

THE ABORIGINES

THEIR PRESENT CONDITION

AS SEEN IN

NORTHERN SOUTH AUSTRALIA,
THE NORTHERN TERRITORY,
NORTH-WEST AUSTRALIA AND
WESTERN QUEENSLAND

BY

J. R. B. LOVE

*Travelling under Honorary Commission
from the Board of Missions
of the*

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
OF AUSTRALIA
1913-14



Printed for Private Circulation.

Melbourne :
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Foreword

HE Board of Missions of the Presbyterian Church of Australia has sincere pleasure in issuing this Report, and is convinced that it will do much to arouse interest in the cause of our aboriginal tribes in Australia, and to deepen that interest among those who already have the welfare of the aborigines at heart. It embodies the results of two years of travel and investigation into the condition of the natives of unfrequented regions, by Mr. J. R. B. Love, a son of the manse and student from South Australia. Mr. Love carried his helpful work through without financial aid of any kind from the Church. The cost of printing the Report has been generously borne by R. Barr Smith, Esq., of South Australia. To him and to Mr. Love the Board of Missions tenders hearty thanks on behalf of the Church.

ALEX. STEWART
Convener

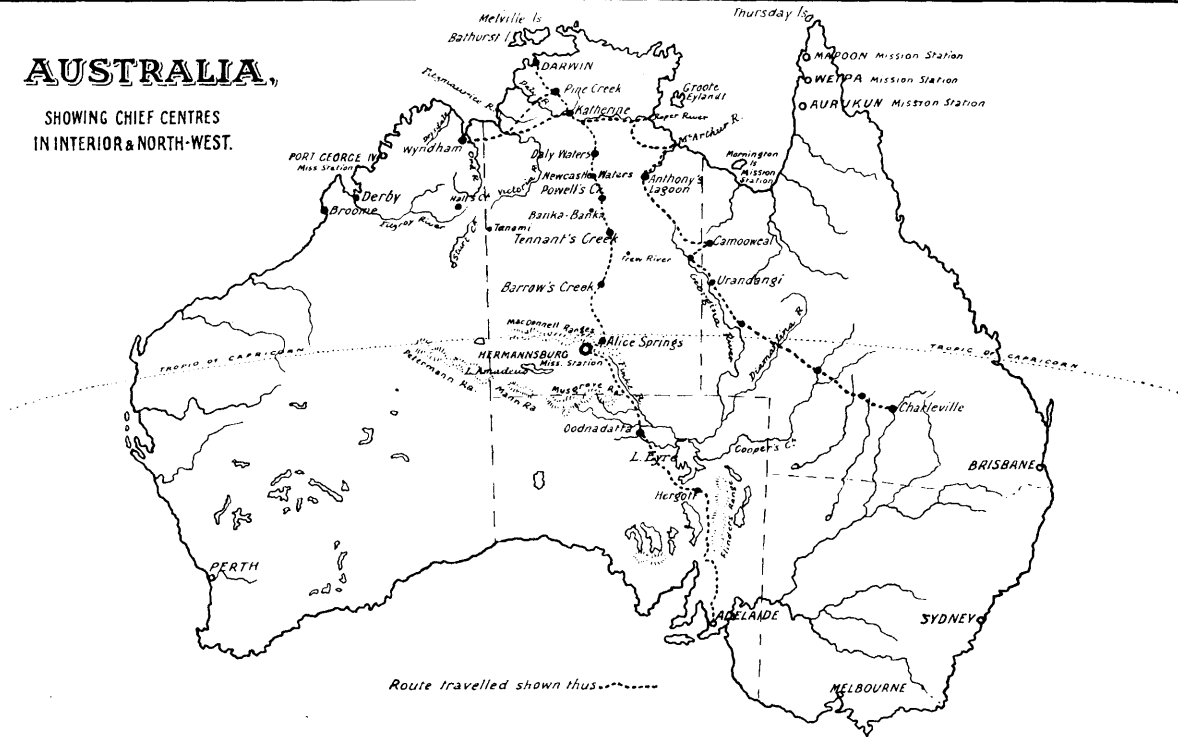
T. W. LEGGATT
Secretary

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AUSTRALIA,

SHOWING CHIEF CENTRES
IN INTERIOR & NORTH-WEST.



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To the Board of Missions

Presbyterian Church of Australia

Gentlemen,—

On September 24th, 1912, you favoured me with an honorary commission to enquire into and report to you upon--

1. The present conditions of life among the aborigines of the settled and unsettled parts of Australia.
2. The approximate numbers at various localities.
3. The suitability of various places as centres for the mission work of the Church among the aborigines.

I forwarded letters from Alice Springs, from Darwin and from Borroloola.

I now venture to submit to your consideration the appended report, in which I have tried, to the best of my ability, to give a fair and unprejudiced representation of the present condition of the aboriginal people as I have seen them, with such suggestions as I believe will aid in the uplifting of this extremely interesting and most neglected race.

I would not wantonly offend any, but, in speaking of a people such as these, who are subject to much indifferent neglect and a certain amount of deliberate wrong, no less than well-intentioned folly, it is apparent that the truth must inevitably hurt some. I can only say that I have endeavoured to avoid a narrow-minded sympathy with, or hostility towards, the missionary, the stockman, and the travelling "bushwhacker," the three parties most concerned with the aborigines in their daily life.

You will notice that I place the position of the children as of first importance, with care of the aged and infirm and employment of the able-bodied as the next considerations.

The care of the children is particularly the province of the Christian Church. To take the hundreds of boys and girls, of aboriginal and mixed blood, who are now growing up, mostly in idleness and, I am convinced, almost invariably in immorality, in the camps, and to give them such a sound Christian and industrial training as will at least give them a chance to live a decent and useful life, is surely a splendid call.

I have the honour to be,

Gentlemen,

Faithfully yours,

J. R. B. LOVE.

Charleville,
Queensland,

August 8th, 1914.

The Aborigines

I.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

1.—Flinders Range District.

For the purposes of this report we may pass over the remnants of the aboriginal tribes now living in a more or less civilised condition in the southern part of the State.

In the north the aborigines have almost disappeared from the settled parts. A few families remain on some of the sheep stations, where they find employment and good treatment.

The rendezvous for the last of the Flinders Range tribes is at the Government camel depot at Mt. Serle, near Leigh's Creek. Here as many as forty blacks gather at times for a holiday, to renew old acquaintance, and to practise what few of their ancient customs still remain to them. After their holiday is ended they disperse again to their various stations, where they build their characteristic little round huts of bent sticks, roofed with leaves, rags, and any old sheets of tin that may be lying about the station rubbish heaps.

The men chiefly spend the greater part of their time in stock-work on the station; the women are welcome as domestics and washerwomen; while the very few children that are found amongst these civilised blacks are usually treated almost as pets by the white men on the stations.

2.—Hergott to Birdsville.

In the north-east part of the State the Lutheran missionaries have worked on bravely for some forty years at the Killalpaninna Mission Station on Cooper's Creek, with out-stations at Etladinna, Kopperamanna and Blazes Well. Of late years the Station has not prospered very well. Venereal and throat diseases have carried off the blacks with terrible rapidity. When I visited this station in 1910 there were thirteen children attending the Mission School, out of a total of one hundred and sixty-five blacks on the station. I was informed that, in the early days of the mission, there were over one hundred children present.

The fact that, for the year 1910, this station registered eighteen deaths and one birth (the child dying since) is painfully eloquent testimony that in a few years there will be no Mission Station on Cooper's Creek.

Yet few who have seen the kindly missionaries at work on the Cooper, or witnessed such scenes as the little black children playing kindergarten games with Mrs. Riedel, while the old men and women sat about on the sand, chuckling with delight, will say that all that time, labour and expense have been in vain.

Far back in the Northern Territory and Queensland, travellers meet and talk, with a kindly laugh, of old Mr. Vogelsang and the other missionaries, who once worked on the Cooper Station. Religious men these travellers seldom are, but they usually agree that the German missionaries have always been the best of good people. Living cheerful and refined lives, on salaries pitifully small, they have spread an influence that has touched many whites as well as blacks, and that will be remembered when the Cooper blacks have become extinct.

3.—Far North.

From Hergott Springs to Oodnadatta one may fall in with a camp of, perhaps, twenty blacks, living to a great extent in their primitive condition. A camp is frequently

to be found alongside one of the large waterholes of Stewart's Creek, where the blacks fish and hunt for ducks and other birds, goannas, snakes and rabbits. The men will frequently work for a time under whites, secure a supply of clothes, tobacco and rations, then go off to join their friends, wherever they may be camped at the time.

Oodnadatta itself has a fairly large number of blacks. One sees the men sweeping, chopping wood, and doing odd jobs, while the women wash, or nurse the children of their white employers. As nurses, the black "gins" (women) are excellent. I have never seen an aboriginal woman strike or ill-use a child.

I noticed two black children attending the State School with the white children. The majority of the black children run wild about the town.

No doubt these blacks are well fed and more or less clothed, though their accommodation leaves much to be desired. The usual blacks' home is the round "humpy" constructed of bent sticks, covered with rags and tin. In one of these "humpies" will live the entire family, including a pack of mongrel dogs. A small fire smoulders constantly before the entrance, round which the men and women sit and smoke, while the children play near by.

Left to themselves, the blacks will always build such huts, living in one till tired of the locality, when they either evacuate or burn the old hut and build a fresh one. When built of boughs and leaves in the bush they are well enough as temporary shelters, though hardly suitable for township residences.

4.—West and North-West of Oodnadatta.

That portion of Australia which lies on the boundaries of South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, including Lake Amadeus, the Musgrave, Mann and Petermann Ranges, is still practically terra incognita.

Opinions differ as to the number of aborigines living in this country. A member of one exploring party informed me that he had seen, in the Musgrave Ranges, a camp containing about three hundred aborigines. A member of the late Mr. Frank George's ill-starred party told me that the blacks in the Petermann Ranges were numerous and aggressive. It was here that they were attacked in 1905, one member of the party losing an eye from a spear-wound.

On the other hand, Mr. Allan Davidson, the discoverer of Tanami, reports that he saw very few aborigines west of the overland telegraph line.

Much depends on the season of the year. In a good season the blacks are scattered far and wide, hunting for food. In a dry season they flock in to the permanent waters, there to struggle for a living till the next rains.

A traveller may be fortunate enough to fall in with a large camp of blacks who have assembled, from frequently hundreds of miles apart, for a corroboree, to use the term generally used by the whites to denote a meeting of the blacks for religious ceremonies, amusement and friendly re-unions.

Vague rumours are heard of large permanent waters hidden away in these ranges, to which no white man has yet found his way, but it is very doubtful if any large permanent water exists, though it is probable that water can frequently be obtained at fairly shallow depths, as at times one finds a "mickri," or native well, containing water.

In time of severe drought the blacks flock in to the stations west of Alice Springs, to the overland telegraph stations, and to the northern waters as far as Victoria River downs. It is likely that such gatherings drain the very heart of the unknown country.

Here lies a very alluring field for the missionary, and ethnologist. Living absolutely under primitive conditions, dependent for their daily food on the stone tomahawk and stone-and-fire-worked wooden implements,

they still maintain the ancient customs which have largely disappeared from the settled parts. The fact that a member of one exploring party brought back with him a fair-haired boy from the Petermann Ranges proves that the white man's influence has penetrated to this remotest corner of the desert, most probably through the travelling into station waters of the blacks during drought.

It is extremely desirable that a well-equipped expedition should ascertain the exact position as regards the desert tribes of the west-central part of the Continent, on both religious and ethnological grounds.



II.

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

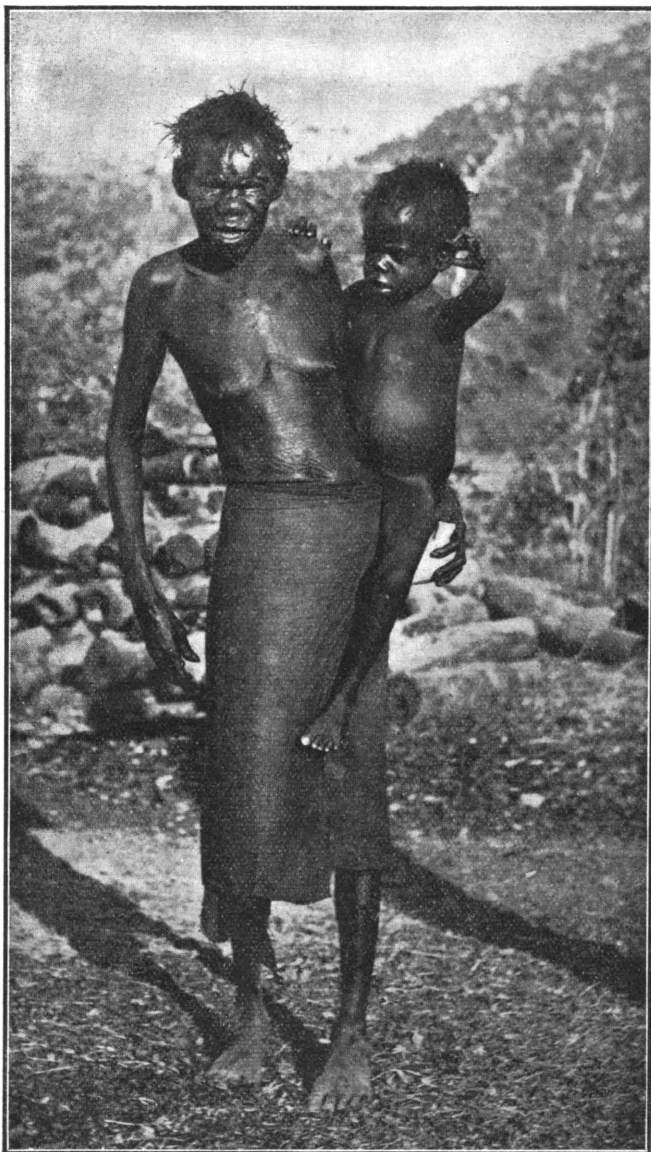
1.—Alice Springs District: Charlotte Waters to Barrow Creek.

Excepting those tribes living in the western part of the MacDonnell Ranges, and beyond to the west and north-west, the blacks of the southern part of the Northern Territory may be described as semi-civilised. Most can speak a few words of English, though few can speak more than a halting "pidgin" English.

On the cattle stations, as far north as the MacDonnell Ranges, the usual custom is for the blacks' camp to be placed near the station homestead, within a quarter of a mile. The station managers insist that the blacks shall camp near the homestead, and forbid them to camp at their pleasure on any part of the run. With the blacks near the station, the manager knows that the cattle are fairly safe. If the blacks were scattered about on the run, they would, of course, help themselves to beef at their pleasure. Apart from the actual amount of beef consumed, the stations would suffer chiefly from the wildness of cattle that were being constantly hunted, and also from the loss of wounded beasts, as the spear seldom kills outright.

When they wish to hunt for kangaroos, goannas, roots, seeds or any other edible commodity, they will inform the manager as to the direction they propose to take. He will then make it his business to ride that way, and see that cattle are not molested.

The camps are much the same at each station: a dozen or more of the shabby and dirty little "humpies." At two places, however—Alice Springs and Henbury Station—the huts are quite respectable affairs, built with



AN UGLY BLOT ON AUSTRALIA

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a ridge pole and thatched roof and walls. These are of more civilised construction. In fact, one energetic Alice Springs blackfellow follows the calling of builder, building a hut for any of the tribe at a cost of half-a-crown.

At each station are found from twenty to fifty blacks of all ages. Of this number the station will employ from six to twenty "boys," as the men of all ages are called. These boys are stockmen, and in the southern part of the Northern Territory it is now customary to pay the boys wages. The usual wage at present paid to an aboriginal stockman is 10/6 per week, in addition to food. One station, which draws all its stock-water from wells by means of donkeys and double whips, pays from £1 to £1/4/6 per week to a boy and his gin, who operate the whip. In passing, it may be remarked that the boy sits at the well-head and simply guides the bucket and pulls the string to release the water, while the gin walks backwards and forwards, driving the donkeys as they raise and lower the buckets. Boys, when on the road with travelling cattle, receive 14/6 per week.

It is encouraging to note that the principle of paying wages for labour performed by blacks is finding its way into the interior. The wages are small, but one acquainted with the blacks will understand that the boy's small wage is more just than at first it might appear.

At each station is a camp of, perhaps, fifty blacks. Of this number probably on an average six boys are constantly employed by the station. They are fed and paid wages. One or two of their gins, employed in the domestic work of the station, are also fed and clothed. The remainder of the camp live partly by hunting and partly on the beef which they receive from the station. These stations kill about one bullock per week. The whites take what they want and leave the bones and a good share of the beef for the blacks. The blacks' share amounts to about a third of the total beef killed. The managers almost invariably take care that the old and decrepit shall get a share, and it is customary for

the manager to give the blacks a Christmas treat at his own expense.

Of course this does not supply the needs of the blacks; very far from it. The position is this: Station managers are employed to produce the greatest possible returns from their stations. Mission stations, which have for their sole ends the uplifting and support of the blacks, find it difficult to make financial ends meet. Obviously, then, a cattle station can hardly be expected to return a handsome dividend to its owners and at the same time support comfortably all the blacks who may live on the run.

The private generosity of the managers, even with the station policy of allowing a certain amount of beef, fail to meet requirements. One finds as a rule that the children are well fed. The young men and women, who are able to hunt, procure enough native food supplies ("bushy tuckout" in "pidgin" English) to satisfy them. The old men, by an ingenious system of banning certain foods—usually the choicest—to the young people, get a good share of whatever the younger men and women catch.

The unfortunate old women are in a sad position. At no time does a blackfellow give much consideration to his gin, except in a few rare instances. He will eat his fill of, say, a goanna, and when satisfied, throw the remains over his shoulder to his gin, who squats on the ground behind him, waiting, with the children and dogs, for her share. I have known of a blackfellow to eat part of a goanna and lay the rest aside. His gin, thinking her lord had finished his meal, took the goanna and began to eat, when the angry buck felled her to the earth with his boomerang for daring to help herself before he had finished.

Be that as it may, the gins do the greater part of the food gathering. While the bucks take their spears to hunt for kangaroos, turkeys, and other big game, the gins collect seeds, roots, fruits, grubs and goannas, and

I have a shrewd suspicion that if the gins should find two goannas, they will cook and eat one before returning to the camp with the other. In the same way the children who, when little, go with the mother, will get a good share of food in the bush, away from the camp.

When the blackfellow gets too old for vigorous hunting, he becomes entitled to the delicacies which he dared not eat in his youth, and so receives ample food from the younger members. Thus, for instance, in certain parts young blacks must not eat wild turkey, but by all means can catch it, and give it to the old men. Young blacks must not eat rock wallaby, nor wood-duck, nor emu fat, nor other things according to the local food supplies. The result is that, in a fairly good season, the old men are all in good condition, sleek and glossy-skinned.

The poor old gins have no such comforting restrictions for their benefit. Unable to hunt well for themselves, they subsist on any odd scraps they can get. In every blacks' camp I have seen, from Oodnadatta to Darwin, and to the west and east, there are from one to a dozen underfed old women; frequently they are simply starving. In time of drought old and young suffer.

The blacks invariably persist in keeping hordes of mongrel dogs. These are of little or no use, and are never properly fed. One is somewhat relieved to know that in severe seasons the blacks frequently eat the dogs, and so make some small use of them.

Strangely enough, though they do not feed their dogs, they are apparently very fond of them. Pups are never killed as encumbrances. To kill a blackfellow's dog is to offend him mortally. On several occasions that have come under my notice, when the blacks were not desired in certain places, the white men rode to the camp and opened fire, not on the blacks, but on the dogs. When several dogs had bitten the dust the blacks decamped. One camp I saw had in it a pup with a broken leg. The wretched creature, a mere handful of mangy skin and bone, crawled about the camp in misery, yet none

dreamed of killing it. When a dog dies, the blacks usually cry and howl over it, finally according it the same burial as is given to a man of the tribe. It is not uncommon, in certain districts, to find a dead dog wrapped in bark and placed in the fork of a tree. Without the dogs the blacks would be better off.

Government ration depots have been maintained at various places. In time of drought rations are certainly needed by all, but in a fair season it is difficult to distribute rations justly. If they are given only to the old and helpless, the whole camp share the rations as soon as the recipient returns to the camp, and an old gin is lucky if she gets even a fair share of what was issued to her.

The question of morality among blacks that come into contact with the whites is one that is most serious and painful. It cannot be denied that the standard of morality among the white men of the interior is low. But, however it may be deplored, it is futile to pretend that the present condition of living among the bushmen is other than the inevitable result of a life that necessarily brings whites in daily contact with blacks, without any restraining or uplifting influence whatever.

A young man may go into the bush for the sake of a free life, excitement, or other reason, with the best intentions in the world, more probably with no particular intentions, good or bad. Several years of separation from all that he once knew of uplifting influences, and of daily growing familiarity with bush standards will almost certainly deaden his moral sensitiveness.

But let those who would censure the bushman reflect that a heavy debt lies at the door of the Christian Churches, which have allowed a generation to go by, and a fresh generation of bushmen to arise without a word of exhortation and encouragement in the struggle.

The work of the Australian Inland Mission, which, in the name of the Presbyterian Church, has been inaugurated by the Rev. J. Flynn, should, in time, have a vast

influence on the character of the interior. So far, help received for this mission has been exceedingly encouraging, and it is hardly too optimistic to regard it as probably one of the strongest forces in shaping the future of the interior of this Continent.

Similar fine work is being carried on in Queensland, under the Church of England, by the Bush Brotherhood, and in 1913-1914, the Rev. Mr. Wilkinson, of the same Church, was pluckily travelling through the Northern Territory with his two black boys, and plain pack horses.

To all such attempts to introduce a sane, sympathetic and broad-minded standard into the interior, we can lend our hearty support.

These schemes, however, all deal directly with the whites. To return to our own subject. The most serious feature of the aborigines question is, to my mind, the fate of the children in the blacks' camps.

In 1912 the number of half-caste children under the apparent age of fifteen years in the Alice Springs district was estimated at one hundred and nineteen; of quadroons twenty-one. I should say that, as nearly as I can judge, there are more than twice this number of full-blooded aboriginal children. These numbers refer, of course, only to the aborigines who are in contact with the whites, and do not refer to the outlying desert tribes, whose numbers can only be guessed at.

At times one is startled to find, in a blacks' camp, children with white skins and golden hair: quadroons, of course; that is to say, the children of half-caste mothers and white fathers. Of course, these children are no better than the others, yet it seems particularly painful that these children should be growing up to the life of the camps—in a word, white savages.

The woman in a blacks' camp has no possibility of a life of virtue, not that such an idea enters her head. As far as the tribal customs remain, the men lend their wives to each other, within strictly recognised limits,

but there is no limit to the white man, and I believe I am not exaggerating when I say that probably every gin in any blacks' camp in the interior is at the disposal of any passing traveller for the price of a stick of tobacco or a piece of damper.

One cannot well blame the blacks. Life is never too easy for them, and frequently food is hard to obtain. The white man has flour, tea, sugar, and above all, tobacco, and perhaps some spare clothing and a few yards of Turkey twill. The gin sees no wrong in obtaining the coveted luxuries easily, and comes to the traveller's camp of her own accord, brought by an older gin, or sent by her aboriginal husband.

The blame rests largely with ourselves, in that we allow children to grow up to such a life, and make no attempt to take them from it and lift them to a higher level.

Not infrequently one finds the white man caring for his half-caste child, and bringing it up to the best of his ability, in some cases sending the child to a school or mission station during its tender years, and finally taking the child back under his own care.

In two cases that came under my notice, the father had drawn his will in favour of his half-caste son, bequeathing him his property, a considerable amount in both cases. Such cases, however, are distinctly in the minority. The majority of white fathers do not care, and probably do not even know of their child's existence.

A proposal has been made, to convert a certain station in the Alice Springs district into a Government Station for the training of aborigines, and raising of stock.

It is an open secret that this station is the Lutheran Mission Station at Hermannsburg, on the Finke River, 85 miles west of Alice Springs. Some account of this station may not be out of place.

In 1877 Messrs. Schwarz, Kempe and Schulz started from Taminda, in South Australia, with waggons and

supplies, for the Finke River, which had been recommended to the Lutheran Church as a centre for missionary enterprise by the Government of the time.

After eighteen months' travelling they arrived at the site of the present mission station, and set to work to establish themselves, and to win the confidence of the blacks. Six months passed before friendly relations were established. Ten years passed before the first baptism of an aboriginal into the Christian faith. When the present superintendent of the mission, Mr. Streplow, arrived, there were some thirty-five blacks on the station. To-day there are about one hundred and fifty—the birth rate slightly exceeding the death rate—and fresh arrivals coming in from time to time.

The present inhabitants of the mission station are principally of the Arunta tribe, made famous to the ethnological world by the work of Messrs. Spencer and Gillen. Arunta is the language spoken on the station, English also being taught in the school. Next in numbers are those of the Loritcha tribe, living to the west of the Finke, and also members of various tribes from the surrounding country.

In time of drought the blacks come in from the desert, and mostly depart again when the rains come. It is not to be wondered at that they should prefer the untrammelled life of the wild. An excellent plan is that adopted by the Anglican missionaries on the Roper River, of encouraging the blacks to leave their children at the mission station, where they shall be cared for and taught, the parents being free to visit the children, and even, if they so wish, to take them away into the bush. Such children usually soon come back from their bush holiday, gradually growing less and less anxious for a "walk-about."

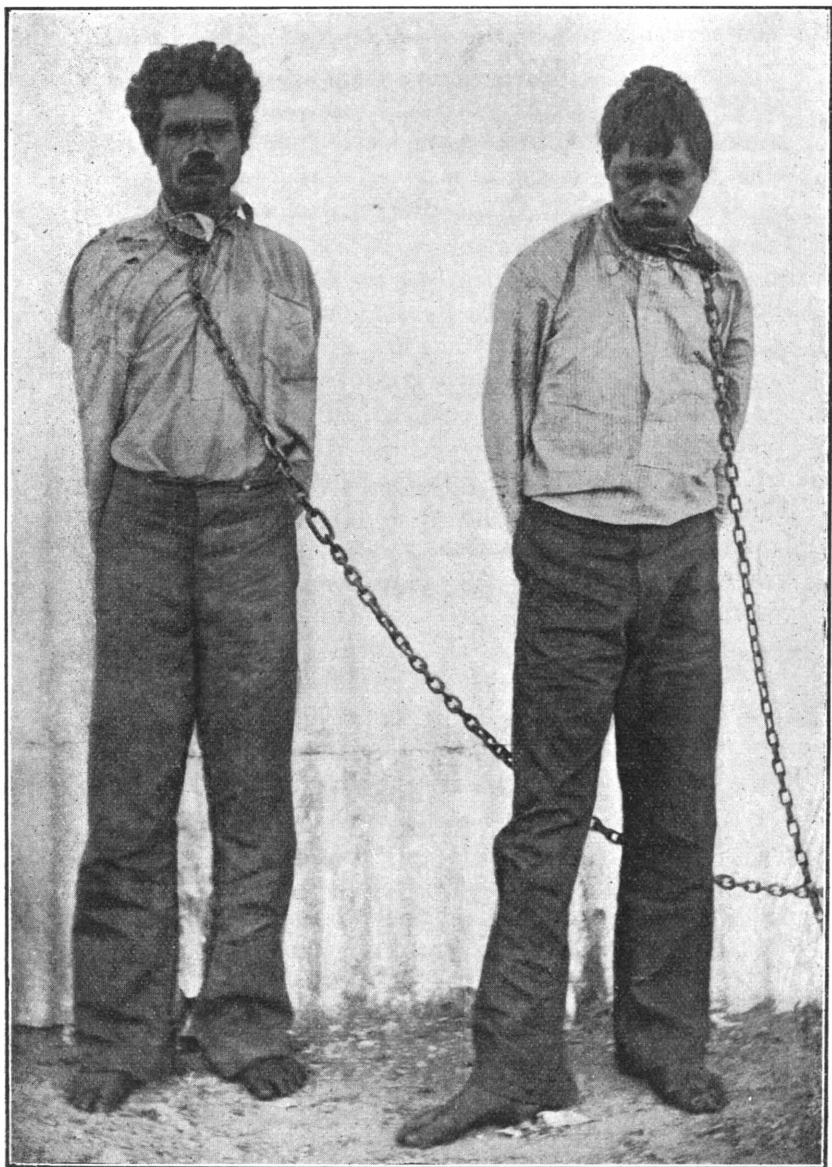
The Hermannsburg Station has lately been subject to a considerable amount of adverse criticism. Some of such criticism has been justified, and some of it not so.

With regard to the religious work of the mission, it would hardly appear just to accept the criticism of a non-religious or, perhaps, even an anti-religious man.

Perhaps I may be allowed to venture a candid opinion of this station. In the first place let me say that I have personally the strongest regard for the Lutheran missionaries, both on the Finke and on Cooper's Creek, as gentlemen, as devoted missionaries, and as the embodiment of kindness and hospitality. They will, I hope, forgive me if I state what are, I believe, defects in their work, while applauding the undoubtedly good work achieved.

It has been said that the Hermannsburg blacks are dirty. This I deny. The habit of personal cleanliness is hard to instil into the aboriginal mind, and Hermannsburg has not entirely overcome this difficulty. The rows of plump, bright-faced little boys and girls in the school-room, with hair combed and glistening black eyes and white teeth, were to me one of the most pleasant sights of the interior. True, one small rascal had to be sent back to perform his ablutions: an occurrence not unknown among white children.

It has been said that the blacks are ill-dressed. This I emphatically deny. On one day in each week each gin washes and mends her own clothes, and those of her family. When dry, the clean clothes are folded and taken to the head missionary to be placed, under his direction, in the store till the end of the week, when all hands receive a change of clothes. New clothes are issued to all hands four times in each year. Here and there I did see a dirty and ragged aboriginal. The explanation will not be surprising to those who have had experience of the ways of the aborigines. Blacks frequently come in to the mission station, with no intention of staying and submitting to mission influences, but simply to get what they can and see their relatives. It must be remembered that all members of a tribe are more or less closely related, the Australian marriage code



(Copyright J. Flynn)

TWO ABORIGINES—
AND A CHOICE OF MORALS

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to prevent the evils of consanguinity being one of the marvels of the ethnological world. Particularly will these visits take place at the time of distributing fresh clothes.

A mission gin will meet a ragged relative, and promptly exchange her new dress for the old, dirty one. This habit is, of course, excellent in its way: the essence of true socialism; but it is often annoying to those who have aborigines in their employ.

I have known a boy to receive a new stockwhip, costing £2, 10/0, from a station manager, and next day to exchange it for a worthless trifle from an outside boy.

Similarly, the blacks will share their food, and, indeed, any article, with their bush relatives.

The discipline of this station has been criticised. This criticism was made at an inopportune time in the history of the mission. Personally, I think a little muscular Christianity is sometimes an excellent thing in dealing with blacks. On this point, however, opinions will differ, and who so liable to public obloquy as the missionary who delivers what may be a thoroughly deserved punishment?

It has been said that the blacks are ill-fed. The best reply to this is the condition of the blacks themselves. The Arunta are, as a rule, tall, well-built, and not very plump. The Hermannsburg members of the tribe were, when I saw them, a fine body of men and women. Indeed, these and the blacks of the north-east coast of the Northern Territory, are people of magnificent physique. The chief article of diet at Hermannsburg appeared to me to be soup or stew, and, though manifestly nourishing, I think a more varied diet might be supplied without extravagance, and to the greater contentment of the blacks themselves.

An idea seems to be prevalent among a good many people that this and other mission stations are money-making concerns. To those who know the salaries paid to missionaries, and the anxious canvassing necessary to secure support for the missions, such a notion seems

hardly worthy of consideration, yet it is surprising how wide-spread it is, even among some otherwise well-informed persons.

The financial basis of Hermannsburg is cattle raising. With the free lease of the land, and the Government annual grant of £300, the station by itself is practically self-supporting. Freight on goods delivered at the mission station amounts to about £400 yearly.

Hermannsburg is carried on by the Lutheran Church, in conjunction with the mission station at Killalpaninna, on Cooper's Creek, in South Australia. The latter station, from several causes, entails a considerable loss.

It has been stated that the Hermannsburg Station sends money home to Germany. The truth might add that the German Lutherans send financial assistance to these two stations, which repay what they can—less than the amount received, as the missions have several times been in danger of abandonment owing to lack of funds:

One great problem is the employment of all the aborigines. It does not take many persons to work a cattle station. Agriculture is out of the question in Central Australia, beyond gardening, carried on by means of well water. While any Central Australian station contains many aborigines, some of them will be partly idle unless suitable industries can be introduced. This, I believe, can be done.

I am inclined to think that this, and other mission stations that I have seen, suffer from two main defects: they are over-staffed, and too little opportunity of self-reliance is allowed the blacks,

Many men insist, and thoroughly believe, that a black-fellow cannot be trusted to carry on any work alone. They have the opportunity, and, as long as the black-fellow is watched and shepherded at every point, so long will he need to be.

Undoubtedly it would be foolish to place an untaught blackfellow in a position of trust. His shifts to avoid

work are often very ridiculous. Much depends on the training he has received since childhood, for, excepting the colour of his skin, the aboriginal child is much the same as any other.

Two capable and practical men: one to take charge of the religious and secular instruction, the other a stockman and handicraftsman, should, with their wives, be ample staff for a mission station. If the mission cannot train members of the tribe to take minor positions of trust, the mission has so far failed.

Apart from mission stations, I have met with, and known of a half-caste head stockman, half-caste drovers, a half-caste drover owning his own plant of working horses, half-caste teamsters and horse-breakers.

I have not heard of a full-blooded aboriginal occupying a responsible position; not, I believe, because he is unable to do so, but because the colour prejudice, which will frequently be waived in favour of a half-caste, absolutely bars an aboriginal from associating with whites.

In the cattle-camps, stations and towns, the half-caste will frequently be seen at meals with white men; the full-blooded black invariably takes his meals in his fingers, and sits on the ground apart.

It would be foolish to argue that all men are equal. The blackfellow is inferior and must necessarily remain so, but he is by no means so inferior as to be unable to rise above the level of a working animal.

The accommodation of the blacks is a difficult question. When an aboriginal has died in a building none of the tribe will live in it again. This is a problem that is usually solved by the simple method of burning the hut in question. However, it is by no means hopeless, and while the older people might be allowed to continue in their flimsy huts, it is very desirable for a mission station to be equipped with substantial and airy boys and girls' dormitories.

Considerable ill-feeling has been aroused over the question of locking girls' dormitories at night. One moment's reflection will reveal the absolute necessity of such a course, though most decidedly dormitories must be airy and sanitarily equipped. As for the girls' opinion of the matter, I could not see that they felt the restraint unnecessarily. When dismissed at bed-time, all ran off laughing and singing, which continued till one by one they dropped to sleep.

Concerning the religious work of Hermannsburg: It is possible that all stations at times suffer from a certain amount of stagnation. What is at first spiritual exaltation and exercise of devotion, may in time become partly matter of habit. Mission stations are not alone in this respect. The remedy is change of scene, which is to be obtained by regular furlough, and sufficient salary to the missionary to enable him to take his furlough.

After all arguments for and against this and other mission stations that I have seen, the strongest argument in favour of Christian missions is in the faces of the aborigines themselves. I here unhesitatingly repeat my conviction, by which I have unfortunately offended some good people, that the faces of mission blacks, on the whole bear a brightness that is not seen in the faces of blacks in the bush camps, or on the cattle stations.

It has been argued that the change is due to regular feeding, washing and clothing; but there is something more, which has impressed not myself alone, but others, both of religious and non-religious tendencies. Call it what you will, I can only attribute this bright look to the influence of Christianity, as taught by unselfish persons, who love the blacks they teach.

More than one man has said to me that the blacks cannot understand Christianity. I will not say that the blacks understand every sermon on Christianity that is preached to them, nor for that matter could I wholly understand some of such sermons myself, but the essential principles of Christianity are within the comprehension of the humblest.

Speaking technically, as an ex-State School teacher, I am bound to admit that the secular instruction on the mission stations is in some respects far from perfect, yet the missionaries lacking, as a rule, technical knowledge of the methods of teaching, have achieved what we, the critics, might fail to do, in that they have most surely instilled the Light that shines in the eyes of these people.

A photograph is in my possession of a group of aborigines at Killalpaninna on a Christmas Day. A number of "myall" (wild) blacks came in to the station to share the treat. Several persons, who have never seen these blacks, when asked to pick out, from the looks in their faces, the myalls from amongst the mission blacks, did so unflinchingly. What argument could be more forceful?

Should the Government take over the control of the Hermansburg Station, a fine work may be done in effecting improvements and revivifying the work of the station, provided that the main issue is not neglected. Work amongst the aborigines is not a question of successfully raising stock. It concerns the souls of men.

While religion without sound industry is idle, industry without religion is worthless.

In June, 1913, I was accorded the privilege of an interview with the Administrator of the Northern Territory. Dr. Gilruth stated this opinion, that it is the duty of the State to care for the physical needs of its people, black as well as white, and the duty of the Church to care for their spiritual needs.

The religious instructor who will also undertake a share in the everyday work of the station, will be welcomed in the event of the establishment of a Government aboriginal institution. The prime need is for a volunteer to inaugurate the work. He must be a married man. His chief qualification is to be his character. Next, Dr. Gilruth advises a knowledge of agriculture.

The work awaits a leader!

Whatever may be the case in the south of this Continent, work for the aborigines in the centre and north of Australia is not merely a question of smoothing the pillow of a dying race. It is a question of training and utilising good material in the form of men and women, in a land that wants men and women to develop it. It is a question of rescuing and uplifting boys and girls who, under present conditions, are most certainly doomed to a life of vice, sloth and disease, and of starting them in life equipped to take their places as useful men and women.

Trained as stockmen and generally handymen, blacks from Central Australia will probably find employment on cattle stations, particularly on the stations of the Barkly tablelands, where blacks are few. Under present conditions a missionary would be sorry to see a boy pass from the mission station to the life of station black; but, doubtless, as the principle of paying wages to blacks extends, and as the blacks themselves become more competent through capable training, station conditions will improve.

The future of the half-caste boy need not, I think, cause misgiving. Given a fair training, he can take his place as a white man; colour prejudice is not severe against the male half caste, particularly in the more settled parts.

The quadroon child is white, and should be treated as such.

The half-caste girl is in the saddest position of all. I can see no hopeful future for her. Let the half-castes marry half-castes, advise some; but, strangely enough, the half-caste man who has a gin usually has a full-blooded black gin. It may be that, with the advance of civilisation and a more assured position for the half-caste man, he may prefer to marry a half-caste.

The State Children's Department of South Australia has adopted a policy of bringing half-caste girls down to the city and surroundings, and educating them with a view to their ultimately marrying white workmen. I cannot believe in the success of such a course. With abundance of white women to choose from, the white man will hardly prefer a coloured woman, and the fate of a single half-caste girl in a community of whites seems certain.

In southern towns I have seen children pointing the finger at the occasional coloured child, crying, "Black-fellow, blackfellow." In the interior this does not occur. The blackfellow is native to the soil, and is regarded as matter of course.

Brought up well, the half-caste girl may marry a white man in the interior, where white women are rare. She can hardly hope to compete with white women in thickly populated centres. A few such mixed marriages are met with, and appear admirable in some cases. Such cases, however, cannot be seriously contemplated to any great extent.

Better for the half-caste girl to marry a decent black-fellow than to be at the disposal of worthless white men.

The greater part of the interior is pastoral country, and will remain so for many years. Cattle stations will probably always be manned chiefly by single men. Married managers are becoming increasingly frequent. Married stockmen are unknown.

The position of a white stockman married to a black woman is pitiable. His wife is not admitted to the house. He cannot allow her to go to the blacks' camp. So they are both regarded as outcasts.

Strange to say, the white men who treat lightly, and indeed openly avow relations with black women, scoff at the white man who marries a black woman. The one

who marries his gin and supports his children is the more honourable man.

A minor issue of the Northern Territory Aboriginals' Act of 1910, as applied to this district, is the question of employment of aboriginals by Asiatics, which is now illegal. None who have had experience of the Asiatic in Australia will be likely to doubt that he is unfit to employ aboriginals. I am not sure, however, that we are not a little hypocritical in this matter. Are our own men at all times quite virtuous?

The person affected by the Act in Central Australia is the Afghan camel teamster. Formerly the Afghans, with the help of aborigines, shared in the carrying trade to the overland telegraph and cattle stations. Deprived of aboriginal labour, the Afghans have gone to Western Australia and New South Wales, leaving the camel-carrying trade virtually a monopoly, which, by the way, is one more argument in favour of the construction of the overland railway.

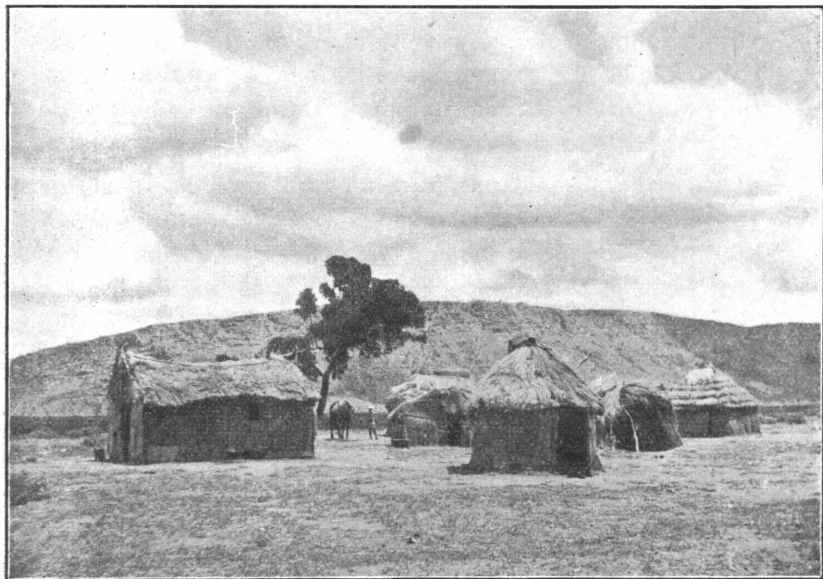
2.—Tennant Creek to Daly Waters.

The only white settlements in this north-central part of the Northern Territory are the overland telegraph stations at Tennant Creek, Powell's Creek and Daly Waters, the Banka-Banka and Newcastle Waters cattle stations, sixty miles south and north of Powell's Creek respectively, and, to the south-east of Tennant Creek, the Frew River cattle station.

As is to be expected, the blacks living in this mostly unoccupied country are in a much more primitive and free condition than those in the occupied country south of the MacDonnell Ranges. They roam where they please and, for the most part, live on the resources native to the country.



OLD STYLE



NEW STYLE

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"COOPERTOWN," ALICE SPRINGS

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In dry times they flock to the above-mentioned stations, both for water and for rations, which are kindly supplied to the telegraph masters by the Government.

The Overland Telegraph staff are some of the finest fellows in the world, and in these gentlemen the blacks find friends and helpers who go to a considerable amount of trouble in seeing that rations, needles, thread, and what cloth is at their disposal are fairly distributed according to the needs of each member of the tribe.

In a good season one will find from a dozen to twenty aborigines camped at each station, consisting, apart from those employed by the whites, principally of old people who are unfit to travel about the bush and hunt. In time of drought the numbers at each station are from one hundred to two hundred.

When I passed through this district, the country was at its best. Water was plentiful; turkeys, kangaroos, and emus were fairly numerous; goannas, bush rats and witchetty grubs—these last being really excellent when well roasted—abounded; and many kinds of edible plants and fruits were available, some requiring a blackfellow's digestion to appreciate, others, such as native figs and konka berries, being very nice.

The result was that most of the blacks, particularly the men and younger women, were in splendid condition, supple and glossy-skinned. Indeed, one might truthfully describe many of the interior blacks, when in good condition, as living models of physique.

The bloodwood trees, a species of stunted eucalypt, which are very plentiful throughout the interior, are usually thickly infested with large galls of about the size of apples. These galls consist of a hard, woody outer coat, an inner soft, white kernel, and, in the centre, the larva of the gall fly. This inner kernel is eaten by the blacks and by not a few white men. For myself, I found it similar to unripe almonds, with the same gas-

tric effect, but in time of drought these galls are the main standby of the blacks: a poor diet, indeed, and one that helps to explain the small numbers of the interior tribes.

Faring well in a good season, the interior blacks are annually confronted with several months of dry weather, during which life is a struggle for the survival of the fittest. Children are not numerous, and one rarely sees a really old aboriginal.

The blacks of the interior are usually very shy. Should a traveller surprise a blackfellow in the bush he will run, and silently disappear among the trees. It is often ludicrous to see a blackfellow busily engaged, perhaps, in digging out some edible root, intent only on the work beneath him, till, as the horses draw nearer, he hears, looks up, and at a bound is on his feet and running for the nearest cover. Such shyness, however, can be annoying when the traveller wishes to get information as to the country ahead, information usually obtained only after a good deal of gesticulation and laughing on both sides.

The blackfellow in the centre of Australia never travels without a load of weapons; usually spear-thrower, several spears, and non-returning boomerangs. The other weapons are laid in the broad, concave spear-thrower of this part, and the entire collection carried on the head.

Behind the man walks the gin, carrying all the household goods, food, and frequently a child perched on her shoulder or on one hip. The blackfellow never thinks of helping the gin to carry the luggage. On the contrary, I fancy that his load of weapons is often a mere excuse for leaving the greater part of the carrying to the gin.

Should he wish to approach the white man's camp, the blackfellow lays his weapons on the ground and walks

up empty-handed, a lesson he has evidently learnt from hard experience.

More frequently an old gin comes to the camp. She knows that she is safe, and, further, she is often laughable in her wheedling and coaxing for food and any article belonging to the traveller, which she may fancy.

"Let the blacks alone," is the cry of many white men. In some cases this might be understood as meaning, "We have here a source of cheap labour and unbridled license. Do not interfere with us." But, on the other hand, the declaration is often quite sincere.

Can we let the blacks alone?

To the Christian Church the injunction to go into all the world, preaching the Gospel to every nation, is imperative.

But let us for the moment waive the religious aspect and meet the bushman on his own ground.

Wherever blacks come in contact with whites or other races, the blacks are affected often to their great hurt. Each year sees the white man's influence spreading further among the tribes. It is, I believe, possible along the north coast to institute reservations, where, as civilisation advances, the tribal life may be preserved. In the interior, certainly along the overland telegraph route, it is not possible. The blacks must inevitably be interfered with. The question is, shall the interference be of such a nature that they may have a fair and clean chance to maintain their existence, or shall they be interfered with, as in the southern parts of the Continent, in such manner that hunger and disease shall wipe them out with appalling rapidity?

The health of the interior blacks is, on the whole, wonderfully good.

Here we have good clean material to work upon. With a training station for the Alice Springs district, and a similar station for the Tennant-Daly Waters district,

where the boys and girls shall receive a wholesome industrial training on a sound religious basis, with a view to their going out and fighting their own way in the world when fairly equipped, so far at least as half-castes are concerned, we may save the Central Australian blacks from shameful extinction.

A suitable site exists, and I believe might be secured, in the neighbourhood of Powell's Creek.

The aim of work amongst the aborigines, says Professor Baldwin Spencer, must be directed mainly towards the children, and must be primarily industrial. To which I might venture to add: and ultimately religious.

The half-caste problem in this district has not yet attained such dimensions as in the Alice Springs district, though it is now quite serious enough to call for attention. Here, too, one finds, although less frequently, a practically white child in a blacks' camp. In a community of whites such children would not attract attention, but seen in a blacks' camp, the peculiar lustrous black eye, with china white, and a certain heaviness in the cast of nose and mouth betrays their origin.

One writer on the aborigines problem has said: "The sooner this miserable drop of blood is fused in the common reservoir, the better."

Whether fusion, extinction, or separate existence shall be the ultimate fate of the race is beyond our ken. We are concerned with the blacks as they now are. If such fusion is to take place upon honourable terms, well, did the writer quoted contemplate that?

Before quitting this district, one instance will serve to show how primitive are the conditions under which these people live:—

When I visited Powell's Creek, there were in the camp five men who had come in from the desert country to the west. A party of blacks had come down from the Victoria River to the camp to which these men belonged,

speared some of the men and carried off the women. The remaining five men had fled, to live with their Powell's Creek friends until the affair had blown over.

3.—Katherine to Darwin.

Travelling southwards, one is impressed with the increasing frequency of disease in the camps towards the north coast.

The Asiatic influence is certainly marked, frequently in the features of the blacks, at times in their dress, and perhaps principally in their health.

It is not an uncommon thing to see in a camp one or more blacks who have lost fingers, toes, nose, or entire limbs. A popular notion prevails that these maimed persons are lepers. This has been denied by medical men. Probably such cases are all venereal in origin.

During the past few years, between £8,000 and £9,000 has been annually granted to the Northern Territory Aborigines Department. In addition to a Chief Protector and several Protectors of Aborigines, the chief officer at each police station in the Northern Territory is ex-officio, a Sub-Protector of Aborigines.

The position of Chief Protector has now been abolished on the grounds of economy. In the late Chief Protector, Mr. W. G. Stretton, the blacks had an able and sympathetic champion, whose long experience of the Northern Territory specially fitted him for this work.

That the police should be Sub-Protectors is, on the whole, a wise provision. The duties bring them into contact with the aborigines throughout the interior, and my experience has been that they are usually willing to do what they can to help the blacks.

The position of Protector appears so far to be rather a sinecure. Their work is to issue permits to employers of aborigines, to see that the aborigines are not ill-used

in any way, and, if necessary, to take legal proceedings against offenders under the Aborigines' Act, on the whole rather a vague and apparently not too strenuous an office.

Such work as that undertaken by Protector P. Cahill, however, on the Alligator River, seems more hopeful.

I have not had the privilege of visiting the Alligator River, but am given to understand that Mr. and Mrs. Cahill are undertaking the industrial instruction of the aborigines of that part, particularly in the direction of agriculture: an admirable aim.

Doubtless, as the duties of Protector of Aborigines become more clearly defined much good work will be achieved.

The Aborigines Department has instituted, on the outskirts of Darwin, an aboriginal village. At the time of my visit this was still under construction, but work done so far was very encouraging. The village was to accommodate about one hundred aborigines. They were to receive industrial and secular education from the Government. Visiting clergy would be welcomed. A teacher has been appointed for the children.

The aim of this village was to bring in aborigines from the outlying districts, and, after a period of training, send them back to their own people as advertisements of the Aborigines Department's intentions, and as recreating forces among their own people: an excellent plan, and one which, it is to be hoped, will be consistently maintained.

On Bathurst Island the Roman Catholic Church has lately established a mission station, where a special feature of the work is the training of children, including half-castes.

The Aborigines Department has adopted a policy of ordering half-caste and quadroon children to be sent to one or other of the mission stations, or to the Darwin

village, in addition to which some fathers are voluntarily sending their children and paying for their upkeep.

With regard to medical work among the aborigines, the Aborigines Department has so far failed, perhaps chiefly owing to the lack of a suitable medical man. It was originally ordained that the Chief Protector should be a medical man, with medical assistants. The first gentleman to occupy the position was equipped with requisites for a travelling surgery, and great hopes were entertained of the work that might be accomplished.

Unhappily such plans fell to earth. A rather spasmodic medical visit or two have since been undertaken, but a consistent plan of isolating and treating aborigines who are diseased to the danger of infecting others, has not yet been inaugurated.

Many of the camps now contain aborigines seriously affected with venereal disease, for whom nothing is done. On the other hand, two aborigines whom I saw diseased, I had the pleasure of seeing again at the end of 1913, apparently cured, since they had been taken in to Darwin by the police and treated at the hospital, which is hopeful.

The prime need is for the qualified medical man who will travel through the camps, issue treatment where necessary, and order into isolation dangerous cases, doing this, not for the sake of financial position, nor the sake of medical nor ethnological experience, but from a heartfelt desire to perform a noble work.

The question of venereal disease in the Northern Territory is not one confined to the blacks. One is astonished at the number of whites who candidly confess that they have suffered from one or other form of such disease, though few will admit that they are still suffering.

The Aborigines Department has issued to each police station, and some other stations, well-equipped medicine chests containing instructions and requisites for the treatment of such diseases as are likely to be prevalent in the northern part of the Territory.

One has only to consider the effect of such diseases not only on the blacks, but upon the future of our own people in the Northern Territory, to realise the grave importance of bush medical work.

4.—Pine Creek to Western Australian Border.

In the coastal portion of the Northern Territory, the aborigines are much more numerous than in the interior. Various estimates have been made as to the probable number of aborigines in the Northern Territory, the generally accepted number being from twenty to twenty-five thousand (25,000).

With the single break at Darwin, it may be said that the coast is uninhabited by whites.

Water is plentiful; fish, game and edible plants, chiefly water-lilies, are abundant.

Recent agricultural experiments and surveying operations have brought the whites considerably into contact with the blacks of the Daly River. On this river was originally a Roman Catholic mission station, which has been abandoned.

West of the Daly the main waters are the Fitzmaurice and Victoria Rivers.

Report says that this country is inhabited by a great number of aborigines, who are treacherous and savage. While travelling through this country I did not meet with a single aboriginal, nor, when well away from Pine Creek, any white man. I saw, however, many smokes and fresh tracks of aborigines—at times ahead, sometimes to the right or left—though any fires that I reached were always deserted, either by coincidence or purposely by the blacks, who may have seen me. I can, therefore, only speak from scant knowledge of the coastal country. I believe the number of aborigines to be large, and living in practically a primitive condition.

Owing to rank high grass, deep waters, and boggy ground, it is difficult to travel through this country with horses. The best means of access is from the sea.

This country is almost a virgin field for research among the coastal tribes.

Further inland, along the route from one cattle station to another, one finds at most stations a fairly large camp of blacks. Some managers encourage the blacks to camp near the station, on the principle that they are less likely to cause trouble if under the manager's eye. Others, on the other hand, will not allow a "myall" black to approach the station, keeping only such boys and gins as are actually employed. In either case, the country is as yet too sparsely settled to adopt the policy of the stations south of the MacDonnell Ranges, where the blacks are more than encouraged to camp near the stations.

While mustering on these stations, the stockmen frequently see the smokes of myall camps among the hills, or come upon camping places by the billabongs, where the myalls have been collecting and cooking lily roots.

Living practically within a stone's throw of each other, these blacks and whites seldom meet. Occasionally the blacks descend to the plains, spear a bullock and carry it off to the hills, where they are rarely molested save by an occasional police pursuit of a thief or murderer.

Last year a solitary traveller was speared while resting at his dinner camp near the Northern Territory-West Australian border. A large police party was organised to pursue and arrest the murderers. Eventually they captured the ringleader, who was hanged.

On the first occasion of surprising the camp of the fugitives the men escaped, but the police captured four gins, who were detained as witnesses. These gins were naked, and had each a little child. It would be most unlikely to take any four gins at random on a cattle station and find that each had a child.

Children are much more numerous in the myall camps than in the station camps.

Infanticide is difficult to prove. The strongest ground for suspecting it is the absence of the children.

Occasionally one hears details of a case where a child has been deliberately killed after having been reared for some time. More frequently the child is killed before or immediately after birth.

The present and growing practice on the part of the whites at these stations is to send the half-caste children in to the care of the Aborigines Department in Darwin, leaving the full-blooded children in the camps.

For the care of these latter children, and also for a medical centre for treating cases of disease among the blacks, which in this part are all too frequent, several suitable sites exist on the Victoria River or one of its tributaries.

Monetary wages are not yet paid to aborigines in the Northern Territory, on the cattle stations north of Bond Springs, twelve miles from Alice Springs. Boys and gins actually in employment receive food, clothes, tobacco, and whatever they need, while the blacks who are camped near the station receive the usual share of beef.

On more than one Northern Territory station extra boys are engaged for the bullock muster and branding muster. They are provided with hat, shirt, trousers and boots, food and tobacco while employed. At the end of the muster the clothes are taken from them and they are sent back.

A person not familiar with the bush point of view, would hardly credit such meanness. One is told that the blacks are absolutely useless, nevertheless he observes that the black, whose labour is practically free, is employed in preference to the white man, who has to be paid wages.. Such cases are, however, in the minority, and I can personally testify that boys employed on

a cattle station are abundantly fed and clothed, as, for instance, when one boy hauled from his swag six pairs of trousers and a coat.

That the black woman on a cattle station is common property goes almost without saying. To state the fact is easy, to suggest a remedy is a different matter.

5.—Katherine to Borroloola.

Eighty-five miles south of Katherine one reaches Bitter Springs, the head waters of the Roper River. Sixty miles from the mouth of the Roper is the Church of England Mission Station.

From the Roper to the McArthur blacks are numerous and native food supplies are abundant.

The young girls of this country are not infrequently very pretty, the north-east coastal part of the Territory possessing the best featured of any of the native tribes.

The men are mostly well built. Especially is this the case with the boys of from about twelve to twenty years. These boys show much greater muscular development than white boys of the same age. They do not seem to mature to such physique as one would expect from the promise of their youth, though they do grow into powerful men.

The Malay influence is more apparent in this area than in any other. One frequently sees a man with smooth-skinned face, and features unmistakably Asiatic. The pure Australian man grows a vigorous beard, which, in the interior, is usually worn long. In the coastal country the custom of the men is to shave their faces, with a steel razor if it can be procured, if not, then with a sharp stone or chip of a glass bottle.

An interesting minor evidence of Malay influence is the Malay style of tobacco pipe, which is commonly seen in the blacks' camps, manufactured from the hollow

bough of a tree, and the use of which they probably understood before white men entered the country.

The Roper Mission deals only with children, of which there are at present about seventy on the station, including a fair proportion of half-castes and quarter-castes sent to the mission station by order of the Aborigines Department.

It is a very pleasant experience to witness the work of this station. From the moment of the stranger's arrival he is surrounded by fearless, laughing, confiding children, clean and bright, all anxious to render some small service, a great contrast to the shy and timid little fellows in the bush camps.

With an oil engine to pump water from the river, gardening is conducted on an extensive scale. Fruit and vegetables can be grown abundantly, very materially assisting the station commissariat. Experiments are also being conducted with Kaffir corn and maize, with considerable success. A start has also been made in cattle raising. Little progress has so far been made in this direction, though in time, with a good area under irrigation, and cattle breeding carried on systematically, this station will be self-supporting, and maintain a large number of aborigines.

The aim of this mission is to finally establish these children, when mature, in cottages of their own on the two hundred square miles which comprise the mission reserve.

A difficult question is that of marriage between the blacks. A mission boy and girl may wish to marry. Two obstacles may confront them: (1) They may both belong to a sub-division of the tribe within which members may not inter-marry. In other words, they are too closely related. Such a bar, of course, is final.

In nearly every case, however, an aboriginal girl is betrothed at birth to a man of the tribe. The man is

usually adult when the girl is an infant, so that when the girl matures she must marry an elderly man.

The old men have usually one or two wives each; the young men have none.

Endless quarrels arise in the camps from this cause, and probably have arisen for generations; but the girl must go with her old husband, and he has power to lend her to another man as a favour, or in return for some service.

The missionary's trouble is that a carefully trained girl, when grown, is destined to marry an old myall in a bush camp. Though very often the trained aboriginal drifts back to the wild life, the girl at first certainly does not wish to go with her old spouse and live in a bark "humpy." More than likely, she desires to marry a smart young fellow on the station.

The solution of this problem is one that can only be arrived at by tactful and careful consideration of the aboriginal point of view, which would regard a girl who left her tribally betrothed for another as a moral outcast, while the offending couple are almost certain to be speared at the first opportunity.

One solution attempted has been the buying of the girls from the old men, which seems a very satisfactory method if it can be fairly concluded. Perhaps an agreement could be arrived at between the young man and the old man, whereby the young man may earn his bride.

Full-blooded aborigines are life-long wards of the Aborigines Department. Half-castes are subject to the same guardianship until the age of eighteen years, when they become independent, unless they are habitues of a blacks' camp, in which case they are regarded as aboriginals.

Concerning infant betrothal of half-caste girls, tribal law does not apply, and the blacks are given to understand that they have no voice in the control of the half-caste child.

The country to the north of the Roper is unoccupied and largely unexplored, with the exception of Protector Cahill's settlement on the Alligator River, and the camps of a few buffalo shooters and trepang fishers.

The Anglican Church has proposed an extension of mission enterprise in this country, and on Groote Eylandt, off the mouth of the Roper. They have a fine field before them.

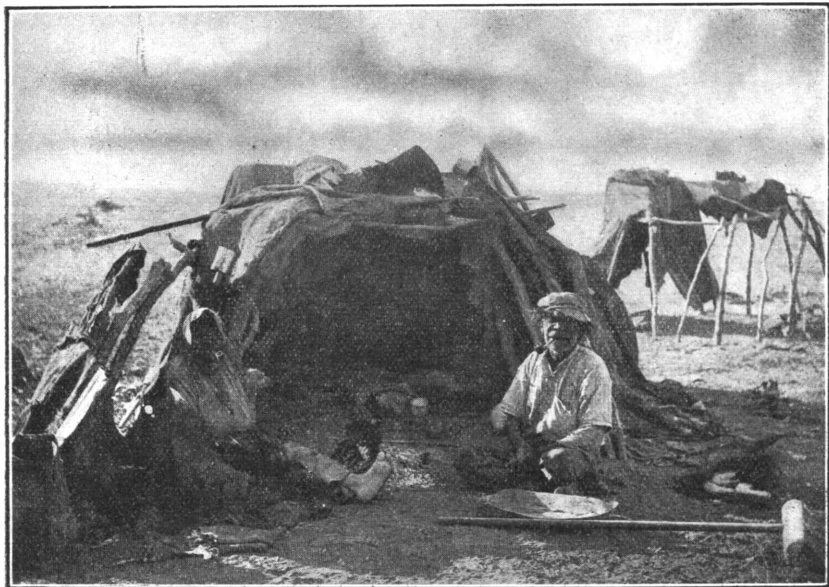
6.—The Barkly Tablelands: McArthur River to Queensland Border.

There are few aborigines on these tablelands, and no permanent bush camps. After rain occasional parties come to the open tablelands from the McArthur River in the north, and occasionally from the Newcastle Waters—Powell Creek country, and the Frew River to the west. Such parties are small and do not remain long.

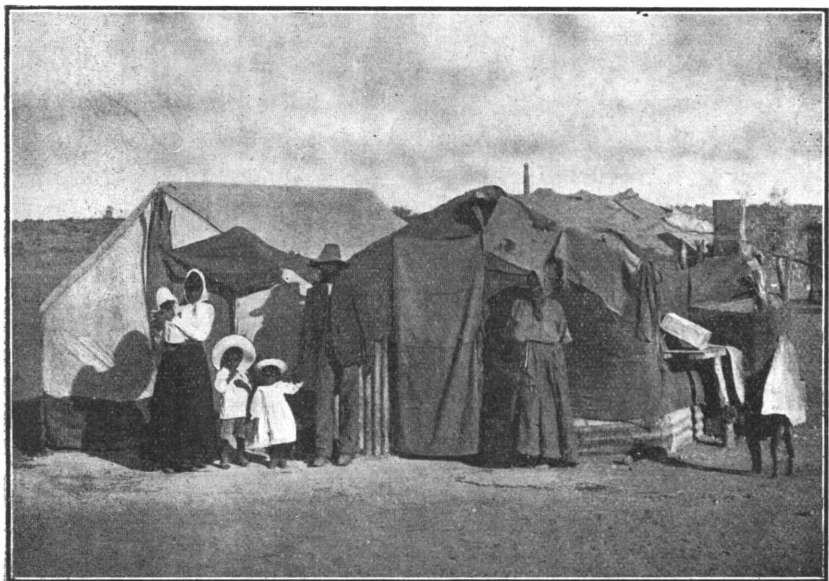
The only permanent inhabitants of the tablelands are those employed at the cattle stations and by the police. The cattle stations employ from twelve to twenty blacks each.

This eastern part of the Northern Territory will probably afford employment to a fair number of capable black and half-caste men. One gentleman in this country estimated that the tablelands stations would gladly employ one hundred blacks.





OLD FOLKS AT HOME



YOUNG FOLKS AT HOME

(Copyright J. Flynn)

THE HOME INCLUDES BOTH COMMODIOUS TENTS

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III.

NORTH-WEST AUSTRALIA

The aborigines of this part are in practically the same condition as between Darwin and the Western Australian border, being in their primitive condition near the coast, and partly civilised on the cattle stations, where they have come into contact with the whites.

The Roman Catholic Church has for some years maintained a mission station at Beagle Bay, which is described as an industrial success, and has recently inaugurated a new station on the Drysdale River, west of Wyndham.

The Presbyterian Church has lately established, under the charge of Mr. R. H. Wilson, a mission station at Port George IV., between Wyndham and Derby.

The Western Australian Government has, for a considerable time, maintained an aboriginal station near Hall's Creek. This I have not visited. I understand that this station is an industrial success, but no religious instruction is undertaken. To members of the Christian Church the question arises: What is the purpose of such industry? If certain missions have been criticised as laying too much stress on religion, while not being practical enough, it might be answered that a purely industrial institution fails in the opposite extreme.

Along the entire north coast there is ample scope for mission enterprise. As men and means are forthcoming doubtless more stations will be established. But, fascinating though these untouched areas are, the tribes who have already come into contact with our race have first claim. Where the white man has not penetrated, at least the blacks are no worse off than formerly. Where the white man's influence has already been felt, there is our first duty.

IV.

WESTERN QUEENSLAND

Here the aborigines problem has already been solved to a great extent by the process of extinction. Such few blacks as remain are mostly employed on the stations.

Amongst those that remain it is instructive to notice how they are received amongst white people. The black man remains utterly an inferior. The half-caste, however, is on a level with the white stockman, receiving the same wages, eating at the same table, and sleeping in the same hut.

I was considerably astonished to witness, at a dance in a western town, a half-caste man dancing in one of the square dances with one white woman after another, according to figures of the dance, without any embarrassment on either side. Such a thing is unheard of in the Northern Territory. At the same dance, however, none danced with the half-caste woman, who sat aside throughout the evening.



V.

CHILD LIFE AND PLAY

The attitude of the black gin towards her child is incomprehensible. Frequently she does not seem to care particularly whether she keeps her baby or not, and will quite coolly discuss the matter with a white man. "Might be me kill 'em; piccaninny no good."

Should the child be saved it is treated with lavish kindness. The aboriginal child is never struck. The parents nurse it and carry it, and it is a common sight to see a hardened warrior of the tribe amusing a tiny black baby, going through the most ridiculous antics in play, or to see an old man patiently carving a toy for a small grandson.

In the north-east of the Northern Territory the mothers plait very pretty grass bracelets, which they place on the babies' arms, between shoulder and elbow, replacing them with larger ones as the child grows, almost every adult wearing several bracelets on the upper arm.

While small, the children are totally naked. As they become older they wear the usual dress of the tribe; among the less civilised solely a tassel of fur strings suspended from the waist. This tassel is now frequently replaced by a strip of rag, a few inches wide, worn as an apron by men and women.

Among the more civilised, the gins manifest the keenest desire for dress, very often securing a tattered man's shirt; at times a piece of cloth for an apron, or even a complete dress.

The men usually prefer the frontal tassel alone. One of the first acts of a blackfellow on leaving employment and returning to the camp is to cast off his civilised clothes.

Often one sees a gin carrying a child that is several years old and quite big enough to walk. In the interior and north the baby sits either on its mother's shoulder, or, when bigger, sideways on one of her hips, with one leg in front and the other behind, being held in position by the mother's arm or clinging to her like a young opossum. Yet, sometimes, when the child grows heavy, the mother may tire of it and callously kill it. One police officer told me of a gin employed at the police station in herding goats. She had a little boy who became a great pet at the police station, till at last he was just able to toddle about and come for lollies when he heard the tin rattled. One day the gin went out as usual tending the goats, but returned without the little fellow. Questioned as to his absence, she replied harshly, "Him all day cry," and refused to say more. Undoubtedly she had grown tired of carrying him, and had killed him in the bush.

Aboriginal babies in the interior are not washed. Consequently the disease known as "yaws" is frequently seen on small children, consisting of sores round the eyes, under limb joints, and wherever friction is liable to chafe the skin.

In the coastal districts, however, where water is plentiful, the blacks bathe frequently for the pleasure of swimming. One may see a tiny boy, hardly able to walk, and too young to swim, clinging to the neck of a bigger boy, who swims and dives with the little fellow spluttering and gurgling, but grinning with delight.

It is often said that aboriginal children have no games. This is hardly correct, though they have no highly organ-

ised games, nor have I seen any specific toy or game for the girls.

Various explorers have brought back some very ingenious and interesting toys. Most of these are rare, but three games are very widespread: In Northern South Australia "throwing the kookeroo," in Central and North-West Australia "throwing a flat boomerang," and in the North and North-East "playing with spears."

The "kookeroo" described by Dr. Howitt as the weewee of Victorian tribes, is shaped like a slender club or elongated tadpole, about four feet in length. A small heap of rushes or grass is laid on the earth at the edge of a clear patch of ground. The kookeroo is then thrown in such a way that it glances off the pile of rushes, and shoots head foremost along the ground. The game is a very pretty one to watch, the aim being to throw farthest, and is played by boys and young men.

The famous returning boomerang is unknown in the interior. A flat, rather heavy boomerang, with one arm shorter than the other, and invariably coloured with red ochre, is used. In addition to its use as a weapon, the young men use this boomerang in a game. The boomerang is held vertically and thrown so that it shall strike the ground some twenty yards ahead of the player, when it rebounds from the earth, spinning forward like a cart wheel, to strike the earth and again rebound, till finally it falls at a surprising distance. Usually several players will stand opposite, and when the flight of one boomerang is expended, another player will pick it up and return it.

The blacks of the north-east coastal part of the Northern Territory use no boomerangs, nor, throughout the entire north, shields, and rarely a club. Their main weapons are spears, of which they possess some very handsome types, the type of spear and spear-thrower

(womera) varying in different localities. Consequently one finds the boys playing spear-throwing. In hunting or fighting a long-handled spear-thrower is used, but in play light sticks and reeds are thrown with the hand alone. In Darwin itself one may see the black boys in their compound, drawn up in opposing ranks, and throwing sticks across the intervening space.

At Barrow Creek I witnessed the gins playing quoits with hobble rings, a game of obviously late introduction.

But if toys are few, and the girls have none, it by no means follows that the children do not play.

One small boy near Charlotte Waters used each evening to climb a sloping sapling, where he swung and shouted in glee for fully half an hour at a time.

The black children are keen mimics. Wishing for some firewood, I once sent four children to collect some. They brought the first load in willingly, but without much zeal, till one ingenious boy hit upon the happy idea of bestriding a log, while the others hauled him and the log. The game rapidly developed, and soon the driver was armed with a strip of greenhide tied to a stick. Cracking this whip he shouted "Gee-off Lion; hey-up Tallboy," imitating the horse-driver, and, with shrieks of delight, the firewood came in merrily.

Similarly, any chance article lying about may cause the rapid development of a game. During an afternoon's spell in a mustering camp, some of the boys chopped out a "sugar-bag" (hive of native bees). One lad took a piece of the fallen bark and whittled it into the shape of a revolver. Soon every boy had a bark revolver, which he pointed at another, shouting "Bang!" One genius hung his gun on the front of his saddle, imitating my manner of carrying a revolver. This was greeted with roars of approval, and when another hung his gun at the side of his saddle, in the fashion of the station-

manager, they simply rolled on the ground in their joy. These boys were from twelve to twenty years of age, and, except that their toy guns were very cleverly carved, it was exactly the sort of play that might be expected from white boys of seven or eight years.

On another occasion, when out shooting, a boy drew my attention to what he thought a turkey, which proved to be a bunch of grass. Throughout the day one boy or another would suddenly become excited and point, saying "Turkey," at which all, including the one who had made the error, laughed heartily.

One curious incident I witnessed shows how much alike children are the whole world over. While cooking I was surrounded by several children, who stood about expectantly, waiting for cakes. I happened to be using a large biscuit tin, on the wrapper of which was the picture of a pretty girl. This picture attracted the attention of one little black girl, who slapped one of her hands upon the other in a certain manner, pointed to the picture, then to one of the little boys. The other children laughed, but the boy indicated became most indignant, slapped his hands in the same way, pointed to the picture and then to another boy, who in his turn became indignant. Evidently the joke was "That is your sweetheart"—a jest so popular among white children, and one which always makes the little boys so angry. I was particularly amused at the idea of this stark naked, pot-bellied little savage being addressed as the sweetheart of the very pretty and stylishly clad young lady on the tin.

Such instances might be related *ad libitum*, but enough has been told to show that, though they may lack organised games, the aboriginal children are by no means without play.

The true savage is revealed in their treatment of birds and small animals. The children love to catch a bird

as a plaything. The men will bring birds to the children. These they play with till tired, then callously break their limbs and tear them to pieces. In one week the children last mentioned caught, played with, and finally tore to pieces, a whistling duck, a cockatoo parrot and two quail.

The nearest approach to systematic amusement is the nightly corroboree.

The corroborees may be classed as of three kinds.

Most important are the religious ceremonies periodically held, at which rites are performed to ensure the food supply and initiate young members into the laws of their fathers. Any adequate account of these corroborees would require years' research and intimate knowledge of the language and customs of a tribe, and is far beyond the scope of this report.

The second class of corroboree corresponds to the war dance of the American Indians. I have only witnessed one such. A party of the Ireenamon blacks came into the Victoria River depôt and announced their intention of killing one of the Timber Creek men. On the previous day I had visited the Timber Creek camp, and found the men lying about, some dressed in trousers, shirt, or both, with very few weapons in the camp. On the day following the advent of the Ireenamon men I found the Timber Creek men all stripped, except for the characteristic frontal tassel of fur strings, and newly-tipped spears lay around in profusion, while all were busily engaged in preparing for the corroboree that was to take place that night.

At this corroboree the main part was taken by four men, who were ornamented with white down stuck in patterns over their bodies with blood, and who wore the high corroboree caps familiar throughout the Continent.

The remaining men formed the chorus, and, under a leader, sang and clapped boomerangs, while the four leading performers went through a dance that at times bore a marked resemblance to certain figures of the Lancers.

The children sat with their fathers, while the women sat together in the rear and joined in the chorus in a rather subdued fashion.

The third class of corroboree entails no decoration nor preparation, but is a more or less comic resume of the day's happenings. Any outstanding incident will be enacted, often repeatedly, amid shouts of laughter.

At first the European fails to notice much but noise in aboriginal music, but on becoming familiar with the aboriginal songs, he detects a certain rythm and cadence that remain constant throughout many repetitions of the same song.

An aboriginal man or woman will compose a song; usually of only two or three words, on the spur of the moment, but it will be sung in perfect rythm. During a lull in the evening's amusement one person will suddenly shout a song that he has just composed. He will repeat it, and very soon all are singing of some striking incident, such as a man falling from a horse, of what he said when he fell, or, as once happened after I gave a boy some tobacco of a different kind from that he usually got, a song which, translated, simply ran, "Oh, the Pine Creek tobacco! the Pine Creek tobacco."

Throughout the interior two boomerangs are clapped rapidly in time to the song. Throughout the north coast country an instrument is used, commonly known among the whites as the didgerree-doo, but bearing different names among the different tribes.

It is a hollow bough, usually from three to four feet long, and two or three inches in diameter. This is blown trumpet fashion, producing a loud droning, not unmusical, similar to the name. A shot-gun barrel makes an effective "didgeree-doo."

During these performances the children mostly sit beside their fathers, chuckling at each amusing turn.



