THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES.

The Queer Habits and Customs of a Race Which is Fast Passing Away.

They Go Naked and Wear Scars as Ornaments—The Native Women and Their Horrible Treatment—Plenty of Bachelors, but No Old Maids—What They Eat—Queer Ways of Catching Ants—Worms as an Omelet—How They Hunt and Net Emus and Kangaroos—They Are the Bloodhounds of the Australian Police—Instances of Cannibalism—The Boomerang—Ghosts and Witch Doctors—Death and Burial.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

THERE are now less than 60,000 aborigines left in Australia, and of these 20,000 are in the state of Queensland, where this letter is dated. I saw no natives in Tasmania. There are only 565 in the state of Victoria, and only about 8,000 in New South Wales. South Australia has been less developed than the eastern states, and it has 23,000, while the vast desert regions of western Australia are said to have something like 6,000. These figures, of course, are not absolutely accurate. The aborigines live in the wilds, and in the vast regions of unexplored Australia no one can tell how many there are. The only pure natives I have seen were in some of the towns along the northeast coast of Queensland, and my information comes largely from travelers, explorers and the colonial governments. Many of my photographs have been furnished by the governments of Queensland and New South Wales, from the collections taken by the official explorers.

"THEY WEAR STICKS THROUGH THEIR NOSES."

From a photograph taken for the "News" by Mr. Carpenter.

HOW THE "BLACK FELLOWS" LOOK.

The people here call the aborigines "blacks" and "black fellows." They sometimes use the word negro, but the few natives I have seen were chocolate brown, rather than black. Their hair was curly, but not woolly, and they had not the thick lips nor the very flat noses of the African. Some of the aborigines are quite fine looking; they are straight and well formed, although generally lean and scrawny. In Townsville I saw a native girl about eighteen years old who looked more like a mulatto than a negro. She had high cheek bones, a slightly receding chin and a big mouth, and her hair was glossy, smooth and fine. Still she was by no means bad looking for a "gin," and would have passed muster among a mixed crowd of colored people from our southern states.

This girl had on European clothes. In the interior parts of north Australia the natives wear no clothes whatever. Both men and women go naked, or at best have only a few ornaments in their hair, noses and ears, with perhaps a string or two about the waist. In northwestern Queensland the natives use belts of human hair during certain ceremonies, and they often stripe their bodies with paint. They sometimes have grass necklaces and strings of opossum skins about their shoulders. They tie bands about their hair to keep it from falling into their eyes, and for the same reasons soak it stiff with fat or clay. Hair grease is everywhere profusely used, and it is not uncommon for a native to give himself a coat of fish oil whenever he can get it. This envelopes him in a rancid smell which is very offensive to Europeans. The methods of hairdressing vary. The hair is often bound up with cloths, and the knuckle bones of the kangaroo are so fastened to it that they hang down over the ears; in some parts kangaroo teeth are fastened to the forelocks, so that they hang down and rest on the forehead between the eyebrows. About Port Darwin in northwestern Australia the men and women use nose pins, some of which are ten inches long. The nose is pierced in the center, and, being pulled down, these pins are thrust through so that they stand out for five inches on each side the nostrils. Some of the pins are made of turkey bones and others of kangaroo or emu bones. Sometimes parrot quills are used, the bright-colored feathers extending out on each side the nostrils. Some of the natives pierce their ears, using kangaroo bones as plugs.

SCARS AS ORNAMENTS.

Among the queer forms of ornamentation are the scarring and cutting of the body. Nearly every native has more or less scars upon him, and the bigger the scars the better they like it. I refer to ornamental scars, for many of the women are scarred by the punishment inflicted upon them by their husbands. As to the ornamental scarring, this is done as a matter of beauty. The skin is voluntarily cut with flints or shells, powdered charcoal is dusted in and the wounds are kept open for months. When they heal they leave ridges on the body as thick as your finger. These scars are found on the back and chest, and on the biceps muscles. They are sometimes on the thighs and stomachs. Among other tribes little pieces of skin are cut out to make scars, the victims yelling with pain durign the operation.

As to the scars of the women, these are often made by the men in way of punishment. They look upon the women as their slaves, and when angry club them and cut them with their tomahawks and spears. If the woman is killed it makes little difference, for she is looked upon as the property of the man who supports her, and a man may do what he likes with his own.

A CHANCE FOR THE NEW WOMAN.

There is no place in the world where the new woman could work to better advantage than among these aborigines. I doubt whether there are people in the wilds of Africa who treat the women so badly. The wife is the plaything and slave of her husband. She has no rights that any man is bound to respect, and if caught away from home any man will maltreat her. As a daughter she is sold or given away by her father or brothers, and after marriage she is a drudge and a slave. The husband can lend or give his wife away. He can forbid her speaking to any other man, and in some tribes she is not allowed to exchange a word with her grown-up brothers. She is often a bride at the age of ten, and there are few native girls who are not married before they reach sixteen. There are, I am told, many bachelors, but no old maids, for even an ugly girl can work, and a man has the right to as many wives as he can get. He leaves all his work to his wives, and the more wives he has the richer he is.

When a man dies his widows go to his oldest brother, who can keep them or dispose of them, as he pleases. The elder brother has the right to give away or trade off his sisters, and the same right belongs to the father, who often trades the females of the family for wives for his sons.

CAN'T COMPLAIN FOR WANT OF WORK.

The native woman of Australia can't complain that all the professions of her tribe are not open to her. She does all the work, from building the house to getting the food and nursing the baby. Most of the tribes are nomadic. They build little shelters of bark or skins wherever they camp, starting a new village at each stopping place. In traveling the women carry all the belongings of the family. They are laden down like pack horses and walk along bent over behind their husbands, who, perhaps, carry nothing but their boomerangs and clubs. As soon as they come to a new camp the woman cuts the bark and builds the hut. She then goes out and digs roots, picks fruit and climbs the trees to chop out the larvae of worms, which she cooks for breakfast. She often carries her child with her while at this work, laying it on the ground as she digs. She cuts the wood and carries the water, and when she falls behind she is usually sure of a whipping. As a result of such treatment she ages rapidly, her hair grows gray and her face wrinkles, and as a rule she dies at about thirty. Even the men seldom live to be more than fifty.

WHAT THE NATIVES EAT.

The lives of the aborigines are shortened by exposure and diet. In point of intelligence they are said to be as low as any people of the world, and they live and act more like animals than human beings. Their food is largely vegetable, including all sorts of roots. They thrash seeds out of different kinds of grasses and collect weeds which they eat as we do water cress and lettuce. One of their favorite dishes is wild honey, which they find in the hollow trees. They collect wild fruits and their bread is made of grass seeds moistened and ground between stones into a flour. This flour is then made into dough and eaten either cooked or raw.

Among the curious viands of which they are fond are ants, worms and snakes. There are ants all over Australia, and certain varieties of them are caught by the aborigines. The native stands upon an ant hill and stamps with his feet, whereupon the ants run up his legs. After his shanks are well coated he scrapes them off and eats them. The larger kinds of ants are roasted or dried in the sun.

Another delicacy is the beetle, which is consumed both in the worm or larva and in the matured insect. The worms are picked out of the rotten trees and cooked in red-hot ashes. Foreigners who have eaten them say they are not at all bad, and that they look and taste much like an omelet.

Snakes of all kinds are caught and roasted, and also lizards, especially the iguana. The iguana is an enormous lizard. It is eaten throughout South America and has flesh much like that of a young chicken. Its eggs are a delicacy and are greedily devoured by the savages.

The natives are also fond of grasshoppers and locusts. There are sometimes swarms of the latter, when the women gather them by the basketful and the people have a great feast. They first throw the grasshoppers into the fire to burn off the wings and legs and then drag them out and roast each grasshopper separately. The flesh so prepared tastes not unlike roasted chestnuts.

AS HUNTERS AND TRACKERS.

The Australians tell me that the natives have more ability than is generally supposed. They show the evidence of reasoning powers and are such excellent hunters and trackers that they are largely employed as such by the whites. Here in Queensland they take the place that bloodhounds had in slavery days. They can trail anything. They follow criminals on horseback and almost invariably catch them. There are now 121 such men on the Queensland police force, each of whom receives a salary of about 10 cents a day and his food.

As hunters they catch the largest game without firearms. They trap emus, hunting them with native dogs, driving them into nets and catching them in pitfalls. In the wilds the hunters station themselves near the water holes and wait until the emu comes down to drink. They then rig up a net across its path, drive it in, and when it has become entangled destroy it with their spears, clubs or boomerangs. They have a call by which they imitate the voice of the emu, much as our mountaineers do that of the turkey in wild turkey hunting. The emu whistle is made by pounding on a piece of hollow log in such a way that it gives forth a peculiar sound. Sometimes a man will cover himself with bushes and thus sneak upon the emu and kill him.

Kangaroos are caught in nets, and are also run down with dogs and spears. The natives trap birds of all kinds and in all sorts of ways. They catch pigeons by throwing nets over them as they sit about the water holes. They go into the water with bushes about their heads and sneak upon the ducks and cranes which are swimming there. They also catch fish with nets, and sometimes poison the water with certain plants and capture the fish as they rise to the surface. They catch catfish by tramping through the streams and getting the fish under their feet. In such cases the native kills the fish by biting deeply into its flesh just back of the head. He then throws it out upon the bank, knowing that it will not wriggle its way back into the water, and feels about for more.

THE QUESTION OF CANNIBALS.

There is no doubt but that the Australian aborigines are more or less cannibals. The records show that they have always been so, and that the eating of human flesh exists in some parts of Australia today. Carl Lumholtz, to whom I am indebted for some of the information in this letter, has written a book, entitled "Among the Cannibals," picturing his travels through the camps of the Australian aborigines; the government records also contain instances of cannibalism. About twelve years ago a man named Edwards saw the natives roasting an infant in one of their ovens. He watched the blacks open the body and begin eating the fat, but the sight made him so faint that he was not able to continue his observations.

Lumholtz says the natives especially like the flesh of a black man, and that any sort of a human being is eaten as the choicest delicacy. There are parts of this state of Queensland where children who die suddenly are roasted, and there are proofs that native children have been killed for food. In western Queensland the flesh of the pure blacks is preferred, but half-caste children are roasted and eaten. It is said, however, that the people do not care for whitet man's flesh, although they are by no means averse to a rare bit of Chinaman. There is one instance recorded of ten Chinese being eaten at one dinner, and the statement is made that the preference for such meat over that of the white man is because the white man eats animal food, while the Chinese confine themselves largely to rice and vegetables.

THROWING THE BOOMERANG.

I bought several boomerangs the other day, paying about 50 cents apiece for them. They are merely little flat bows made of wood, each about two inches wide and from twenty inches to a yard long. They have a natural twist in them, and are so shaped that when thrown they return to the owner. The natives display great skill in throwing them, but do not, as I had supposed, use them to any extent as a weapon of war. For fighting and for all heavy hunting they prefer spears and lances. They have spears which weigh as much as four or five pounds, and which are eight or nine feet in length. Some spears are barbed with bone, flint or iron. The natives throw them with great skill, and are so treacherous in their use that the explorer has to watch out that he does not receive a spear in his back. The boomerang is sometimes used for killing small birds, but it is to a large extent a plaything.

GHOSTS AND WITCH DOCTORS.

As far as I can learn, the aborigines have no Great Father like that of our Indians, although they believe in a future state and happy hunting grounds. They have a great dread of ghosts and demons, and think that certain places, such as caves and thickets, are haunted by them. They have witch doctors who cure their diseases, which they think come from the spirits. The doctors pretend to locate the demon, and they suck pieces of wood out of the body where the pain is. They believe that most of their woes are due to sorcery, and that certain men can cause others to fall sick and die if they so wish. They believe their medicine men can make rain, and hold them responsible for all their sufferings. They have all sorts of charms to bring on and ward off evil spirits, and of late have announced their belief that the white settlers are dead natives come to life again, and that they themselves will, after death, again appear as white men.

QUEER METHODS OF BURIAL.

The future state of the aborigine depends largely on how he is buried, and the men are very careful to inter their head after certain rites. As to the women and children, they are of no account, either dead or alive, and their remains are usually rolled up in rugs or between sheets of bark and thus buried. A woman will often carry a dead child for a month before she buries it, laying the body under her head at night and sleeping upon it, notwithstanding the horrible odor.

The men are usually bundled up before burial. The knees of the corpse are forced up to its neck and tied there, the arms are tied to the sides and the calves forced up to the thigs and there tied. Then a rug or some pieces of bark are fastened about the body, and it is buried three or four feet deep in the sand, a mound covered with logs being erected above it.

In other parts of Australia cremation is practised, while in other sections the dead bodies are dried before the fire until they turn into mummies. Some tribes lay the dead out upon platforms in the trees and allow the birds to clean the bones, just as the Parsees do upon their Towers of Silence at Bombay. After this the bones are buried in the earth or dropped into a hollow tree.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Brisbane, Australia.

THROWING THE BOOMERANG.

From a snap shot taken for the "News" by Mr. Carpenter.

THE POOR HEATHEN.

Let us go and find the heathen; let us take him by the hand;
Let us take his evil from him; let us also take his land;
Let us break it to him gently that it's wrong to be so nude,
And inculcate proper notions of the style as it's pursued.
Let us show him all the glories of the white man's kingdom come,
And, by way of introduction, sell him lots of white man's rum.
Let us seek our heathen brother in benighted lands afar
And impress him with the wrongness of his habits as they are;
Let us guide him slowly, surely, till he's nobly civilized,
And has banished all his foibles, all his fancies, so despised;
Let us show him how he's destined to go forward with a jump,
Lest our grand, resistless progress take him 'midship with a bump.
Let us teach him that the bolo and the dagger are not right
When the seven-shooter follows up its barking with a bite;
Let us bring to him the gospel of the shirt and full dress suit,
And the glad and glorious tidings of the proper shoe or boot;
Let us lift the poor old heathen from the bog wherein he sticks,
And explain to him the beauties of the game of politics.
Thus we'll labor with the pagan till he understands our ways
And will ponder with a shudder on his old unhappy days.
We will stock his land with clothing, we will dot it with golf links,
And he'll hail the architecture of the home of fancy drinks;
And we'll get the glory for it—for the good that we will do—
All the grand impressive glory—and we'll get his money, too.

—Baltimore American.

MAKING CIVILIZATION UNPOPULAR

It is estimated that 1,000,000 Chinese lives have been lost through starvation or violent death about Pekin and Tien-Tsin since the allied forces held sway there. This sort of estimate is scarcely likely to make "foreign devils" any more popular among the natives of Cathay.—Duluth Herald.

YALE EXPLORERS

Chas. Arthur Moore, the Yale student who accompanied Peary in 1897, is going to make a trip to Hudson Bay after bear, walrus, and birds. A party of nine Yale students will accompany him. The start will be made from Sydney, Cape Breton, on July 20th.

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"Our little daughter had an almost fatal attack of whooping cough and bronchitis," writes Mrs. W. K. Haviland, of Armonk, N. Y., "but, when all other remedies failed, we saved her life with Dr. King's New Discovery. Our niece, who had Consumption in an advanced stage also used this wonderful medicine and today she is perfectly well." Desperate throat and lung diseases yield to Dr. King's New Discovery as to no other medicine on earth. Infallible for Coughs and Colds. 50c and $1.00 bottles guaranteed by Z. C. M. I. Drug Dept. Trial bottles free.

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