springton, where, on the evening of the 22nd June instant, a collision took place between my detachment of native mounted police and a mob of blacks; they dispersed in the Forty-mile Scrub, Lower Dawson-road. I have the honour to report that I visited the stations named in the margin—Sanders, Mackenzie, Cooroorah, Springton, Tryphinia Vale, Pearl Creek, Coomooboolano, Wooroona—and that the following collisions took place between the native police under my command and the

aboriginals, namely: June 4th.—On the Sanders Run, near the Expedition Range; the blacks dispersed towards the Comet Range. June 5th.—On the foot of the Comet Range; the blacks dispersed. June 7th.—In a scrub near the Tryphina Vale Station; the blacks dispersed. Sub-Inspector Blakeney and three troopers arrived on the 7th June, and Sub-Inspector Bailey with nine troopers on the 9th of June instant. Early on the morning of the 10th of June a collision took place in the Expedition Range between the four detachments of the native mounted police and a party of aboriginals, when the latter were dispersed. I have the honour to state that I consider the blacks to have left the district for a time, but they will, no doubt, return to the Expedition Range; and in the Lower Dawson district they are very numerous, and of a hostile disposition towards the Europeans. I consider it my duty to submit to you the urgent necessity for immediate and permanent police protection against the natives of that district." It will be observed that there are no inquiries as to what tribe, or portion of a tribe, killed Mr. Hill. Mr. Pescher found fresh tracks of blacks; they are blacks, which seems quite sufficient for his purpose, and he follows, finds "a" mob, attacks them, and they disperse in the scrub. Three times within a week he attacks and "disperses" parties of blacks, whether the same or others he does not say, and probably did not know. On the 10th there is another attack upon "a" party of the aborigines, and they are driven out of the country. You will observe that the number killed is not mentioned. These are never counted, and in fact never looked for. If the usual form is gone through of riding over the ground to count them, the usual course is not to look down so as to see the dead; not one in twenty killed is ever reported. Neither is mention made of wounded or prisoners; no, none survive who cannot get out of reach of the black troopers. Mr. Hill mentions that, in his brother's case, the women and children remained

in the camp after the dispersion, which is to his honour. Mr. Pescher says only that the blacks "dispersed," and left the district, without mentioning that the women remained; and there is no reason whatever to doubt that they were all dispersed and all fled together.

If the Queensland Government does not recognise as one of their institutions wholesale execution, without either warrant, apprehension, judge, or jury, it would be well for them on such occasions to insist upon the dead being counted and reported, and to inquire how long the firing continued after the troopers disappeared in the scrub? How many women and children were shot there? It will never be found out, however, how many children were on this occasion dropped in the retreat and died of starvation, and how many, to-night, at the end of a month's agony, are dragging on a miserable existence, as only black children can, waiting the return of the tribe, to be again cut up—or, to use the favourite word of Mr. Oscar Pescher—"dispersed." But the most extraordinary part is the conclusion of the report, in which he denounces the conduct of certain squatters, who will persist in harbouring and protecting the blacks from him and his black bloodhounds: "Finally, I have the honour to state that the police will encounter great difficulties in the Lower Dawson district, while several squatters continue to admit the blacks into their stations, and harbour and protect them against the police."—*Courier*, 26th June. In even the very worst frontier wars there are always a number of squatters who will receive any black who will come in and be at peace. When "bale coola"—not angry—is exchanged, all past offences are forgiven, and, though not always on that of the blacks, the agreement is invariably kept on the part of the whites. There are some among the whites cruel and most inveterate, but I never met one of them who did not approve of this proceeding on the part of others. It kept them out of mischief, reduced

the number of enemies, and formed a nucleus for all "coming in" when they would. It has remained for an officer of the Queensland Government, with the apparent approval of his superior officers and of the Government, to denounce as enemies of the public weal the men who, at their own expense and risk, are willing to afford these wretched people this chance of settling down at peace with the whites, and escaping total extermination. The blacks have been massacred cruelly and indiscriminately enough, but now, by the adoption of this report by the Commissioner of Police, all, all, without exception, are given up to destruction.

The Queensland Government may have been as ignorant as people in the towns generally, as to the real facts of the case, but now that its enormity is shown in broad daylight by this most extraordinary report of their officer, they can no longer shut their eyes to the necessity of introducing a more humane system of occupation, if they are to be any longer entrusted with the colonization of the enormous country placed under their rule by the Imperial Government.

HOW ARE COLLISIONS TO BE PREVENTED ?

All experience has proved that if the settlement of the colony by the whites is to be accomplished without the immediate extermination of the blacks, it must be done under the supervision of the Government. If the Government and the squatters, in going to take up country, would adopt a system at once firm and just between black and white, with a reasonable regard for the manners, customs, and rights of the natives, and their peculiar disposition ; and, above all, if they make a judicious use of the organisation of the different tribes, I am satisfied that collisions might, to a very great extent, be avoided. To effect this I have a plan to suggest, the main objects of which are, first, to throw a considerable amount of the responsibility of dealing with the

blacks upon the individual squatters, but all acting upon one general system, under the supervision of officers appointed by Government; secondly, to protect the persons and property of the whites, and at the same time protect the blacks from outrage, by punishing both whites and blacks without favour to either.

The plan I shall give in full, and afterwards explain each point.

First.—There should be appointed an officer equal in rank at least to the commissioner of police, to be named the Chief Curator of the Aborigines, who should have the management of all matters connected with the blacks, subordinate, of course, to the Cabinet.

Second.—That two or more officers be appointed Curators of Aborigines, to be in charge of all arrangements and operations in reference to the blacks in their respective districts under direction of the chief.

Third.—That Squatters of standing and experience and magistrates should be appointed Assistant Curators, each in his own district.

Fourth.—That no country beyond the boundary of any proclaimed district should be occupied until it is proclaimed a district, as formerly in New South Wales, and officers appointed, but all applications for leases should be allotted according to date of application, but be held over till the country is proclaimed open.

Fifth.—That before the country is proclaimed, the Chief Curator, or a Curator with such of the applicants for leases as the Government may select as Assistant Curators, with Mr. Morrill, or some other experienced interpreter, should visit the district and place themselves in communication with the natives. They should then ascertain the boundaries of the country of the different tribes, find out who are the leading men, and explain to them what the white men intend to do, the necessity of their accommodating them-

selves to the new state of affairs, how they can do it, and all other requisite information.

Sixth.—Ascertain what lagoons, rivers, &c., may be most requisite, and arrange with lessee that these have to be left open.

Seventh.—That the squatter on application for his lease should state whether he intends to occupy with sheep or cattle. If with sheep, the blacks can go anywhere and no arrangement will be necessary, but if with cattle there must be arrangements for the blacks passing from one part of their country to another, and from the scrubs to the water. If the whole or nearly the whole of the ground of a tribe is to be occupied by a cattle station, or continuous cattle stations, land must be set aside temporarily for the exclusive use of the blacks, though still forming part of the run leased or to be leased when no longer required for the blacks.

Eighth.—When the squatters take up their country each Assistant Curator should have a few of the leading blacks, old women as well as men, employed upon his station, so as to be available on the occurrence of outrage: the management of the first of which will to a great extent decide future events. Further, to secure the full advantage of their intense selfishness of disposition, they should be employed regularly, fed extremely well, and receive annually from the Government, blankets, tomahawks, &c., besides an allowance of tobacco. These worthies will take excellent care that their comfort is not endangered by the feuds or intrigues of the younger and less important members of the tribe.

The following rules should then be observed :—

Ninth.—That no private individual, magistrate, or officer of police should take action on occurrence of outrage, or do more than is requisite for the immediate defence of life and property, without the authority and if possible the presence of a Curator or Assistant Curator.

Tenth.—That on the committal of any outrage, either robbery, murder, or assault, steps should be taken to ascertain whether it is the action of individuals or of the tribe.

If by private individuals, the tribe should at once be called upon to surrender them, and if not done in reasonable time, the rations of all the leading men should be stopped, a warrant issued, and a search begun. If the search fails he must be apprehended as soon as heard of, no matter what length of time may elapse.

If the outrage is by the tribe, the leading men living with the Assistant Curators (though they may not have left the place will know all about it), and will probably tell who were engaged; at the same time their information must be checked by examining the tracks and questioning others, as they will not hesitate to sacrifice a few men of small importance, not closely related to themselves. They should then be demanded, all rations and allowances being, of course at once stopped, and if none of them are surrendered, warrants should be issued against them by their individual names (not by the name of the clan, which would include dozens), and a pursuit begun, after it has been notified to the tribe who the individuals are, and that none others will be harmed; and to the neighbouring tribes that the Curator will be "coola" with them if they harbour the fugitives, but will give a specified reward for their surrender.

Eleventh.—The party pursuing should be under the command of a Curator, and on no consideration should the present practice of creeping on a camp at daylight and firing indiscriminately be allowed. A black without cap or shirt should call out what is wanted, and then let the party go into the camp; if the tribe show fight, let the women and children draw off, and fight it out; the best shots of the party who know the men wanted directing their fire exclusively upon them. If, on the other hand, the tribe stand neutral, take the men, if they remain; if they run, pursue them, taking no notice of

the remainder, and never stop until they are found or surrendered. No shots should be fired after these fugitives, unless in cases of murder, and then only when the men are recognized.

Twelfth.—In case of the murder of a black by whites being communicated to an Assistant Curator, active steps should at once be taken to bring them to justice, and individual proprietors and managers should afford every information.

APPOINTMENT OF CURATORS.

The Government should most carefully avoid appointing as Curators of any degree, pure philanthropists, who will look to nothing but the "poor blacks," and treat them as black angels who can do no wrong, thus compelling the white men in self-defence to deal secretly with them, when the few blood-thirsty cowards who are always among the whites are beyond the restraint of the great body of better disposed, and have it all their own way. Appoint benevolent but experienced men of the world and of common sense, who will protect the whites from bloodthirsty savages, who will both steal and murder without compunction, but who will also regard them and insist upon their being treated as men, and not as vermin.

Arrangements with the Blacks—It has been asserted that the tribes have no organization, and that it is impossible to make any arrangement with them, but I have always found that those who have been among blacks and assert this, have never troubled themselves about them. Sir George Gray is clear and explicit upon this point, and is supported by every man whom I have consulted, and who has made himself acquainted with their manners and customs. I have not only found a tribal organization to prevail, but made use of it in the Glenelg country. Twenty years ago our firm and another party took up the country between

Glenelg and the coast, among blacks never in contact with whites before; and after getting on smoothly for a considerable time, got into collision with the blacks, through a missionary convert telling them to kill as many cattle as they liked, as our people would be hanged if they interfered. I returned to the station about twelve months afterwards, and found not only our own tribe, but a large number of picked natives from other tribes, whom the squatters all over the Rivoli Bay and Glenelg districts had refused permission to come in with their tribes, being too dangerous. Winter was coming on when I learned from some of the women, that when the rain set in and made the ground too soft for us to ride, they intended to kill us all, and get all the cattle and sheep. My brother and I sent for old Flourbag, the chief of our own tribe, and told him what we had heard, adding that we wished to have a palaver upon the subject. He said that it would be also necessary to consult the strange blacks, and he brought two of them to confer with us. We gave them clearly to understand that, if they attacked our party, we would kill every man of them unless they killed all of us; that, even if they succeeded, all they could gain was a temporary feast of beef and mutton, while they were certain to be attacked and cut up by the police; whereas, if they remained friendly with us, we would feed a certain number of them; that we would divide the country with them; that, if they kept clear of the part occupied by the cattle, they might go where they pleased over the rest of the run, including the lakes and eel-beds. The men made no denial of the projected massacre; said they could give no reply without a consultation, but would bring an answer in three days. During the interval I visited their camp, and saw the elderly men of the council in earnest debate. When the deliberation concluded, old Flourbag and his two companions returned, and informed us that the council had assented to our terms. In a few weeks afterwards nearly all the strange

blacks went away ; and the arrangement thus made was faithfully observed on both sides.

When the blacks have learned the power of the whites to enforce their arrangements, they are ready enough to comply, and if collisions take place through such arrangements not being made, the responsibility must rest entirely with the whites.

ARRANGING FOR HUNTING GROUND FOR BLACKS.

It will be very easy to ascertain what ground is necessary, and it can be selected so as to interfere very slightly with stockowners ; where the scrubs are extensive it will scarcely interfere at all, so far as sheep are concerned. In the case of cattle, the Curator should insist upon the cattle being "broken in" to the blacks, which is soon done by having them about the stockyard after the cattle are yarded, then afterwards tailing them on the run naked. It would also be well to give the Curator power to extend the term during which a run might remain unoccupied, on the squatter undertaking to occupy with sheep instead of cattle.

The practice of driving the blacks from a whole stretch of country covered by the home and outstations, should on no account be permitted, as it is not only unjust but unnecessary.

At the same time, unless, in an extreme case, and with the sanction of the Governor in Council, no land should be permanently reserved from lease for the use of the blacks, and then only after the intending lessor has been heard in reply to the Curator. There are several reasons for this. 1st, That the assistance and co-operation of the squatters must be enlisted, and there will never be good will between the Curators and them if the former are to exercise the power of reserving land which the squatter has explored, waited perhaps years

for, and made extensive business arrangements to occupy. 2nd, That it is, except in rare and peculiar cases, unnecessary. In two years, with anything like decent management, the blacks and whites settle down amicably together, when they can go anywhere they please without harm ; and the country will be as available to them as if reserved.

DUTY OF INDIVIDUAL SQUATTERS.

First, every squatter on taking up his country should, in his own private sphere, supplement the public arrangements of the Curator. He should put himself in communication with the leading blacks in his own locality ; explain to them what he intends to do and the country he intends to occupy, which is not usually more at first than a quarter of the ground leased, arrange with them for their occupation of any particular ground or lagoons they may require, and thus avoid causing bad feeling at the commencement.

It may be alleged that allowing the blacks to come to the huts would entail great danger upon the whites ; so far as the outstations are concerned, they should for a time be forbidden to visit the huts, as the shepherds cannot always be controlled, and collisions may occur that might otherwise be avoided. At the same time, the sooner they are allowed to have intercourse with the white men, the sooner they will become civilised, and with proper arrangements and precautions they may with comparative safety and certain advantage be admitted at the home station. The blacks will never resist the temptation of a large amount of food, tomahawks, &c. exposed without proper guard ; they will then without mercy or compunction arrange, as in the Wills' case, to cut the whole white party off at one blow ; but neither will they make an attack if there be a chance of defeat or loss, and with common prudence and tact no serious attack is to be apprehended. The squatter must never trust them, never for-

get their treacherous and bloodthirsty character. He must be always on his guard, and let them know that he is so ; and he must take care that fire-arms are always at hand, in case of a sudden attack. It should be a rule, strictly enforced, that no blacks come within a marked line, two or three hundred yards from the place, until they have cooeed and attracted attention, placed their spears on the ground, and held out their arms as they advanced. And even then no large number should be allowed to approach together, until it has been ascertained that they are not dragging along their spears between their toes, or have tomahawks, paddy melon sticks and knives stuck in their belt behind, or covered with cloak or blanket. There is no more danger in living at apparent peace than at open war, if these precautions are observed ; it is trying, no doubt, but no one has a right to take up new country who has not strong nerve ; and it is preposterous to suppose that the whites who are, for their own profit, taking their country, should be allowed to murder the blacks off wholesale, merely to avoid the risk and expense of teaching them how to accommodate themselves to the new circumstances arising from this profitable mercantile transaction.

Apprehending Blacks.—With such a system as I propose it will only be where the tribe is involved that it will be necessary to attack a camp, and then the present system of a surprise and volley should be strictly forbidden. A long pursuit after the leading men will be infinitely more effective. In a surprise they are the first to get clear off, and care very little indeed who or how many are killed afterwards ; they will chance that for a flock of sheep or a lot of flour and sugar, but not if they know that they personally will be pursued and punished. When in the Maranoa it was my intention, which the gold discovery alone prevented me carrying out, to take up country there at once ; and as I knew that the blacks would be much more likely to keep any arrangement I made

with them after they knew that I was not to be trifled with, I invariably assisted the Commissioner where any trouble arose. On one occasion he mustered all the white men within reach, fourteen, and went in pursuit of a large body of blacks, among whom were some murderers. Our guide was treacherous, and the blacks doubled upon us and got off, when he left on the third day, and had to go off to protect some other part of the district. He then gave me the warrants, and, with new guides, I picked up the trail, and followed it, in spite of every double and stratagem they could practice. On the evening of the tenth day, when the whites had dwindled to two stockmen and myself, the blacks to five, three of them murderers, our blacks said we were close upon them, and that they were so done they could hardly walk, and on emerging suddenly from the bregalow scrub into an opening about 200 yards wide, covered with very low scrub, they said the men were there. As the men were five as resolute and formidable blacks as in the district, fairly brought to bay, I knew that when we roused them out of their lair, that instant, without time for a word, a deadly fight would commence; so I told one of the blacks to call upon them to surrender in the name of the Queen, the mother of all the whites, and, further, that the Commissioner had sent me to bring them in for murdering such and such men. We first walked over the ground, quartering it all carefully, and then galloped round and round without seeing them, when the stockmen proposed to go out into the open before it was quite dark, and said also that they must return. I insisted upon continuing the pursuit, but, after some discussion, Walker not being with me, had to consent, and we camped in the open ground. A few days afterwards the Commissioner told me that the tame blacks told him that the men were in the opening in the scrub, and that my horse's foot had severely bruised the thigh of one of them, that they were within hearing of our discussion, and

our blacks, while apparently speaking to each other, told them the pursuit was given up, and that they came out and had a silent corroboree over us in triumph, as we slept, but dare not attack. They denied that they were the men, "t'other one blackfellow did it," and expressed, through the tame blacks, the utmost disgust at the way they had been pursued, and asked the Commissioner "what for that one whitefellow along o' Walker 'cabon coola' along o' them?" that he was not a policeman, that they had stolen none of his sheep, nor killed any cattle or white men or black boys belonging to him, and what for was he "cabon coola?" We sent back word that I had done so because he told me to, and I told them that I was about to occupy country there, that I would not molest them if they did not interfere with me, but that, if they did, I would follow them as I had done these, till I was face to face with them, if it took a whole moon or two moons. On my return from exploring, the Commissioner told me they had sent in word that they did not wish to have anything to do with me; that if I would leave them alone they would not interfere with anything belonging to me; and I have not the least doubt that, with ordinary management and precaution on my part, they would have done as they said—kept clear of me. They are just as able to understand their position, and to calculate their risks and chances, as any white man, and though individuals may commit themselves, as among whites, there is very little fear of a tribe doing so when they understand that they will be gainers by living quietly, and will incur serious danger by an outbreak.

Punishment of the Blacks.—It will be alleged to be impossible to get the blacks as a body to submit members of their tribes to punishment, and that they cannot understand what just punishment is, and will revenge upon all and sundry. If properly managed there will be no difficulty. In case of a minor offence being committed by the blacks on a run, the white settler should stop all rations until

the delinquent is either given up for punishment or punished by the tribe itself, in the presence of the whites. If they know he is not to be shot, they will give him up at once. I have known this to be done, when two men were compelled by the tribe to submit to punishment, and were flogged with the stock-whip, in the presence of the tribe.

Sir George Grey (vol. ii., p. 350) describes the manner in which he put an end to pilfering, without "involving the innocent and guilty together." On complaint of a soldier that his garden had been robbed, he took a native to examine the tracks, who told him that Peerat's two wives and boy were the thieves. They had joined the tribe at seven miles distance, and he followed. He then told the blacks what Peerat's wives had done, and demanded that they should be given up; that if they were not, the allowance of flour issued to them all would be stopped. "The natives hereupon entered into a deliberation among themselves, and eventually were unanimously agreed on several points as follows:—

Imprimis.—That stealing potatoes was a very heinous offence, more particularly in women.

Secondly.—That women were notorious thieves, and altogether worse characters than men.

Thirdly.—That beating women was an every day occurrence.

Fourthly.—That losing flour was a great bore.

Fifthly.—That in consequence of the above considerations they would give Peerat, his wives, and son, up to me.

Each of these propositions was lengthily discussed by them. They then went in search of Peerat, who refused to surrender, and a fight nearly ensued. Captain Grey had to threaten to shoot him, and explained to the blacks how much better it would be for them to surrender them for a moderate punishment, than to compel him to bring soldiers, when life

would probably be lost. Two days afterwards they surrendered themselves.

In a case where I punished a black, neither he nor the tribe resisted, though I had no right to interfere.

The first night I camped on the banks of the Murrumbidgee, at the Mungadal Station, where I lived for many years, there was a large body of blacks camped in the bend of the river, the land subsequently occupied as a horse-paddock. I had arranged with them to cut sheets of bark, and to be paid in flour, tobacco, and iron tomahawks. As the night advanced, I saw that they had lit several very large fires, and were making a great noise; and, having heard of no intended corroboree, knew that something unusual was taking place, so I stepped down, after supper, to see about it. On reaching the camp, I saw three large fires burning, and in the space between stood two young blackfellows, abusing each other like so many Billingsgate fish-wives. All around stood the other blacks, among the huge trunks of the tall flooded gum-trees, which, with their white bark lighted up by the fires, against the deep darkness behind, resembled gigantic marble pillars. I had not been long watching this scene, when suddenly every blackfellow upon the ground was in rapid motion, flitting about among the trees like so many spectres; and in an instant I was lifted up, carried some distance, and set behind a large tree. I turned round, and looked angrily on the face of an immense old blackfellow, who, in lifting me up by the belt on both sides, had taken hold of a good deal more than the belt, giving me such a squeeze that my sides were about as black as himself for weeks after. I asked, angrily enough, what he meant, and he pointed to look past the edge of the tree behind which we stood, when I saw that a fierce fight was then taking place between the men who had been abusing each other. This explained the sudden movement of the other blacks, and my own unceremonious removal. Those

near the fire, went nearer, in order to avoid the flying spears; those at a distance sought safety behind the trees. The old black saw that I was unaware of the danger, and as he could not speak English, lifted me bodily out of harm's way. Before the fight ended, the two young wives joined in the fray, beating each other fiercely with their yam-sticks, which they wield as quarter-staffs as skilfully as ever did Robin Hood or Little John. On the conclusion of the battle, the man who was worsted vented his rage upon his wife, striking her in the small of the back with a heavy waddy, when she fell back, with a fearful shriek, her head turning over right back to her heels. When the blacks came up next morning to get the tomahawks and cut the bark, I asked one, who could speak English pretty well, to point out the man who had been beaten the night before. He had not put in an appearance, so the others had to wait and send to the camp for him, wondering evidently among themselves what it was all about. When he arrived, I stated my opinion as to his brutality; in the strongest language, told him, and of course through him all the rest, that I would never employ or befriend any of them who treated their wives so cruelly. I then took him by the arm, and walked him to the bank of the river, where I ordered him into a canoe to cross to the opposite bank, and banished him for twelve moons. The rest of the blacks looked on, wondering much that I should make such a fuss about a mere woman; but the lesson had its effect. There was no such severe wife-beating among them, to my knowledge, afterwards.

Even in a case where death has to be the punishment, they will acknowledge the justice of the punishment, and, where only one or two individuals are concerned, will readily give them up. The principle men of the tribe will sacrifice any one to save themselves, and will kill the delinquents out of hand themselves, if necessary. One old scoundrel in the Maranoa, when fighting on the white side, was seen to

spear one of his own tribe to the ground to keep him quiet while he deliberately cut his throat. I was present when a squatter on the Glenelg, in a passion at hearing of some fresh outrage by a very troublesome black, turned to a blackfellow and said, "If you bring me Jerry's head to-morrow I will give you that," pointing to a quarter of beef hanging up. He at once assented, when my friend, quite horror struck, said he did not mean it, it was only gammon. The black had no idea of losing the beef, became very angry, and insisted upon earning the beef, till my friend had to settle the matter by locking him up in the store all night, and presenting him with the beef in the morning, with the assurance, which the black at length assented to, that Jerry's head might remain where it was.

Sir George Grey (p. 239), in describing the laws of retribution in case of murder, states that all the clan and relatives are liable to punishment. "Little children of seven or eight years old if, whilst playing, they hear that some murder has taken place, can in a moment tell whether or not they are *jeedyte*, and, even at this tender age, take their measures accordingly." Those that are *jeedyte* rally for mutual support, as do the friends of the murdered man to obtain vengeance; "they then go and confront the body of those who are the relatives of the murderer, when a stormy altercation takes place; this generally, however, is terminated in an amiable way by the parties uniting to go in search of the culprit. It is obviously the interest of all that he should be caught and punished, for until this takes place the whole of his connections are in danger."

On the occasion of the murder, by three blacks, of a young girl, and of her father in defending her, the murderers were pursued by three squatters, two of them friends of my own. These gentlemen abominated the system of indiscriminate slaughter, but they knew that as the law could not reach the murderers, the whites would satisfy their vengeance by

a wholesale massacre. They therefore went on the track themselves, guided by a black boy, who on the third day announced that they were close upon a large native camp, and that the three murderers were in it. They told the boy to go to the edge of the scrub in which the camp lay, and to say that the whites wanted these three, naming them, for murder, and none other. They then at once went among the tribe, seized their men, and, after a desperate struggle, tied them each to a sapling and fired a volley upon them. The blackfellows declared this to be a just vengeance, and in no way molested those who carried it into effect. Another case was that of a beautiful golden-haired blue eyed little girl, the daughter of a quiet respectable man, a blacksmith, on the Castlereagh, who was carried off by the blacks, murdered with circumstances of brutal atrocity, and eaten. The father, assisted by the neighbours and some friendly natives, long sought his child, "hoping against hope," till one day he ascertained all the particulars. He abandoned home, business—everything; and, night and day, for many a month, hunted the murderers like a bloodhound, till with some assistance from Dick Walker, he killed every man of the party—thirteen. The last was disposed of by my friend Walker, then a constable in the border police. Having discovered where this fellow was, Walker dashed into the camp, calling out to the natives (numbering about two hundred) to keep quiet, as he intended to harm nobody except one, naming the murderer. Every one, even the man himself, sat still, while Walker rode up to the murderer's gunyah, dismounted, and told him to "stand up and meet his death like a man," which he did, and Walker shot him through the heart. The blacks expressed themselves satisfied that it was a just vengeance; but were careful to explain that every man of the party had then been now killed, and that no more should be shot. No more were shot, nor, on the other hand, was the father of the girl ever afterwards molested.

Even if the tribe did not give a murderer up, he would be compelled to go away, if they knew that they would suffer great inconvenience on his account.

Punishment of the Whites.—The Curator will seldom be able, for want of evidence, as the law at present stands in Queensland and New South Wales, to take any steps against the whites, and collisions will certainly occur until fear of punishment is brought to bear on the brutal cowards who now shoot the blacks because they are too much cowed to resist, and the law in no way can or will punish them. The only remedy is to adopt the law of Victoria—admit the evidence of the blacks. They are liars, no doubt, and have no idea of truth for truth's sake; but their evidence can be taken as it is here for what it is worth, like that of thieves and informers. When the blacks understood that the whites were liable to be punished, communication would instantly be made to the Curator; he would then examine the bodies; find if the bullets corresponded with those of the accused whites; trace the horses of the party to their place of residence or halt; examine their horses' tracts at the place of murder, and compare it with the horses' feet. He could thus get quite sufficient evidence in most cases to commit them, and, supported by the evidence of the blacks, enough to get them penal servitude, if not the gallows, which many of them have well earned.

Large bodies of blacks are now collected near Rockhampton, and, feeling their strength, will never settle on any country quietly until they are fought and beaten; but when that is done, it is sincerely to be hoped that some arrangement may be made for their having country assigned to them where they can live in safety. Dangerous as they now are, I can name gentlemen who are ready to accompany Mr. Morrill as a guard while he explains the terms on which they will be allowed to settle down at peace, which they will

most thankfully accept. I persuaded a squatter in 1850 to have a conference, when he and I met some of the wild blacks in an open forest, each laying down our arms at a short distance. When they saw that I wished to make peace, it was painful to see their eagerness to be allowed to "come in" before the arrival of the black police, then expected. The squatter refused till he had shot a fine young fellow then present. I offered to take him as my guide, but nothing would move him, and they were left to the black police. After being hunted as they have been, they will submit to any arrangement that will secure them safety and a bare subsistence.

To conclude, the blacks have a tangible tribal government amongst themselves, and are sufficiently intelligent not only to make, but to enforce on the individual members of the tribe, any reasonable arrangement that may be proposed by the whites for the joint occupation of the country for pasture and hunting; and it is the duty of the Queensland Government to introduce and enforce some system that will at least give the blacks a chance of escaping summary extermination. In the country now under the jurisdiction of the Queensland Government, with its immense extent of hills, rivers, and coast, in a climate most suitable for the blacks, there are (judging from the large numbers—600 or 700—that collect occasionally in the settled parts) probably 30,000 or 40,000 aborigines, and it is awful to think that these are to be left, as at present, without law or supervision, to the haphazard mercy and management of every squatter who has capital or credit to take up country, and of every young scamp who may get appointed an officer of the Native Police.

APPENDIX.

While this pamphlet was in the press I received from Sydney a copy of the *Daily Empire*, containing the following letter from my former colleague in the Sydney Assembly, now a Member of the Queensland Assembly, and an old and much respected resident and sheep owner in that district. As my only wish is to let the truth and no more than the truth be known, I have delayed the publication of this pamphlet, that this semi-official reply to my allegations may go with it.

THE BLACKS IN QUEENSLAND.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE EMPIRE."

"Sir,—As one of those who have lived in Queensland almost from the time when the aboriginal ruled supreme over a vast territory, now redeemed from barbarism, in a great measure through the civilising enterprise of the pioneer settlers, it is with no ordinary feelings I have read the statements in your paper of the 2nd instant, relative to the alleged atrocities committed upon the blacks in Queensland, made by Mr. Gideon S. Lang, on a late occasion in Melbourne.

"Truly the appetite for the 'sensational' is proverbial and universal. It is not confined to any class or locality. It is as insatiable amongst the people of these matter-of-fact money-making colonies, as among the idle and wonder-loving sentimentalists in older countries, whose morbid tastes require the pen of the modern novelist and the declamations of the 'popular lecturer' to cater to their cravings for the marvellous. To supply this stimulant, so grateful to the multitude, is the vocation of a class possessing—whatever else they may lack in intellect—a superabundance of ideality, whether as 'sensational' writers or of that class of orators

who delight to make Exeter Hall the scene of harangues, too often employed under the influence of prejudice and ignorance, or what is in effect equally injurious to truth, false or erroneous information, to put a foregone construction upon some favourite theme they wish to illustrate. A writer or a speaker may be pardoned for extreme warmth upon a subject, whether abstract or practical, involving the welfare of any section of the human family, provided he does not distort the facts he appeals to, in denouncing wrong; and scrupulously careful should even the abstract reasoner or theorist be in quoting anything in support of his argument which is not based upon truthful grounds, and (when it involves the characters of others) upon facts which can be substantiated without being perverted. That a gentleman professing to have the lengthened experience as a colonist and as a practical squatter, that Mr. Gideon Lang does, should, under any excitement, or for any purpose, utter the strong aspersions he has done upon a body of men to which he himself would claim to belong, involves something more than the passing ebullitions of temper or caprice which sometimes stimulates the 'popular lecturer.' Had Mr. Lang been a denizen of an urban district all his life, and laid no claim to pioneering experience in the squatter life, there would scarcely have existed any occasion to notice the grave charges he has made. Whether Mr. Lang has had experience of the kind presumed, in a country where the native blacks were troublesome, I know not; but his remarks, until contradicted, go forth to the public as if he had had the requisite experience to constitute him an authority on the subject. Without meaning to give offence, my own impression is, from the tone and tenor of Mr. Lang's observations, he never could have had such experience amongst the wild blacks of the interior as to entitle him to be an authority on the subject on which he assumes so high a tone, or at all events to justify him in casting the sweeping reflections he has done upon those whose sense of honour and manly feeling, will, I should hope, at least bear comparison with his own. If Mr. Lang has not had the experience in the southern colonies to justify the tone of his remarks, it is a fact that he has never had such experience in Queensland, for with the exception of travelling with an old bushman over a portion of the Maranoa, and perhaps part of the Upper Daw-

son country in that colony many years ago for the purpose of taking up runs when grazing country had not acquired its present value, there is little shown of Mr. Lang's experience in Queensland, of which he was never a permanent resident. His knowledge, then, of the subject on which he is so vehemently, and, I cannot avoid saying, so disingenuously declaims, it is to be inferred can only be derived from hearsay, and the report quoted of a young and inexperienced officer of Native Police, who had been employed with his small detachment of men, under circumstances of unusual excitement, smarting under the feelings which the brutal murder of a brother officer, committed in the prosecution of his duty, would not unnaturally give rise to, and in a remote district where the wild blacks had collected in considerable numbers, and where, without adequate protection at the time, the lives of the comparatively few Europeans scattered, as is usually the case in outlying bush districts, over a wide area of country, were exposed to the attacks of a lot of lawless savages. In Queensland the unmeasured character of Mr. Lang's remarks would be treated in the manner their extravagance merits; no notice would be taken of such 'indiscriminate' assertions, but here or in Victoria, where the subject is not so well understood, it is undesirable that such statements as those made should be allowed to pass altogether unnoticed.

"Before I proceed to comment further on Mr. Lang's statements, I may mention that that gentleman and myself are not strangers to each other on the subject under discussion. When representing, in the New South Wales Legislature, before separation took place, the combined outlying northern districts, then comprised in one electorate, it became my duty to move for a select committee to inquire into the condition of the Native Police, with a view to the better organization of that force. In the course of my full investigation of the whole subject, an amount of evidence was taken, so ample and satisfactory in its nature, that the report of the committee was unanimously adopted, and a vote of £17,000 was granted for the support of the force, then, as since, considered absolutely essential for the protection of the lives and property of the remote settlers, and as an indispensable adjunct to the pioneering progress of the outlying northern districts. Mr. Lang was a member of the New

South Wales Legislative Assembly at the same time with myself. The period when the subject underwent such a full investigation was in the year 1856-7, a little more than eight years since.

“‘About ten years ago,’ Mr. Lang remarks, ‘I stated my determination to expose the whole system ;’ and continues, ‘Though the squatters acknowledged and lamented the occurrence of such atrocities, they remonstrated against doing away with the Native Police, unless I could show how they were to protect their people from large bodies of blacks, exasperated to the highest degree, yet unsubdued.’ Significant though this quotation from Mr. Lang’s own remarks is, I would ask him, could any reason, however apparently cogent, have justified his silence, with the strong views he professes to have held, under the belief that such horrible wholesale atrocities as he alluded to existed ? Why, then, did he fail to take advantage of the special opportunity afforded him, thoroughly to investigate the subject when it was essentially his duty, as a member of the Legislature to have done so ? And I would ask, is it to be supposed that a body of men, such as composed the select committee to which I have referred, would have recommended the continuance of a force by which such continual and indiscriminate slaughter was being perpetrated ? Or that a House of Assembly, consisting, as it did then, of a body of representatives in a great measure worthy of the confidence of the country, would have voted a not inconsiderable sum of money for the support of such a force ? I would take the liberty of recommending the evidence taken by, and the report of, that select committee, to Mr. Lang’s careful reperusal. The Native Police force of Queensland, ever since separation, has been conducted in the main, and in details, as closely as circumstances would permit, upon the principles recommended by the report ; but a grave difficulty has, of late, arisen from the smallness of the force having been found totally inadequate to overtake the greatly extended sphere of duty which the immense additional scope of country, recently occupied, has entailed : and the Government have, to meet the great and interesting difficulty of properly working the force, been obliged to send an officer to the Murray to select recruits. The Native Police is not intended to be an aggressive force—its object, is that of a protective or preventive police, and its duty is to patrol in the extreme outly-

ing districts—leaving the more settled districts in the care of the ordinary police after the blacks have become sufficiently civilized to abandon their hostile and treacherous habits. That collisions between the Native Police and the wild blacks will occasionally take place is inevitable, but that they occur so continually as Mr. Lang would appear to imply, is utterly untrue. Indeed, of late, the aggregate depredations committed by the blacks, and the consequent collision with them has been comparatively small. Mr. Lang would apparently wish it to be inferred that, in collisions with the blacks, the whites are always the aggressors, and that a desire exists, that they (the blacks) should be indiscriminately massacred and totally exterminated. I cannot believe that a man of Mr. Lang's 'colonial experience' can seriously maintain such a charge; it would be too foul a slander for any one in his position to utter. Mr. Lang, during his long career in Australia, cannot assert that he has ever known 'squatters,' in the true sense of this conventional term, as a body, guilty of cruelty to the blacks in any of the older colonies, and he cannot urge that the squatters of Queensland are of an inferior order, as regards education and character, to those of the southern colonies; and I would put it to his sense of propriety, whether men in any degree above the grade of the aboriginal himself, much more a class, the majority of whom are gentlemen in character, could be guilty of tacitly permitting the wholesale system of exterminating his charges would imply? I affirm, without fear of contradiction by those who are really practically conversant with the character of the blacks, that, as regards the question of aggression and extermination, the converse of the charge implied by Mr. Lang would be more nearly the truth amongst the savage tribes. Can Mr. Lang be ignorant of the Wills' massacre, under circumstances of atrocity certainly never exceeded in the history of any savages, and perpetrated upon a party who, one and all, from Mr. Wills, senior, downwards, had treated the blacks with the most marked kindness? Or does Mr. Lang forget the equally inhuman massacre of the whole of the defenceless Frazer family—mother and children, and household, some ten in number, on the Upper Dawson, which occurred some years previously? And how was it that these brutal murders took place? Simply from the absence of the police, who were even then

not in sufficient numbers to act as the Native Police were originally intended, as a protective force. And in such cases of barbarous atrocity, is to be wondered at that retributive justice should be executed upon the murderers, whom it may not always be possible to identify individually, but for whose diabolical acts the tribe to whom they belong, according to the laws of the savages, is well-known to be responsible? I deplore, as much as Mr. Lang, or the most enthusiastic Exeter Hall philanthropist, the necessity for bloodshed at all in our intercourse with the blacks; but I repeat, I utterly deny that in nine cases out of ten the whites are the original aggressors; and I anxiously look forward to the result which the Government are desirous of carrying out—that is, by the augmentation of the force, to render it sufficiently numerous to be employed as a continually patrolling force for the frontier districts, where by their presence, moving about from place to place, and on the principle that ‘prevention is better than cure,’ the causes of collision would in a great measure be controlled. As to the statement of Morrill, in which he alludes to the period ‘before the whites commenced destroying the blacks indiscriminately,’ I cannot understand what knowledge Morrill could have of the subject while in captivity for many years with the blacks in a remote part of the extreme north, and he could only have formed such an idea from the usual vague hearsay reports after his release.

“Before concluding I will only briefly observe upon a question in regard to which there may be a difference of opinion as a matter of theory, viz., allowing the blacks up in the frontier districts—that all practical and experienced men, with very few exceptions, agree, that the most humane and most judicious plan is not to permit them upon newly formed stations, for by keeping them at a distance for a time, the risk of misunderstanding, which an unrestricted intercourse with the shepherds at outstations might produce, is thus avoided.

“In what I have said in the foregoing remarks, my desire has not been to arouse angry feelings on the part of Mr. Lang, or those who may think with him—although I confess my own feelings of indignation have been somewhat moved by the statements he has expressed—my wish is to endeavour to correct the very erroneous impressions which Mr. Lang’s remarks regarding the treatment of the

blacks in Queensland may have created, and if he is not satisfied with what I have said, there are many beside myself who have spent years in the remote districts of the north, who will be quite ready, when required, to supply him with further information.

“ I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

“ GORDON SANDEMAN.”

First, Mr Sandeman denies my having sufficient experience to speak on the subject. I have been a squatter, a holder of sheep and cattle runs, since 1841; from 1841 to 1844 I was intimately acquainted with the proceedings of the men who were and had been taking up country, several of whom the Government tried for their lives under the Exeter-hall system, and two of my friends had to flee the country. One firm took up the Glenelg station in 1844, and the following year I joined them, when we took up country on the Adelaide side also, and encountered every kind of trouble with very heavy losses from blacks, and experienced both systems of Government with blacks till the end of 1848. We then went to the Murrumbidgee, where the blacks were still numerous, and though subdued, afterwards committed several murders, and I had to put a final end to “despersion” by giving notice, on being applied to for a supply of ammunition, that if persevered in, I should do my utmost to get the stockmen convicted. I then went to Moreton Bay in 1850, and first resided about two months at Warra Warra, with Mr. Colin M’Kenzie, and from him and other squatters received a very full account of all the troubles that had been in that district. I then proceeded to “travel over the Maranoa and a portion of the upper Denison country,” as Mr. Sandeman describes it. The whites had been driven to the east of Tannien Creek, and there kept at bay by the blacks for I think three years; Ferrett’s being the furthest out, and he holding his ground only through his desperate tenacity. The furthest post west on the Condamine was an outstation at Wambo, where I saw an empty dray arrive from Surat, escorted by five white men armed to the teeth. On reaching Surat, the commissioner’s quarters, they were almost in a state of seige, the only station north

being that of M'Enroe, afterwards burned, and he killed. When we bathed within 150 yards of the house, our boots, carbines, and ammunition had to be on the water's edge. About one report per week of collisions went to the Government, and every time Walker and I went exploring, there was an attempt to cut us off on our return to Surat; and on returning from making enquiries on the Maranoa as to Leichhardt's reported murder, we escaped by a miracle, having camped in the middle of the night within 300 yards of old Billy and 24 picked on the Cagoon, where they had arranged with our black boys to cut us off. I was out twice in pursuit of blacks; once with the Commissioner, and again with warrants issued by him for murderers, and altogether my four months' "travel," as Mr. Sandeman calls it, was a short but remarkably sharp piece of practical experience. During my twenty-four years in the colony the aborigines have been a constant subject of interest and enquiry. I have passed eleven years in the bush, more or less in contact with them; they during nearly three years of that time being either in a state of active hostility or dangerous peace.

I am not a blind partizan of the blacks; on the contrary, took the white view of the case entirely, until January 1846, when I formed one of a party in an attack upon a black's camp at Rivoli Bay, Adelaide. No mischief was done, but my conclusion afterwards was that if any one had been killed I would have been a murderer, and came to the determination to which I have adhered, never to shoot a black unless in circumstances which would justify me in shooting a white. My effort has always been to manage them without fighting, and my conviction is that, after they know the power of the white man, it is quite practicable.

Second, Mr. Sandeman's letter in no way affects the two main points of my allegation as regards the management of the blacks by the Queensland Government. First, that when the country is occupied there is no provision or arrangement whatever made for the location of the blacks, or the reservation of ground for their subsistence; everything being left to the discretion of each individual squatter.

Mr. Sandeman says, "Before concluding, I will only briefly observe upon a question in regard to which there may be a difference

of opinion as a matter of theory, viz., allowing the blacks up in the frontier districts—that all practical and experienced men, with very few exceptions, agree, that the most humane and most judicious plan is not to permit them upon newly formed stations, for by keeping them at a distance for a time the risk of misunderstanding, which an unrestricted intercourse with the shepherds at outstations might produce, is thus avoided.” If they are not to be allowed upon stations, or runs rather, for intercourse with out-stations can be prevented only by clearing the blacks bodily off the whole country occupied by the sheep, where in the name of Heaven’s mercy are they to go? Some few years ago I was informed by a squatter with whom I stayed for ten days in Ipswich, waiting for the Sydney steamer, that on many outside-stations men were hired simply and solely to protect the shepherds, and keep the stations free of blacks; that they were left to their own discretion how they did it; that his man went and came as he pleased, and sometimes was not seen for weeks together, but that he, the proprietor was satisfied, as the run was kept *perfectly free of blacks*. As this gentleman told me this in private conversation, and, though a kind and concientious man, apparently perfectly unconscious that he was employing a human ferret to hunt human rats, I shall not bring his name into this discussion, but Mr. Sandeman may have it for his private information.

I have no doubt, that Mr. Sandeman himself causes them to remove from his runs, with as much mercy and consideration as the circumstances will permit, but if a man of such well-known kindness of disposition as he, will advocate and practise such a policy, what can we expect of those who are neither kind nor humane, but act solely and entirely for their own immediate profit: can we possibly expect anything better than the “ferret and rat” system? Could a stronger argument be given in support of some such system of Government supervision as I propose, than such an opinion from such a man as Mr. Sandeman.

Third, Mr. Sandeman’s remarks as to my accusing the whole body of squatters of cruelty to the blacks I shall not notice, as he had evidently not seen the first part of the lecture, where exactly the contrary is stated. As a body they treat the blacks with great

kindness, and Mr. Pescher's denunciation in his report shows that many of them are protecting the blacks at all hazards ; but that there is any strong feeling in favour of the blacks, I must deny. Mr. Pescher would not have written, nor the Commissioner of Police have published his report, if there had been ; but the fact is that a general conviction appears to have been arrived at, that nothing can be done for the blacks, and that the sooner they are out of the way the better. The logical result follows ; and I re-assert that most cruel massacres have been, and are, perpetrated by some of the whites. While many, I believe most of the whites, are so disgusted that they not only refuse to join in any attacks upon the blacks, but shield and protect them, the cruelties of those who assist the black police in their work cannot be exaggerated. Mr. Sandeman alleges that I have gone upon vague reports. I have had, in the first place, the reports and paragraphs in the public papers as to difficulties and collisions, so continuous, that it would almost appear to people at a distance, that the principal business of the people at Queensland was to "disperse" blacks. But from the numerous Victorians who have now stations there, I have also got authentic information, not only as to the extent and mode of proceeding, but details of many cases. As Mr. Sandeman wishes me to "condescend to particulars," I shall give him one case, which I have on most undoubted authority, as a specimen : Not many months ago the blacks were in such large numbers near an outside station, that the manager became alarmed, and asked his neighbours to make a demonstration, that they might keep further off. About a dozen white men came, several of them gentlemen, and he went out with them, but not finding the blacks he went another way ; while separated he heard firing, and galloped back and remonstrated with them, stating that he did not want the blacks shot, that they had done no harm ; they told him they would shoot him if he interfered. The blacks stood in stupid despair, like a flock of sheep, and were shot down to a man. Whether the women and children were included I cannot say, as my informant, on my expressing my detestation, became alarmed for his friend and would say no more, and exacted a promise that I would

give no clue to time or place, lest his friend should be shot by some of the white party, to prevent him from giving evidence. I can give both to Mr. Sandeman, but only on giving the same promise ; for a different reason, however, namely, that this system of wholesale murder has arisen through the supineness and mismanagement of the Queensland Government, and if not legalized is practised openly, and officially reported by their own officers ; and if men are to be hanged as an example, it should be after fair warning given that blacks are in future to be considered human, and that slaughtering them shall be considered murder, even in Queensland.

My second allegation is, that when the outrages are committed by the blacks, they are left to be dealt with to the extent of putting them to death by "inexperienced young officers of native police," acting as judge, jury, and executioner.

Mr. Sandeman says I ground ~~my~~ allegation on the "report quoted of a young and inexperienced officer of native police, who had been employed with his small detachment of men, under circumstances of unusual excitement, &c." I must demur to this entirely. It is not now Mr. Pescher's report, it is that of the Commissioner of Police and of the Queensland Government ; so far as Mr. Pescher is concerned, he simply reports an ordinary proceeding of the native police, only rather more openly than usual. He not only attacks parties of blacks again and again, and disperses them with his own small detachment, but on the 10th he has a collision in which four detachments were engaged, two of them mustering twelve black troopers and two white officers, in all probably not less than twenty-four men, the officers at least armed with revolvers I understand, and many must have fallen, yet he no more thinks it necessary to state how many were killed and wounded than if they were rats. He was in a state of excitement I grant, but was the late Mr. Hill so when he attacked the nearest mob of blacks to punish them for a murder, committed by a black two months before? and more, was the Commissioner of Police excited when he published Mr. Pescher's report, with Mr. Hill's also before him, without publicly expressing even the mildest disap-

proval, thereby officially recognizing their mode of dealing with the blacks, as the correct one for the officers of native police, and as a natural sequence for white men generally.

I have again made most careful enquiry among those having stations in Queensland, some having been there themselves, others having managers, and their report is unanimous that there is no exaggeration in what I have said ; and they add, besides, that several of the officers, so far from restraining their men, are as bloodthirsty as they are ; * that when complaint is made of the blacks being troublesome, they readily interfere, and apply their only remedy—death ; how readily let the conversation between the late Mr. Hill and Mr. Rothery testify. No Turkish pacha ever proceeded to administer death on slighter evidence or trial, yet he only performed an ordinary duty in the ordinary way.

A friend with whom I have been on intimate terms for more than twenty years, a man of the most undoubted veracity, told me, since this lecture was delivered, that when on his way from his station to either Port Denison or Rockhampton, he and a friend saw, on emerging from the timber, a large body of blacks in an open plain, and who the instant they were sighted dropped as if shot ; they galloped up to them, when all, women and children as well as men, fled in a state of frantic terror. That night they met in the township an officer of native police, who asked them if they had seen any blacks, and where, and they told him. Within the next day or two he went out with his black police, caught them on the same or a similar plain, made an “awful slaughter” of them, and told them of it on his return.

Mr. Sandeman slights the assertion made by Morrill, the shipwrecked seaman, that since 1860 the blacks have been slaughtered indiscriminately, and asks where he could get his information. In his narrative, when he came in, he stated what any one acquainted with the blacks must know, that information had been conveyed from tribe to tribe long before the white reached him.

* It is only fair to mention that Mr. Pescher was not mentioned as one of these.

I would recommend Mr. Sandeman again to read over his narrative, of which I give a few extracts from Mr. Bonwick's work on the aborigines :

“ At the beginning of the present year he resolved to make himself known to his countrymen, who had established sheep stations as far as the tropics.”

“ He went to a waterhole, and removed some of the accumulations of preceding years, that he might shadow forth a resemblance to his former white self. Coming to the fence of the sheep-yard, and calling to mind the bit of English he could command, he sang out, ‘ What cheer, shipmate ? ’ Alarmed at this unaccountable salute, one looked out and exclaimed, ‘ Come out and bring the guns, Wilson. Here's a naked man on the fence that's white or yellow, but not black. ’ Fearing a shot, Morrill found words to say that he was only a shipwrecked seaman.”

“ He returned to his old friends to bid them farewell. They besought him to remain with them, if only to shield them from the violence of the new white neighbours. Earnestly did they tell him to beg of them not to shoot any more ; and if they would take the good land, at least to leave them the swamps and saltwater creeks. He promised them to devote his life to their interests.”

“ Morrill hoped for the authority of the Government to act as a mediator between the whites and blacks, as Mr. Gellibrand intended Buckley to do.”*

Morrill not only wished, but, I am told, actually beseeched the Queensland Government to allow him to devote himself to arranging between the white men and the blacks : can Mr. Sandeman say why they failed to use a means so providentially placed at their disposal ? They did what they do now—nothing ; the blacks are the business of the native police in Queensland.

Mr. Sandeman asks why I did not reveal all I have done now when in the Assembly with him ten years ago, and asks if I should not have done it as a duty. The great difficulty, almost impossibility, of getting the people engaged to give evidence was one

* “ The Wild White Man,” by James Bonwick. 1863.

reason; but I have felt ever since that it was a duty, and regretted not doing so at all hazards, every time these everlasting extracts from the Queensland journals about collisions and dispersions appeared in the papers; and I always felt also, as I did then, that I was not justified in proposing the disbandment of the native police until I could propose some other practicable plan of protection that the colony could afford. The growing prosperity of Queensland and the yearly increasing destruction of the blacks, capped by Mr. Pescher's report adopted by the Commissioner of Police and the Government, made another system quite practicable, and brought my endurance to an end; and now I shall relieve my conscience for my delay, by doing my utmost to get a more humane system introduced.

By the same steamer which brought Mr. Sandeman's indignant remonstrance, the Queensland papers, from which I make the following extract, also arrived.

The following leading article appears in the *Brisbane Courier*, (August 7), the leading paper I believe in Queensland: "The vote for the police force always occasions a discussion about the blacks, and the peculiar body of police which keeps them in order, and punishes them when they are guilty of crimes against the whites. Some of the members in the House spoke of the force as lawless, unmanageable, and disgraceful, and the cause of all the outrages committed by the blacks; while others praised it as most efficient and useful for the purpose of protecting settlers and others from the savages of the interior. Both the whites and the blacks were accused of the most atrocious cruelty. There were others who took a neutral ground, attributed the origin of outrages to both sides, and supported the black police as a necessary evil. The debate turned on the blacks themselves.

"To whatever cause it be owing, one fact cannot be denied, that the miserable creatures who once roamed unrestricted over the vast territory now occupied by our enterprising colonists, are fast disappearing. Their case is a hopeless one. It seems to be a general law that the encroachment of the whites brings about the extinction of the blacks. They disappear before the white man's face. No effort is

put forth to prevent their entire destruction ; on the contrary, their presence is not desired ; and it is at least in conformity with a common wish that they are dying out. They are of no benefit to us, and the poor, pitiable creatures, are only increasing their own misery by their intercourse with the whites. Some few people, perhaps, feel for them, but the generality never think about them at all. In the settled districts they are sometimes regarded as useful, but oftener as a nuisance. In the interior, where the only occupants of the soil are the squatter and his men, they are all branded with a common name—all regarded in one light—as natural enemies, whose weakness alone prevents them from retaining the land which consent once allotted to each separate tribe. They are looked upon as having but one characteristic, a hatred to the white man, and a desire to injure him and his property. If some commit an outrage the whole are considered guilty, under the principle that though all did not actually participate in the crime, yet they were as fully capable of it as the actual offenders. The difficulty of detecting the real criminals is obviated by a punishment of the whole, and the tribe suffers for the delinquencies of a few of its members. When they retaliate for a conceived injury, they are regarded as worthy of nothing but slaughter, are at once pursued, fired at, and perhaps some of them are shot down. Their fate appears inevitable. Every day the blacks are losing ground ; every day their numbers are diminishing, and if things continue there will ere long scarcely be one alive in the explored parts of Australia. The savages of the South Seas, not quite so low in the scale of intelligence, are being taught the truths of religion, but the poor natives of Australia must, it would seem, remain in utter ignorance of them.”

In the *Maryborough Chronicle*, 5th August, a local paper in the centre of these black troubles, is a leading article commencing so :—

“Are the blacks to be dealt with as human beings, ignorant, brutal, and degraded, but human still ? or are they to be treated as wild beasts.

“Suppose the latter—an awkward supposition though, but necessary from what we read and hear sometimes of the doings, amongst the aborigines, of some of Her Majesty’s subjects and servants.

"The law, as it at present stands, deals with them as co-equal in all their rights and attributes, with a few trifling exceptions in colonial enactments, with the civilized race."

"The Government do not deal with them after this law, so says the Chief Justice of Queensland. They have organized an illegal, but when properly officered, a very useful force. All depends upon the temperament and disposition of the officer. If he is a merciful man, and a man of intelligence and courage, he deals fairly but mercifully with them; if of a meaner nature, he indiscriminately slaughters them. It is an easier service, and he achieves the proud position of being considered a determined and active officer. Life and death, with no responsibility to human tribunal, is in his hands, without appeal, except to God. We cannot quarrel with this arrangement, because we cannot suggest a better."

The *Bulletin*, Rockhampton, another local paper, August 8th, 1865, in a leading article says, "There is already too much indiscriminate shooting of the blacks, and while the practice is continued outrages may be expected in retaliation. No sooner is an outrage by the blacks reported (*sic*) than troopers and squatters set out equipped with fire-arms, and every blackfellow within reach is shot down, without inquiry, without a thought as to whether provocation has been previously given."

At an influential meeting held at Rockhampton, His Worship the Mayor presiding, and reported in the *Bulletin* of 5th August, the climax is reached. After various resolutions, calling upon Government for more native police, &c., a resolution was moved, submitting to the Government that "the impending hazards to life justify the most serious apprehension of those placed in authority." After a long discussion the climax was reached.

"Mr. Cobham moved the following amendment to the motion:—

"That in the opinion of this meeting it should be made legal for any proprietor or *manager* of a station, with the concurrence of *one* magistrate, to organize a force on any station *threatened* by aborigines, or on which any outrage has been committed by them, to organize such force as may be necessary to disperse said blacks at once, and that no one engaged in such dispersion shall be liable to any legal penalty.

“Mr. Ellis seconded the amendment.

“The motion and amendment were submitted, and the amendment was carried ; only three hands were held up for the motion.”

If the Home Government in face of this, fail to interfere, on their head be the blood.

St. Kilda, Melbourne,
14th September, 1865.





