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Would shrink and melt to nothingness away,
Ere any recognized the thaw begun.
Amid the early labours of the day,
The tribes have vanished, sunk into decay,
The kindly earth that unto them had been
A fruitful field, requiring toil nor pay,
Had sheltered them in forests evergreen,
Now in her bosom hides them from life's busy scene.

N. R.

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RITUAL, MYTH, AND CUSTOMS
OF THE
AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES.

A SHORT STUDY IN
Comparative Ethnology
BY
W. A. SQUIRE.

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ROBERT BLAIR & SONS.
I.—THE BORA CEREMONY.

It is a great leap from the temples of Ancient Greece, Egypt, and Rome to the eucalyptus groves of New South Wales; but in order to explain much of the secret doctrine and many of the initiation rites of Isis, Orpheus, Venus, and the Eleusinian Ceres, such a leap must be taken. Hidden in the seemingly unintelligible jargon and ceremony of the Bora lies the key which opens the door to the inner circle of many ancient rites and mysteries. With all due respect to the hierophants of Thebes and Delphos, I must admit my doubts that their sacred secrets were not in reality more deserving of respect or curiosity than those of the Australian Aboriginal Karaji. The latter were certainly entitled to more respect, as the guileless black had not yet reached that stage when the priestly power was paramount, the mysteries
had not become a source of unearned revenue, and the Karajis or initiation chiefs certainly believed in much they taught, in which they differed from their prototypes in the old world. In all ages it has been considered an unpardonable crime to reveal the secrets of these religious farces; and to this may be attributed the fact that until very recently nothing of any definite character has been known of the Bora.

The secrets were undoubtedly unworthy of keeping, as the initiates were not philosophers, but narrow-minded men, directed by their Karajis, who, though absolutely ignorant from a modern standpoint, knew a trifle more than their pupils. An oath of secrecy was administered, and has with very few exceptions been most rigidly adhered to. The aboriginal’s mysteries and secrets are certainly of no very great importance, yet they seldom if ever perjure themselves.

It is generally presumed that the mysteries of the Eleusinian Ceres were divulged in Claudian’s poem on Proserpine, and in the sixth book of Virgil’s Æneid Horace condemned Virgil for the act.

To silence due rewards we give,
And they who mysteries reveal
Beneath my roof shall never live,
Shall never hoist with me the doubtful sail.

Be this as it may, it was not until the mysteries of the Bora ceremony had been divulged that the religious impulses which brought the ancient secret rites into existence were capable of interpretation.
“Popular opinion on any scientific subject is always wrong.” The truth of this has never been so fully demonstrated as with regard to the Australian Aboriginal. In the early days of the Colony’s history, traveller after traveller visited our shores, and having seen from a distance, the squalid and debased specimens of the blacks who congregated near Sydney Cove, condemned the whole race as “savages of the lowest type, with no redeeming features.” Absolutely no reliable information was published regarding them, and the conflicting accounts of non-scientific visitors resulted only in vagueness and confusion. The crude generalizations of many writers, who, although absolutely ignorant of the Aboriginal dialects, customs, rites and ceremonies, presumed to deal with authority thereon, has been the cause of the general ignorance with regard to the many admirable institutions, customs, and religious and civil systems by which the Aboriginal daily life is regulated and governed.

With a degree of patience and skill highly to be commended, a few writers have been able to collect from reliable sources, and place before us, a picture of the Bora, and in this respect too much credit cannot be given to the Rev. Lorimer Fison, of Melbourne, Dr. John Fraser, formerly of Maitland, and Mr. R. H. Matthews, formerly of Singleton, to whose articles on the subject I am greatly indebted. The difficulties which had to be contended with may be realised from the fact that it is only the initiated blacks of the highest degrees who can explain their tribal myths,
traditions, mysteries, customs and ceremonies, and they hold them in such sacred awe, that they will divulge them to no one, whether white or black, who has not previously been initiated to such degree as would warrant the revelation. Rarely can a black be induced to speak of his tribal rites, especially to an European, who would possibly treat the revelation with ridicule and contempt.

Upwards of a century had elapsed since the whites landed on these shores, yet it is only within the last few years that the blacks have been understood. Irreparable injury has been done them, and they are now rapidly dying out, succumbing to the superior race, as all other inferior races have done. A few more years and the Murri race will be numbered with the Aztecs, the Incas, the Mayas, and the Tasmanians, and all that will remain will be a few brief records, obtained with infinite toil, rendered more difficult by the misleading accounts of the early writers.

I propose first of all to give a condensed account of the ceremony, compiled from various sources, and although it may not refer to any particular Bora, yet there being no essential difference in the ceremony of one tribe from that of another it may be taken as a comprehensive and general picture of them all.

It is then my proposal to deal briefly with each item of importance in the ceremony from an ethnological point of view, comparing it with similar ceremonial of other races. We may thus hope to arrive with some degree of
certainty at the hidden inner meaning which such ceremonies conceal.

The Bora, Kabbara, Yoolangh or Kipperah, which is of a religious and civil character, is the great educational ceremony of the Murri or Australian race, and has been celebrated all over the Southern Continent. During its celebration the authority of the elders and the Karajis, or wizard-priests, is strengthened, and the young initiates are tutored in the myths, traditions, moral and religious codes, the games and ceremonial dances of their forefathers, and more particularly in the laws relating to the group marriage, which occupies such a prominent position in their social life, and the initiate is thereby admitted to the duties, obligations, and privileges of manhood, and thereafter enters upon a new life. In this former respect it is somewhat akin to that of investing the Roman youth with the virile toga, and in the latter with the investing of the sacred thread of the twice-born Brahmin.

The particular time or season wherein a Bora is held is restricted only to the necessity of having a sufficient number of proposed initiates, but for the mere sake of having light it is generally held at the time of the full moon.

When a number of boys, not less than five, have arrived at the age of puberty, that is to say about the age of thirteen or fourteen years, the initiated men of the clans, who must equal in number four hands or twenty by deputation, inform the chief of the tribe of the fact, accompanying the information
with a gift of three boomerangs, and preparations are immediately made to summon, say a month hence, all the tribe, and perhaps to invite friendly tribes occupying an adjoining taurai or district. The public messenger is selected by a Council of chiefs, and he, in his turn, selects his representatives. These heralds are men of fluent speech, well acquainted with the surrounding dialects, the country, and the guiding stars. When initiated men, they convey the message of the approaching Bora alone, but if uninitiated they are accompanied by an old man initiate to the first camp. After the message is delivered the old man returns to his own camp, and the messenger is sped on, accompanied by another old man, to the next camp. In similar manner this old man returns, and the herald goes on; and so through the whole series of camps. All being prepared, the date and site of the coming Bora fixed, the Heralds are despatched in different directions to spread the news, each in his own pre-arranged district. Armed with the regalia of their office, a piece of wallaby skin, either fastened around the waist or attached to a spear point, his person is inviolable when passing through a hostile territory. When the Herald approaches a camp charged with the important message from the tribe headquarters, he makes known his presence by uttering a peculiar cry which brings around him all within hearing. He then divests himself of what little clothing he may wear, paints himself with raddle, and displays his wallaby skin badge of office. Then, having
executed a ceremonial dance before the tribe, he, in compliance with aboriginal etiquette, sits down, and for a long time remains perfectly silent, nor is he interrogated as to his mission. At last in a torrent of picturesque eloquence his tongue is loosened, he is listened to with great attention, the summons assented to, and after being regaled with the choicest dainties in the larder on he speeds to the next camp, where precisely the same ceremony is gone through. When he reaches the outermost tribe he waits and returns with them to the Bora site, and on the way their number is increased by the blacks from each place visited by the Herald on his outward journey.

When all the contingents have arrived the head chief finally fixes the day upon which the great initiation ceremony shall commence. During the mustering of the tribes some of the head men of that section of the tribe which called the Bora, assisted by those who have been through at least the initiation degree, prepare the ground for the approaching ceremony. The site selected is usually a flat piece of country near water, and two circular enclosures (a larger and smaller) are formed about a quarter of a mile distant from each other. These circles vary in size (the larger being generally about sixty or seventy feet in diameter) and are exceedingly regular in shape. The interior of the circles is carefully cleared of all timber and grass, and made slightly concave from the walls, which are about a foot high, much after the manner of a circus ring. From one circle to the other
an avenue is formed through the scrub, and a bush fence placed round the circles and along each side of the avenue. The site is so arranged that one circle cannot be seen from the other. In the centre of the larger ring is erected a pole of ten or twelve feet high crowned with a bunch of emu feathers, and in the smaller one two young trees torn from the ground and trimmed straight across the top are placed roots uppermost. The tap roots are left for the heads and the two lateral roots for arms, the whole being swathed in bark and fibre till the semblance of a man has been arrived at. Numerous designs and figures are cut in the ground both in the track connecting the circles and without its border, and to mark the location of each figure the debris from the smooth surface whereon the figure is cut, and from the figure itself, is heaped into small hillocks, each crowned with an upright piece of stick. The designs of course vary amongst the different tribes, but the stereotyped figure of Buiamai, the aboriginal creator, an embodiment of the good principle, is ever prominent—portrayed with uplifted arms and expressionless face, he stares upwards from the earth placid as the silent sphinx. At the Bora held at Gundabloui in 1894 and described by Mr. Matthews in his paper to the Royal Society, “The most interesting of these carvings in the soil was a group of twelve persons life size with their heads in the direction of the smaller circle—all the figures were joined together, the hands and feet of one joining the hands and feet of others. They
represented the young men who were with Baiamai at his first camp.” In addition to the figures cut in the ground are many raised in relief and composed of logs covered with bark and earth; notably amongst these appear Baiamai and Gunnabeely, his consort; also Boobardy and Numbardy, the first parents; emus, snakes, cockchafers, grubs, porcupines, birds, fish, and other figures according to the District, are represented along the avenue (images of alligators have been seen at Bora Circle) as far south as the Bellinger. At intervals the bushes were adorned with representations of birds nests in which stones are placed to act as eggs, caterpillars’ nests and imitation caterpillars of prickly pear are tied to the branches. Bark figures of two men, Cobbarailbah and Byallaburra, the sons of Baiamai, near representations of the Sun and Moon, also of bark, guard the entrance to the sacred inner circle. In the track and occupying, as we shall see, an all-important position in the ceremony, is dug a grave which on being opened after the ceremony is found to contain some old clothes with a sheet of bark doubled round them, and firmly tied, as is customary in the aboriginal burial rite. Numerous geometrical designs of a fanciful character are carved upon the large trees at intervals along the track and round the smaller circle. The bark is stripped off and the designs cut deeply into the wood of the tree. On the track or in the circle the great fire of Baiamai is kept burning day and night. Many modern additions in the shape
of bullocks, caricatures of the whites, and ludicrous figures formed with stuffed clothes have been observed, but they form no part of the primitive serious ceremony. The ground, which has been carefully guarded, is now prepared. The boys have said their farewell to their mothers, for they are about to enter upon a trial of courage and obtain a degree which will remove them from their parents' control. Nothing is wanted but the signal to begin. Anxiety is depicted on every face, as the novitiates with their mothers and relatives approach the larger circle.

Suddenly from the depths of the scrub is heard the reverberating roar of the tirrikotti or murrawan, the oval wooden instrument, which being whirled in the air by means of a string, gives out the awe-inspiring voice of Durrumullan, the presiding deity of the Bora; louder and louder its hideous note swells upon the air as if some supernatural being “fluttered and buzzed its wings with hideous roar.” As the sound increases the hearts of the youths become filled with dread, and the women hide their faces in abject fear. It is the voice of Durrumullan, who from all time has regulated the Bora ceremonial. Suddenly it ceases, the neophytes or boombats have been fully impressed with the solemnity of the occasion, and with downcast faces are placed within the larger circle facing the several districts from which they came. The women lie prone upon the ground covered with rugs, and upon the slightest evidence of curiosity would receive severe handling from the elders. Amid the
rhythmic beat of boomerangs and bark manipulated by the gins and old men, the youths are now instructed in the tribal and ceremonial dances, but, however, are not permitted to take part. It is a strange weird scene, a tableau from the drama of the damned, conjuring up a thousand fantasies of “fearful shapes and beckoning shadows dire,” the red fire shimmering on the naked painted bodies of the dancers, as they pass before the eager eyes of the novitiates, the low crooning of the women, together with the dull beating of the time-sticks and the occasional whir of the bull-roarer, cause fancy’s wild imaginings to see more devils than vast hell can hold. This spectacular melodrama which would make the fortune of an enterprising manager who could properly stage it, continues a period of some few days, until at length the time has arrived when the ceremony takes upon it a greater significance. One morning just before the sun has appeared on the horizon, all the men, women, and children assemble near the larger circle. All the males remove their scanty covering and paint their bodies with raddle and grease, and forming into groups dance with much solemnity before the rest of the tribe. At a given signal the novices who have painted themselves red, enter the circle and so sever all ties between themselves and their blood relations. To each boombat or novice is assigned an initiated guardian or tutor belonging to the same totem or marriage class as himself, they are brothers, own or tribal, of the novitate’s female relations. The whole line of the bora
ground is now carefully guarded by initiates armed with pass words and counter signs and their vigilance is not relaxed until the whole of the ceremony is completed. The gins and children having been securely covered up with rugs and bushes each guardian leads his pupil to the centre of the circle, where he is daubed with pipeclay in the particular manner or design which his tribe adopt; he is further adorned with a waist belt or bor of wallaby or kangaroo-rat skin which must be retained by him until his initiation to a higher degree in another ceremony.

Amid the sudden hideous uproar of beaten time-sticks, bullroars and maniacal shouts, supposed to prevent the women from noticing the departure, each boombat is conducted along the avenue, and at intervals forced to undergo ordeals of skill, endurance, and bravery of a most painful, distressing and alarming character; indeed in the Northern Territory one of the ordeals is said to be the enveloping of the naked arm in bark in which hundreds of the large bulldog or red "jo"-ants have been placed, the ends being filled with mud. Should the aspirant for manly honors show the pallid face of fear he is hustled back disgraced among the women and children, who receive him with jeering and contempt. Along the track the guardian and his protege halt at intervals before the various figures and their meanings are explained; as the boy raises his eyes to look for a moment at the figure the hierophants of the procession shout and execute a short dance, and one of the
Karajis after pretending to suffer acute agony, brings up from his inside, by his mouth the *joea* or magic of the particular totem before which he stands. For instance when before the figure of a porcupine he produces chalk, when before the kangaroo stuff like glass and so on. The ceremony at this stage is described by an eye witness and partial initiate. “At a signal the boys who had been sitting in a row, were blindfolded and raised to their feet, and with an old man carrying a torch on either side of every boy, all proceeded along the path towards the inner circle. I was requested not to look up from the ground. On our arrival at the circle all seemed dark and silent, suddenly after a loud ‘Wugh! Wugh! Wugh!’ bright fires sprang into life around us and a number of old men were seen inside the circle holding their hand as if in supplication towards the images and carvings. The bandages were now removed but the initiates were still held tightly by the arm. Then all at once the old men leapt each to one of the carved trees and while chanting a monotonous dirge-like primitive psalm, traced the figures and carvings on the trees with their forefinger. After this had continued some little time, after another “Wugh! wugh!” the boys were all placed apart outside the circle, and made to lie down with their eyes firmly fixed on the images, a guard was left over each boy while the remainder of the party returned to the outer circle. Hunting the “Capaiman” which invades the mountain tops then begins. A man dressed hideously, had been secretly sent off and I
presently saw the flash of a fire stick and heard the weird sound of the “raw-raw” or “turndun” on an adjoining ridge. Eight or ten men armed with club and shield started in pursuit shouting and beating their shields. This noise was redoubled when they reached the spot from whence the sound came. In a little time the fire flashed from another locality and the hunt recommenced. This continued until daybreak, one party of hunters succeeding another, and it was repeated each night while the Bora lasted.

At the grave a symbolical resurrection is enacted, the novitiate dies as a youth and comes to life a man. He has bestowed on him a new name which, under no circumstances, is to be divulged, and is presented with a small fibre bag containing one or more small quartz crystals which he must carry until his death, and must not on pain of the extreme penalty show them to the uninitiated person. An old man disguised with stringy bark fibre lies down in the grave and is lightly strewn with sticks and earth. The natural appearance of the earth being restored, the presumed dead man holds a small bush in his hand in such manner that it appears to be growing from the soil, and other bushes are stuck in to heighten the effect. The novice being brought to the edge of the grave, a song is sung, in which the words used are the class name or totem of the buried man and the word for stringy bark fibre. Gradually as the song continues the bush held by the man begins to shake and quiver until finally with an out-
burst of acclamation the man springs up from the grave. The new name has been bestowed on the novitiate and his future life and marriage subjected to religious commands more strict than the laws of the Medes and Persians.

At the entrance to the inner or smaller circle more severe tests are applied, the principal being those of endurance, silence, and solemnity. In the upper circle the novitiates are made to lie prone on the ground or in constrained positions for days receiving very little sustenance, indeed what food is given to them is of a most revolting and disgusting character. Some idea of the severity of the imposed tests may be gained when the fact appears that many of the candidates are so exhausted that they are, at the completion of the rites, unable to walk out of the ring.

I have purposely left until now the description of a most revolting custom which obtains amongst the aborigines, which description I have on most reliable authority, and to my knowledge it has never before been published. It will be seen why the Aborigines kept the rite such a profound secret, and why they will admit no white man beyond a certain stage. Some two or three weeks before the date of the Bora an initiated man of their tribe, of high caste and without blemish, gives himself up into the hands of the Elders, two of whom are thereupon appointed as his guard, and his restricted food passes through their hands, and all communications reach him through them. He is prepared for the coming ordeal with great care and his position is regarded as
the most honourable one a man can attain, his presence at the Bora is kept a profound secret from the novitiates until the supreme moment arrives. Within the sacred inner circle he awaits the inevitable hour, when he shall fulfil the design, and when the whole of the novitiates are within the circle this hour has arrived. To the slow music of a monotonous chant sung scarcely above a whisper, the whole of the guardians and old initiates form a circle round the hetaira who lies prone upon the ground, the new initiates being placed on the inside, the song is descriptive of the virtues to be gained through the medium of this rite, and as to its origin and institution. Suddenly as the song swells louder on the air, with a sharp flint flake the best man or chief initiator makes an incision in the arteries of the neck and arm of the sacrificed victim, and he dies slowly and painlessly from loss of blood, to the sound of a plaintive wail-like dirge. After this he is roasted in a particular, sacrificial manner, and a small portion of his body is eaten by each novitiate, who thereupon attains to high manhood.

I do not think this sacrifice occurs at every Bora, but rather that it constitutes the highest degree, and only those who have passed through several Boras are admitted to its secret rites. As will be seen by a later portion of this article it is a natural sequence to the ceremony, and its absence, not its presence, would need explanation.

Amongst the rites which are enacted in the sacred upper circle is the production and
explanation of the sacred murravan of Durra mullan or bullroarer, the sight of which inspires manhood, and amongst some tribes Malthusian incision and depillation. A system of secret signs is imparted to the candidates and by a peculiar movement of the eyes or a signal by the right hand with the two first fingers pointed upwards, the initiated may make themselves known to their brother initiates. The initiates are harangued by one of the elders, principally to the effect that they must fight and hunt well, take care of the women and children, never take another man’s gin, and generally to be honourable and honest, according to the aboriginal code of morals. After an elder from each of the tribes who are represented by the novices has addressed the gathering two of the oldest from each tribe enter the ring and the initiates are thrown across these two men’s thighs as they half kneel and amid a dirge like chant the hair is singed off, and after lancing the gum with a piece of bone, the left front tooth is punched out, though the correct way I believe is for the old Karagi to bite it out. The candidate is then led round the ring so that all the tribes may observe the vacancy in the mouth and as he approaches each tribal section the men slap their thighs three times and cry “Wugh, Wugh, Wugh.” The tribal marks on the bodies of the candidates are not made until the last day of the ceremony. In addition to the secret signs given by the eyes and hand, is one which is visible to all initiates. With a pointed eagle-hawk’s feather a small puncture is made in the right
shoulder of the candidate, and then filled with powdered charcoal of a particular wood. When this has healed a small raised scar results, and is easily observed by those who have the necessary knowledge to discern it amid the surrounding scars having other significance.

The tests of endurance are very severe, and a Spartan mother would be proud to welcome any son of hers who had passed through them. The ceremonies to this stage usually extend over a period of nine or ten days, sometimes more, never less. At the termination of the tests the Kangaroo dance is generally performed; the dancers after fastening to themselves long tails of twisted grass, jump about in imitation of the Kangaroo and after a little performance at a given signal each dancer casts off his tail and catching up one of the novitiates carries him out of the circle.

The boombat’s or wommaroi’s probation being now at an end, they wash the raddle and clay from their bodies and prepare for the final initiation by painting themselves almost completely white. The camp has meanwhile been shifted. Near the circle a large fire is made with green bushes for the purpose of creating a great smoke, and two old men who have acted as the principal initiators bring the novitiate to the fire, beating their boomerangs together, the men form a ring round the fire and on the inside of the ring an old man runs beating a heelaman or shield. The boy’s mother then enters the ring, lifts her son from the ground, sets him down, and retires. After some tribal dances mainly character-
istic of the hunt, the young initiates plunge headlong through the smoke without speaking or looking back. The ceremony at this stage is described by Dr. Fraser and I closely follow his description. After the ceremonies at the upper circle are completed the men remove to a flat piece of ground a long way off; here a fire has been kindled at a distance of perhaps a hundred yards from a deep watercourse in which a considerable number of blacks can hide. The boombat is carried to this post blindfolded and he is persuaded that he gets there by flying through the air. The fire on the flat is a large one and has been kindled early in the morning; and the gins seat themselves on an elevated slope near by as spectators of what is to follow. After a while a party of men painted white, red, and yellow, emerge from their concealment in the ravine, and run into view from one quarter and advance towards the fire. They come on in single file to the sound of music of weapons beaten together and when near the fire move on and on until they form a complete circle round it, face inwardly, then making a loud crashing noise simultaneously, they disperse. Upon this another band from another quarter come in similar manner, and do likewise. When all the bands have thus encompassed the fire in succession the gins rise and descend from the heights and lay themselves prone in a circle round the fire and are carefully covered up. They dare not look up, for several blacks with spears in hand run round the circle of prostrate women ready to kill them upon any
evidence of curiosity. When the women are all properly placed a band of blacks, perhaps a hundred in number, with the boombats among them, come suddenly out of the ravine. The boombats have had their hair cut short. All the men in this band have weapons in their two hands and strike them together as before, but their weapons, their bodies, and their hair are all painted white. They too approach the fire, shouting and moving their bodies to and fro as in a karrabarri dance. When they have formed themselves into a complete circle they join hands and move round the fire two or three times. The women are still lying on the ground between the circle of men and the fire. They now rise at command, with heads bent, pass outwards under the outstretched arms, then the men in white take hold of the boombats, rush in and they all leap upon the fire, which by this time has died down considerably, raising a column of smoke and dust until the fire is wholly stamped out. The men in white then take the boombats back to the ravine and leave them there in charge of two of their relatives, and then return to their posts, and the previous performers with the parti-coloured bodies rush in upon them and a general conflict ensues.

After this is over, the two men to whom the boombats were committed take them away into the bush for many weeks training them and testing their fitness for tribal occupations. What the procedure is during this term of tuition can only be imperfectly realized. Doubtless the novice
is subjected to more terrible ritual and trials of endurance, and instructed in the meaning of the mysterious paintings and carvings which are so common in the Sydney, Hawkesbury, and Wollombi districts. He is taught to trace the various geometrical and ideographic figures which are now to be found in many parts of the colony, and which form an indecipherable page in the history of the Aborigines. He is also instructed in secret sexual knowledge, the nature of which can only be hinted at in such an article as this.

For some time after his initiation into the tribal mysteries, a young blackfellow is secluded from women as much as practicable, and must always cover his mouth and nostrils with a piece of a rug when a woman happens to be present. The reason being that the initiate's soul is for some little time after the ceremony in a critical condition: it is regarded in the light of a newly born infant. Popular expressions by civilized people such as "to have one's heart in one's mouth" are survivals from a time when it was a very natural idea that the life or soul might escape by the mouth or nostrils. At the termination of the ceremonies, the circles, bark figures, and earth carvings are all scattered and broken and the camp made to look as if Millir Millir, the evil spirit of the whirlwind, had swept over the scene.

So ends the Bora ceremony. The man has emerged out of the youth, but to complete his manhood and place him in the position of tutor rather than pupil he must attend several
more Boras and be initiated in its higher degrees. Little wonder that the Aboriginals kept their vows inviolate. The physical tests, the prolonged fast, the midnight silence of the woods, broken only by the weird yells of the hierophants and the whirl of the murrawan, the enforced torture of a constrained position, the teaching and exhortation of the Elders, and the dread of failure which would bring death and disgrace by supernatural means, would be more than sufficient to impress the shallowest mind with the sacred, mysterious importance of the great initiation. Doubtless the reader will have observed the singular likeness which many portions of this ceremony bears towards the initiation rites of both ancient and modern races. There is nothing strange in this; and because we find that the ancient Greek initiation and the Bora have much in common we must not hastily conclude that the more recent is a copy of the older. Both may be merely the natural method of human thought at a certain stage of civilization put into figurative action. It is no uncommon thing to find two races whose intercourse is impossible, practising a similar rite. Mankind is the same all over the globe, and under similar conditions will do, and think, exactly the same things. Witness the monoliths, flint headed arrows and stone implements found all over the earth in every possible stage and under all possible conditions.

What does this ceremony mean? A variant of it is at the present day practised by Fijians, Maoris, Brazilians, the Aboriginal
tribes of Central India, the Negro tribes of Upper Guinea, the tribes of the Deccan, the Hottentots, North American Indians, New Mexicans, and in fact by most of the primitive folk in all quarters of the globe. Amongst the Ancients the Druids had their initiation ceremonies, at which the secret doctrines of the preexistence and transmigration of souls was taught by word of mouth. In order to prevent the initiation instructions from being divulged to those unworthy to receive them, they were never reduced into writing, but recited at a ceremony. The Druidical sciences were contained in twenty thousand verses, and there is little doubt that the vast and mystic Stonehenge, and lesser Abury, were the most important initiation circles in which the Druid patriarchs declaimed their esoteric doctrines. Evidences of the ancient existence of the initiation ceremony are scattered broadcast over the globe, and a knowledge of its various phases cast much light upon the psychological development of men. In the Greek and Roman religious and dramatic verse, the letter of the ancient mysteries has been preserved; while much of the superstitious ceremonial has, amid the progress of centuries of culture, been suffered to survive, under the crystallising spell of custom, "that does still dispense an universal influence." Reference will be made to the ancient mysteries only, where points of resemblance to the Bora ceremony may be distinguished. However, on account of its great antiquity, and interesting character, I venture to describe the initiation trials, im-
posed upon the youths of the Maya race, the indigenes of Yucatan in Central America.

That sacred mysteries were celebrated from time immemorial in the temples of Mayax at Xibalba, Copan, and elsewhere in Central America is conclusively proved by the nature of the symbols found sculptured on the walls of the temples and also by the description of the initiation rites set forth in the ancient sacred manuscripts of the Quiches, a branch of the Maya nation.

The applicants for initiation to the mysteries were made to cross two rivers, one of mud, the other of blood, before they reached the four roads that led to the place the priests awaited them. The crossings of these rivers were full of dangers that were to be avoided. They had then to journey along the four roads which respectively bore the names White, Red, Green, and Black, to where a council of twelve veiled Priests and a wooden statue dressed similar to the Priests awaited them. When in the presence of the council they were told to salute the King, and the wooden statue was pointed out to them. This was in order to try their discernment. Then they had to salute each individual, giving his name or title without being told, after which they were asked to sit down on a certain seat. If, forgetting the respect due to the august assembly, they sat as invited, they soon had reason to regret their want of good breeding, for the seat, made of stone, was burning hot. Having modestly declined the invitation, they were conducted to the “Dark house,” where they had to pass the night and submit to the second trial.
Guards were placed all round to prevent the candidates having intercourse with the outer world. Then a lighted torch of pine wood and a cigar were given to each. These were not to be extinguished: still they had to be returned whole at sunrise when the officer of the house came to demand them. Woe to him who allowed his torch and cigar to get consumed, for terrible chastisement and death awaited him. Having passed through this second trial successfully the third was to be suffered in the “House of spears,” where still more severe trials awaited them. Amongst other things they had to defend themselves during the whole of the night against the attacks of the best spearmen selected for the purpose, one for each candidate. Coming out victorious at dawn they were judged worthy of a fourth trial. This consisted in being shut for a whole night in the “Ice house,” where the cold was intense. They had to prevent themselves from being overcome by the cold and freezing to death. The fifth ordeal was no less terrible, and consisted in passing a night in company with wild tigers in the “Tiger house,” exposed to be torn to pieces or devoured by the ferocious animals. Emerging safe from the den they had to submit to their sixth trial in the “Fiery house.” This was a burning furnace where they had to remain from sunset to sunrise. Coming out unscorched they were ready for the seventh said to be the most severe of all, in the “House of bats.” The sacred book tells that it was the house of Kamazotz the God of the Bats, full of death
dealing weapons where the God himself, coming from on high, appeared to the candidates and beheaded them if off their guard.

These initiatory rites vividly recall the visions of Enoch, the blazing house of crystal, fiery hot and icy cold, the bow of fire, the quiver of arrows, the flaming sword, the crossing of the quick flowing stream and the molten river, the extremities of the earth filled with all manner of birds and huge beasts—the habitation of the One of great glory, whose footstool is the orb of the sun.

THE CIRCLES.

In the first place the unvarying circular form of the ceremonial site commands attention. Since, in an infantile fashion, man first began to form logical conclusions, circles have ever embodied a mystic sexual meaning relating to eternity, and, when associated with graves, have symbolised the second birth into which the dead shall emerge into life.

"Planets circle round the sun,
Life doth in a circle run,
And the circle e'er must be
Emblem of eternity."

It is somewhat difficult to credit the aboriginal with a knowledge of abstruse metaphysics or with any advanced theological theories relative to the metempsychosis or to the reincarnation, regeneration, or resurrection in a future state. But it is quite possible that in their mystic lore may be found the primitive germs of the sublime ideas embodied in the esoteric Kabala which were perfected by the Buddhists, and formed the stock-
in-trade of the mystics of the middle ages and Rosicrucians, but prove an enigma to most of the latter-day self-dubbed Theosophists. Few relics of the past have caused more controversy than Stonehenge, and the circles of Abury. The former is so well known that little description is necessary. The great circle of huge stones twenty-two feet high, was ninety seven feet in diameter, and the inner one of nineteen stones about seventy feet. With its majestic circles of gigantic trilithons, it is one of the wonders of England. It has been demonstrated beyond question of doubt that the novitiate passed by degrees of initiation from the outer to the inner or sacred circle, and the ceremony symbolized the initiate’s regeneration; the casting off the old and impure, and the putting on of the new and spiritual nature. At the Abury circles, which consisted of two circular enclosures, one large, the other small, joined by an avenue two thousand three hundred feet in length, all marked out by huge stones (many of which however have disappeared), exactly the same ceremony was enacted. The dual circles connected by an avenue and surrounded by upright stones, which are to be seen in the Scio valley, North America, the temple of Carnac in Brittany, the Avenues in Moab, and the Circles of the Hill Tribes of India, are without doubt an advanced stage of the Bora circles and avenue which recall strongly those mysterious solitary or clustered monuments of unknown origin so long the puzzle and delight of antiquaries. Viewed in the light of the Bora they each become an
initiation ground whereon the novitiates passed by stages from the outer darkness of ignorance to the inner light of knowledge. Similar explanation is possible of the sacred groves of the Hebrews, and in the carved tree trunks of the Bora circle we may see Asherah, the symbol or image of Ashtoreth or Astarte, the Phallic Goddess to whose worship the Hebrews upon occasions reverted.

Here then among the savages of Australia, we find the primitive germ of the religious and architectural impulse which culminated in the symmetrical temples of Greece, the massive structures of Baalbec and Egypt, and the magnificent cathedrals of Rome, Canterbury, and Milan.

THE DANCES.

All nations have associated dancing with religious ceremonies. Lucian in his treatise on the subject states: “I pass over the fact that you cannot find a single ancient mystery in which there is not dancing. To prove this I will not mention the secret acts of worship, on account of the uninitiated”.

Each degree of initiation has its own distinctive dance, and attached to each dance is its own particular meaning. The Greek mysteries at one stage of their ceremonial were entirely set forth in ballets d'action. Much of the secret sexual teaching of the Bora is conveyed to the initiate entirely by dances and gestures, and needless to add much of it is of a most libidinous character. The ballets, however, in the main represent hunting and warfare, the two principal factors in the aboriginal life.
What poetry is to prose, dancing is to motion. Both emanate from intelligence and passion. Gesture being much more the immediate expression of sentiment, preceded articulate language, whence will be seen the importance of dancing and pantomime to the aboriginal: it is his supreme art and language, he reproduces by his supple movements his hopes, fears, joys, and griefs. Sentiment and burlesque, pathos and humour, he dances them all, even to mocking the being he most fears, and the objects he most loves. Just as David danced before the Ark, with its secret contents, so dance the aboriginals before the sacred shrine of Bajamai, the great and all powerful Deity.

THE BULLROARER.

It is strange that there should be found in the ancient Greek and modern Australian mysteries, a similar instrument, used for a similar purpose, and that the same should be the plaything of the English peasant child. There can be little doubt that in Greece the sacred wand or bullroarer was a survival from the time when the Greeks were in the social condition of the Murri race, and that in the latter the necessity evolved the instrument. Similar sacred wands are in use in New Mexico, New Zealand, and in South Africa. The memory will recall the sacred rods of Moses, Aaron, Pharaoh's priests, the thyris of Bacchus, Mercury, and many of the mythological host. Its sacredness is preserved by many a legend. At initiation the boys are told that if ever a woman is
allowed to see it, the earth will open, and water will cover the face of the globe. The old men point spears at the boy, and whisper: “If you tell any woman you shall die, the ground will be broken up like a sea.” A deluge tradition is connected with the sacred wand in Athens, Syria, and Australia. The Kurnai tribe of Gippsland have the tradition that a long time ago some children found one and taking it home showed it to the women, and immediately thereupon the earth crumbled away, all was water and the race was drowned. It answers two purposes—making sure the alarm and absence of women from the ceremony and impressing the initiate with a proper degree of religious awe, as he hears the roar of wings of Durramullan rising louder and louder above the yells of the Elders and the crooning of the women. Such an instrument is exactly fitted for the purpose which called it into existence.

PAINTING.

Nudity is the sacred garb with which primitive man ever clothes himself to approach the unknown. Added to this are white and red, the distinctive colours of good and evil. The custom of daubing the initiate is much travelled, and seems to represent the impure state of the novice cleansed later by ceremonies of initiation. Red, the colour with which the initiate is first painted has, to the religious mind, always suggested evil. With the Egyptians it was the distinctive colour of Typhon the Evil One. The Mephistopheles of the European drama without his red doub-
let and hose would with difficulty be recognised. The devil is more lurid than he is generally painted. Amongst the Hebrews, Cingalese, and Congo negroes, red was particularly associated with the evil influence. In the advanced theosophical system of the Rosicrucian cabalist this was altered: red became the symbol of the masculine principle in nature, the producing power, the noblest and most active element, and to this day the colour gules in heraldry is the sign manual of Princes.

The colour white, to all minds except perhaps to the Chinese, is symbolical of spiritual purity and grace; this is so well known that it needs no demonstration. The white agates of Siva, the white horses and temples of the Sun, the celestial robes of the Christian heavenly host all present themselves. White however, has been a most unlucky colour with regard to English history—but that is another story.

Thus we see the initiate entering into the ceremony, bearing the badge of evil, and after his purification emerging a new being, resplendent with the “Livery of the children of the Light,” a being with a fresh motive in life, possessing a powerful knowledge for the vanquishing of evil.

FIRE.

Fire has occupied a first position in all religious systems, and from the earliest historic period to the present time, the never quenched flame has always been an accessory to the altar. To the primitive mind fire is the most powerful of all purificatory agents.
The midsummer fires of the European peasantry are survivals from a time anterior to that when the ancient cabalists transformed the material to the spiritual fire and so laid the foundations of the Christian hell. In all religions whether Eastern, Western, Northern or Southern, the fire mystery stands ever recurring and conspicuous. As old almost as man and the thoughts of man, its monuments stand in the four corners of the world, notably amongst them the pyramids, which derive their name from the Greek word pyr (fire). The Scandinavian Balder, the Egyptian Osiris, the Greek Hercules, Bacchus, Phoebus or Apollo, the Hindoo Krishna, and Agni, the Persian Mythus, the Atyr of the Sidonians, were all sun or fire gods, and all their creeds of fire were fortified by rites and fenced around by ceremonies bearing a strong family resemblance. In all their initiations the disciple was led by stages, until, towards the highest grades he became illuminata, and having attained the highest knowledge was admitted to the presence of the Most High. The fire festival was an important rite in the religions of the ancient Druids, Greeks, Romans, Scandinavians, and in fact all the European races, whether sprung from Aryan stock or from the original indigenes of the land. In the majority of the ceremonies no women are permitted to be present, and traces of human sacrifice at them are particularly clear and unequivocal. Many prayers are said by the participants invoking a prosperous harvest and abundance of game. Many dances are performed round the fire, and at a
given signal the whole party join hands in couples and spring through it, in some instances crying "I leave my sins behind me." The cattle are then driven through, until, by the constant trampling of men and animals the fire is entirely scattered and extinguished. In the Bora we have an exact counterpart of what is occurring every year in the midst of the highest civilization of Europe, and thousands of myths have arisen out of the scattered embers.

The meaning of all this is not far to seek; everything goes to show that the fire is a suncharm, and as such is intended at the Bora to exert its good influence upon subjects represented by carvings and drawings in its vicinity. The leaping through of the blacks is intended to secure for them a share of the vital energies of the sun and purify them from all evil influences, and so lessen the power of witchcraft in which the aboriginal is a firm believer. Doubtless at the fire ceremony, the chief initiator repeats unconscious of plagiarism the incantation of the Chaldean astrologers, "May the god fire, the hero, dispel their enchantments or spells for the injury of others."

THE GRAVE.

The simulation of death and resurrection or of a new birth at initiation, appears to have left its traces among races who have advanced to a degree of civilization; for instance, the investiture with the sacred thread of a Brahmin "twice-born" and the new life
entered upon and new name given to a modern religious recluse. It also appears to have formed part of the Mithraic mysteries.

The aid of totemism must be called in, in order to understand the principle which underlies this deep-rooted belief. The custom of totemism is formulated upon the idea that the soul may be deposited in some place of security. Amongst the Murri race the usual receptacle for the human soul is the body of some animal, who thereupon becomes of one flesh with the aboriginal. A stock, say of the kangaroo, which may be scattered through many tribes, claims its descent through the maternal line, from the kangaroo, and will not kill or eat that animal. Further, the members of each totemic class being prohibited from inter-marrying, must adopt the exogamous custom of seeking a wife from another stock, and it sometimes happens that this renders it necessary for the anxious groom to seek his bride in another tribe. A man descended from the iguana, living on the Murray River, cannot marry a maiden of the same descent, though of no blood relationship even though she come from the Gulf Territory. He must marry a girl descended from a kangaroo, an emu or a paddywack and therefore of no relation. Relics of this custom may be easily discerned in the names we daily see before us, Wolf, Fox, Swan, Crane, Bear. The totem is the receptacle in which a man keeps his life, and this view of totemism throws much light on that part of the Bora ceremony which is enacted at the grave. The rite consists of the pretence of killing
the initiate, extracting his soul, transferring it to his totem, and bestowing the new totemic name upon him. The extraction of the soul is supposed to kill him, and his recovery is accelerated by the infusion of fresh life from the totem. The primitive belief of the possibility of such an exchange is made clear in the Basque story of the hunter, who stated that he had been killed by a bear, but, after he had been killed, the bear breathed his own soul into him, so that the bear was now dead, and that he himself was the bear. This is exactly what is supposed to take place at the grave. The lad dies as a man and comes to life again as an animal; with sound logic therefore he calls himself an opossum (Kubbi) or a kangaroo (Murri), whichever is his totem, and with good right does he treat all opossums or kangaroos, etc., as his brethren, and all members of the race of the same totem as his relations. This subject can be extended and discoursed upon at considerable length, as the resurrection custom and myth has been almost universal. The reader will doubtless draw many analogies, upon which our limited space prevents us from touching.

The institution of totemism is not resorted to merely at time of peril, but is a system into which all males who wish to be considered men must be initiated. The fact that the age of puberty is invariably adopted as the time for such initiation is in itself significant, and suggests that the dangers which the ceremony is presumed to obviate, do not arise until maturity has been attained, and
would point to a belief in the danger as a sexual one. That many supernatural perils attach, in the savage mind, to the sexual relation is amply proved by a lengthy array of facts, but their exact nature is at present obscure. When their character has been definitely ascertained we will then have an explanation to most of the ancient phallic rites, to the social aspect of totemism, and to the origin of the marriage system which the "New woman" literature is endeavouring to undermine. A fact that points to the Bora as being to a great extent a phallic rite, is that whenever Durramulan, the presiding Deity, is mentioned or his sacred wand produced the women slink away, knowing that to overhear or see is to court instant vengeance, probably death. So stringent are the rules regulating the group-marriage of totemism that any infringement by an initiate will bring summary punishment upon his head. Mr. H. O'S. White witnessed the carrying out of such a sentence. "Twelve spears were thrown with all the force of the wom-mera at the delinquent, who was allowed the meagre protection of a small heiliman about 4 inches wide where held by the hand pointed at both ends and presenting a convex surface to the missile. Each spear was thrown by a different black with great rapidity and true to the mark."

**THE SACRIFICE.**

That a human sacrifice was offered at the Bora ceremony was with me a foregone conclusion long before I ascertained from reliable sources that such was an actual fact. It is
commonly known that the flesh and blood of a brave young man was with the Kamilaroi tribe, sometimes eaten to inspire courage and bravery, and the absence of a sacrificial orgie at the Bora would, in the face of the great amount of accumulated information proving the existence of just such a rite in other initiation ceremonies, need explanation.

A dissertation upon this subject must of necessity prove somewhat repulsive to the reader, but it must be understood that cannibalism for its own sake and not simply as a religious act did not obtain to any extent amongst our aborigines.

The sacrificial rite has been such an universal act that traces of it are visible in all religions which at the present time do not actually practise it.

With the Konds of Bengal, a young woman, who has been prepared with great ceremony beforehand, is set up as a divinity, praised, sung, and danced to, and after being tied to a stake and passing a dreary midnight vigil alone she is sacrificed during an invocation of the Sun and her blood sprinkled on the earth. The Scythian tribe of the Albanes, fattened a Hetaira and killed her before the altar of Artemis. The Athenians at the Thrargelia gorgeously adorned a man and woman who had been splendidly entertained by the State and led them forth in procession to be burnt in the open country. The Indians of Arizona at the “Feast of Fire,” offered a human being to the gods—his throat was cut, his breast opened, and his heart eaten. The horrors of Carthage, the carnivals of
blood at Upsala by the Scandinavians, and at Rügen by the ancient Slavs are matters of history. In Mexico and Central America the same rite was enacted and the victim after receiving royal honours gave himself up to be immolated upon an altar for the good of all men. A picturesque description of this ceremony may be found in Mr. H. Rider Haggard’s “Montezuma’s Daughter.” When a Hindoo has killed a sacred animal he has to expiate his offence by a pretended sacrifice, whereat he feigns to die after having received an incision in the arm and is brought to life again with great pomp and ceremony. As the nations advanced in civilization many religions discarded the human sacrifice and substituted that of an animal, who like the scape-goat had to bear the sins of the people. It has been assumed that the mock killing of the wild man and king in North European folk-custom is a modern substitute for the ancient sacrifice, and those who recognise the tenacity with which a custom will cling to the peasantry and amid the surrounding growth of civilization dwindle from solemn ritual into mere pastime, will be least willing to question this assumption.

It is a peculiar fact that before the sacrifice is made the proposed victim is always treated with the greatest respect, elevated to a kingly and even divine position, and it is a very common belief amongst primitive races that their safety and even that of the world is bound up in the life of these god-men or substituted deities and
on no account will they select an old or feeble man. Further than this, they specially guard him from the time he is chosen and precautions are taken to prevent his dying from natural causes or being killed before his time arrives. The whole of his faculties, mental and physical, must be in such a sound condition that benefit will ensue to those who take part in the after ceremony. The advantages to be derived from the sacrifice are obvious enough. The soul and good qualities of the man-god are transferred in a vigorous condition to those who partake of a portion of his flesh. Horrible as this may seem to a civilized European, and strange as the belief may appear, there are things stranger even than this lying as the bed-rock upon which many of the institutions and systems of to-day have been erected. Below many a glorious masterpiece of thought there frequently lies a foul and hideous primitive ancestral idea; a veritable mocking skeleton within a richly-chased and carved cabinet. Truly this is a strange being we see —here a savage, there a philosopher, at one time a barbarian howling his war chants, at another a Tennyson singing a brotherhood of song,—in one land an anthropoid ape with no thought but of himself, in another a Spencer or a Huxley striving to benefit all humanity, and yet at each and every place and time ever the same; Man, subservient to same impulses, the same desires, capable of the same achievements, and different only in degree.
GENERAL.

The many points of resemblance which the Bora presents to ceremonies of other races have led writers to find the ancestors of the Murri race amongst Dravidians, Malays, Negros, and even Arabs. It is the better opinion that they are an off-shoot from the Dravidian stock. This hypothesis of a common origin, however, is not founded upon any thing so weak as the resemblance of ceremonial or custom. The bull roarer is common to the ancient Greek and the Australian rites; trials of endurance are found in the initiation ceremony of the Maya and the Murri; the same fire ceremony is enacted by the European peasantry and the aborigines, but these facts are not sufficient whereon to base a broad statement that the blacks were originally natives of Greece, Yucatan, or Europe. Similar minds, however far distant from each other, working with similar means and surroundings towards similar ends, may evolve similar myths, customs, ceremonies, symbols, and implements.

Myth is always the daughter of a rite and not its parent, and the Bora rite has already given rise to several myths. In order to counteract the influence of Krooben the Evil Spirit, Baiamai is said to have first instituted and taught the aborigines how to practise it, the circles are called "Baiamai’s ground" and he is said to have given his people the sacred wand. Initiation endows a power of resistance to evil and witchcraft, and gives protection from the powers of unknown dangers. Baiamai gazes from his Paradise of plenty in the milky-way
upon each Bora, ready to deal prompt punishment (through his baleful emissary Wurrwilbur) to those who are remiss in the ancient and sacred rites, and ready to enfold in his welcoming embraces the Karajis and Elders who carefully uphold the old traditions and ceremonies. Baiamai instituted totemism as a badge of recognition through all eternity. Many of the stars and constellations are pointed to as the camps at which Baiamai and his sons and the ancestor Karajis of the tribes held Boras. Pundjel the Aboriginal Prometheus is credited with having given to the natives the never dying fire. The handiwork of priestcraft can be easily discerned in this primitive system of reward and punishment, and needless to say the Karajis kept a wholesome fear constantly before the tribe and so held secure their position and their right to the first choice from the hunter’s bag.

A very small portion of the great initiation ceremonies is still shrouded in uncertainty, and it is quite possible that some of its minor rites have in recent years been discarded, and its principal rite altered so as not to bring the participants within the pale of civilized laws, and it is more than probable that much of the rite has been lost. In point of fact it has been stated that the present blacks remember nothing of its original meaning. This of course is quite possible, seeing that a custom or religious ceremony may exist, having no intelligible meaning, and capable of no rational interpretation; custom is so powerful that it will sustain an ancient usage
long after its meaning has been forgotten. The old Grecian and Roman rites and mysteries which had been instituted by the non-Aryan indigenes of the land were retained until long after the two nations had arrived at a high stage of civilization. However, I firmly believe that the aborigines of the interior, who have not to any degree come in contact with the Europeans, still have full knowledge of the meaning of the entire ceremony, and still hold it with all its rites and mysteries.

**THE ASTRONOMY AND STAR-MYTHS OF THE ABORIGINES.**

I have read somewhere that Homer, Plato, and Shakespeare combined wrote everything worthy the writing, and knew all worth the knowing. In the majestic masterpieces of the first of this trio of giants are to be found, clothed in the gold and purple of his regal pen, some of the star myths of the Australian aborigines. It were as if the mighty portrayer of the tale of Troy, Ulysses, and the Argive Helen, ensconced behind some giant grass tree fern, the Southern Cross wheeling in silent splendour overhead, witnessed a dusky band of barbarian warriors sitting round their camp fire, singing or declaiming the stories of their youth, and the more important sagas picturing the prowess of their ancestors—listening as far into the night the men told endless stories, contributing silent applause, as with emphasizing gesticulation, an old karaq told of the mighty doings of Turee and Wanjel, and the
newly initiated youths in proud admiration grasped their boomerangs and spears and shouted for war.

Havoc and tears, and spoils and triumphing
The morning march that flashes in the sun,
The feast of vultures when the day is done.
And the strange tale of many slain for one.

And then, having heard, returned to his beloved Greece, and from the unminted wealth of his glorious poet's mind clothed the barbaric tales in gorgeous rhythmic splendour. However, we know the Master Poet did not do this. His material was closer at hand. There, amid the peasantry of his native land were preserved similar tales handed down from father to son from a time when the original denizens of Greece were in the mental and social condition of our unjustly-despised natives.

Diogenes like, the whole series of myths is but the glimmering of man's lantern searching for truth, and from the errors through which humanity has in its various stages passed, a great lesson is to be learned—the lesson of the mental development of man, who once carried about a never-quenched fire stick, but now calmly reads beneath his electric light, who once believed in the Southern Cross as his one immediate ancestor, now teaches in his academies of learning the approximate weight of the planets and their relative distances from the sun. All the learning of the present day is the direct outcome of the desire to know, which is of more value than the wish to believe. Myth was the product of man's emotions and imagina-
tions directed by his surroundings; he wondered before he reasoned. Given a phenomenon, and a race of men in a condition of mental darkness, a myth in explanation of the phenomenon will arise, and, as men and similar phenomena are to be found all over the world, little surprise can be expressed if two or more myths are found in different quarters purporting to explain similar occurrences, or the reason for the existence of similar objects.

It will therefore be seen that myths made their appearance and began to form the religious systems of the world at the very earliest dawn of the earth’s history. The first survey of nature made by man, ignorant of the forces and mysterious laws surrounding him, and to whom a logical sequence of cause and effect was a blank page, was that of wonder and awe.

He measured all things by himself, consequently the sun, moon, and stars, clouds, rivers, trees, rocks, and the multitudinous forms of nature, night and day, fiery sunset and roseate dawn, were all invested with an actual personal being, life and will. The thunder was the roar of the devouring fiend; the lightning, the storm demon darting on his helpless prey; the rainbow, a beautiful benefactor or thirsty monster according to whether rain was wanted or not. This was not poetic imagery, but an explanation of the phenomena. Like the child gazing at the stars the savage looks on the unknown object and says, “How I wonder what you are?” He then explains it to himself, and
in his barbaric fashion calls to his assistance the only things he knows, himself and some of his surroundings, and upon these he bases his infantile philosophy. He animates all nature, "sees God in clouds, or hears Him in the wind." He peoples the universe with supernatural beings, good and evil; his translated ancestor

Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glow in the stars, and blossoms in the trees.

There is scarcely a bird, beast, or uncommon conformation of territory or natural growth but the Australian aborigine will explain its peculiarities by a myth.

After the mythical deluge of the Southern Continent, Pundjel the Australian Prometheus, upon whose wife it is death to gaze, converted all good men and women into stars and like the Egyptian priests, the Karajis can point out the progenitors of the tribes shining in the sky, guiding lights to their descendants through all eternity. This crude manner of interpreting natural phenomena is called animism, and when the ancestral stars are worshipped as higher powers it develops as with the Chaldeans into Sabbæanism.

The aboriginal knowledge of astronomy greatly exceeds that of the majority of civilized folk, and the reason is very evident: the knowledge is of vast importance to him in his night journeys and in his computation of time; and such knowledge, with its accompaniment of myth, is carefully preserved in the minds of the elders and karajis, and imparted with exceeding care to the initiates at the Bora ceremony. Consisting as the
Murri race does, of innumerable tribes, whose intercourse was chiefly that of warfare, it is natural that many dissimilar myths explaining one particular phenomenon, have arisen, and as this article is intended to serve only as a popular review of the subject, reference which would merely swell its bulk without adding to its interest may be omitted.

The science of astronomy as it is now known, is of great antiquity. The names the stars and constellations now bear are derived from the Greeks, who had them from the Chaldeans, with whom star-worship occupied a principal feature in religion, and they in turn had them from their primitive ancestors, who in a savage state noted their individual peculiarities, and attached to each a name and a myth, accounting for its origin. Many of the solar names and the signs of the Zodiac have came down to us after weathering the devastating storms of over 6000 years.

Some of the aboriginal star myths are, though crude in construction very picturesque, and many bear a strong family likeness to those of other races. To the savage enquirer the origin of light would pre-eminently demand explanation, and one race of aborigines says that many years ago all was darkness, until one of their ancestors who is now Jupiter out of pity for the race, cast an emu’s egg into space where it became the sun.

Another race believes that all birds, like those of Aristophanes, were originally gods. The Northern Crown is Mullion Wollah, the Eagle’s camp with its six eaglets. Altair the
chief star in Aquila in the N.E. and Vega in the N.N.E. are the parent eagles rising from the earth to watch and guard the nest.

A long time ago the moon was an evil man who devastated the earth, and one day he swallowed the eagle. The eagle's wives met the moon and asked him the whereabouts of their husband; the moon in an evasive manner requested to be directed to a well: the well was pointed out, and as the moon drank the eagle's wives hit him on the head with a nulla nulla and killed him, when out flew the eagle. This may be compared to the Greek myth of the all devouring Chronos who swallowed his children but disgorged them after being punished. It also bears a remarkable resemblance to one of Grimm's European fairy tales "The wolf and the kids." In this the wolf swallowed the kids, their mother cut a hole in the wolf, let out the kids, and filled the wolf with stones. Upon the wolf going to a well to drink, the weight of the stones dragged him in and he was drowned. Another tribe says the moon is a man, the sun a woman of indifferent character who arises from the earth each morning in a coat of red kangaroo skins given to her by an admirer, and she is trying to overtake the moon, but only does so at an eclipse. Still another tribe, to prove that Olympus had no monopoly of conjugal faithlessness, state that Mityan the moon was a native cat, who, for having fallen love with someone else's wife, has been driven to wander in loneliness for ever across the face of the sky.

The native belief, that the sun dies every evening and is re-born every morning, is
identical with the doctrine set out in the Vedanas, and believed in by Epicurus, Heraclitus and by the Soufis of Persia.

Baiamai, the almighty powerful and wise, resides in Warrambool, the Milky way, in a beautiful hunting ground abounding with the choicest game, and the eagles are his emissaries, who overlook the tribal rites and report to their master any error or slip in the ceremonial.

Orion, that imposing giant hunter, with his belt and sword is just such a constellation as would serve whereon to hang a mythical story. He is called Beraiberai, a young man, who when on earth was smitten with the fever of love. Being of a most exemplary character Baiamai translated him to the heavens near to Miai-miai (the young girls), the Pleiades, whose beauty had attracted him; he has a boomerang in his hand and the belt of manhood round his waist; the Pleiades, being desirous of captivating and retaining his affections, sing and play to him, but one of the sisters on account of her defective appearance crouches behind the others, and hides her head in shame. She is called Gurri-gurri, (afraid or ashamed.) To the aborigines of another tribe the stars in Orion’s belt and scabbard are young men dancing a corroboree, the Pleiades being young girls beating time with sticks for them to dance to.

The well known group, The Pleiades, has a peculiarity to be accounted for. It consists of seven stars, one of which is so dim, that it is almost indiscernible. The Greek myth accounting for the lost Pleiad is: that they
were seven maidens, daughters of the giant Atlas; six of them had gods for lovers. Ares admired one, Poseidon two, and Zens three, but the seventh (Merope) had but an earthly mortal lover, so that when all of them were changed into stars Merope hid her light for shame: this compares strangely with the Australian myth already quoted. A Pleiad myth current in South Australia runs:—A long time ago the Pleiades were a queen and her six maids of honour; the crow fell in love with the Queen, who refused to be his wife. He found that the queen and her attendants used, when hungry, to hunt for grubs in the bark of trees, and he at once changed himself into a grub (just as Jupiter used to change into a swan, a horse or a bull) and hid in the bark. The six maids tried to pick him out, but he broke their wooden hooks, then came the queen with her bone one, and letting himself be withdrawn, he changed into a giant and ran away with her, ever since which event there have been only six stars, six Pleiad maidens. The main conception of these myths is identical, allowing of course for the difference in Greek and Murri thought as regulated by the surroundings. The Pleiades are also called "Worrul," the bees' nest, and are by the Shoalhaven tribe said to be the damsels with whom the Moon was in love, and who when catching and roasting fish were threatened by a hostile black, and were suddenly caught up to the heavens by the Moon in order that they might be out of danger and contribute to his pleasure by singing and dancing every night.
The Southern Cross has not escaped, and by the Kamilaroi blacks is recognised as a ti tree, the pointers (Bungula and Agenor) being cockatoos flying towards it with messages from other stars. The dark space near the Cross is a crouching emu (gao-ergi). A peculiarly beautiful myth is related by the Murray River blacks as to the two pointers of the Cross. A long time ago many brush turkeys used to play every evening on the plain; and much to their consternation whenever one of them became tired and weary with dance or play, and began to drop behind its companions, an old cannibal bird would pounce upon it and devour it. A council was thereupon held, and it was decided to remove their quarters to another plain. Just as they were ready to leave, there came from a distance two birds of the same species who persuaded them to stay by promising to save them from their assailant. The sports were continued that evening, and one of the newcomers hid himself in the bushes near the habitation of the destroyer, and the other joined in the festivities. After a little time had elapsed the latter bird pretending to be exhausted, fell down near the ambush, and the old cannibal sprang forth to kill him. But the bird recovered himself, and aided by his companion quickly despatched the entrapped persecutor. While the whole of the birds loudly applauded the feat, their two deliverers rose from their midst, and flying higher and higher reached the sky, where, as the two pointers they shine on for ever. This
recalls to mind Apollo and Diana coming from on high to assist their votaries.

Castor and Pollux both in Ancient Greece and Australia are said to have been young men. In Greece they were natives of Lacedaemon and were celebrated for their brotherly affection, wherefore Zeus to immortalize them placed them amongst the stars. In Australia Turee (Castor) and Wanjel (Pollux) are two young men, mighty hunters, who pursue Purra and kill him at the commencement of the great heat. Coonartooring (the mirage) is the smoke of the fire by which they roast him.

The constellation of the eagle who in Greek myth was the bird of Zeus, who transported Ganymede to be the cupbearer on high Olympus, is in aboriginal mythology Totyarguil a man who while bathing was killed by a terrible monster, the Bunyip, just as Orion was destroyed by the scorpion, and, like Orion, he was translated to the stars.

Many great men among the tribes figure in the orb studded firmament. One of the foremost is Gharabooung who with his smaller companion now shine as the Heavenly Twins. Both are skeletons and neither were equal to Menee, who though in the heavens, is too majestic a character to be seen by the common eye. On earth Gharabooung was a man of great stature and power, a prince among men, so tall that his feet could touch the bed of all rivers; his food was snakes and eels. One day he buried a snake and an eel, and afterwards when he became hungry, returned to eat them. He perceived fire issuing from the ground
where they had been buried. His companion warned him not to go too near, but declaring he was afraid of no fire on earth he approached, when suddenly a whirlwind enfolded him and carried him on high, where he and his companion may still be seen.

It is natural that the great Bora ceremony should give rise to many myths. Baiamai was its originator, and serene above the earth in his peaceful home in the Milky Way he directs its ceremony. The worthy ones ascend to him by the Mundewar, a star in the constellation of Serpentarius, which represents the notches cut by which the blacks ascend to tree tops. They are particularly cautioned that when climbing to Baiamai's Paradise they must carefully avoid the vengeful demon Wurrawilburu who lurks in the dark space in the constellation Scorpio, ready to pounce upon and destroy them. Across the wide expanse of heaven are to be seen glimmering like beacon fires along the path, the many blazing camps of those who have journeyed to their eternal home. There are star camps for each tribe and each star bears the totemic or clan name of the tribe who holds its ceremony there. For instance, Benemasch, a star near the great Bear is Ngung-gu (the White Owl) or the camp used by the aborigines of the White Owl totem. The dark space under the Southern Cross is Gaerghi (the Emu), the Magellan clouds are Buralga (the Native Companion). Two stars near Scorpio are Gijeriga (the parrots), Antares is Gudda (a lizard), Spica Virginis is Gurie (a crested parrot),
Fomalhaut is Gani (a small iguana), Corvus is Bundar (a kangaroo), the Peacock’s Eye is Murgu (a night cuckoo). The spirits of the worthy ones from the tribes first enter by means of the stepping or climbing star of Mundewar to the peaceful groves of Baimai; and if, after trial, they are not found wanting, they proceed each to the camp of their tribe or totem, there to commune with their own tribal ancestors for ever. In the Murrumbidgee District the Aborigines speak of the Milky Way as the smoke issuing from the fire of a great Chief who was translated to the heavens while roasting mussels.

Wyungare, the Nimrod of the tribes, who was one of the men of the red clan who are now stars, had no father but only a mother, and had for his companion Nepelle. Wyungare stole Nepelle’s two wives, and being pursued he flung his spear into the heavens with a line attached, and, having stuck there, he hauled himself and the two wives up. Three stars are pointed out as Wyungare and his wives. Nepelle still paddles across the heavens in his canoe, the Milky Way, trying to overtake his stolen brides and their captor. Wyungare is the deity who presides over marriage, and his mythic history has evidently arisen out of the exogamous custom of the Aborigines, or the marriage by capture imposed upon them by totemism which prohibits the intermarriage between two of the same class or totem. A variant of this myth is current amongst the Northern Victorian tribes.
The stars were formerly men and came out at night to reenact their former occupations; they are too far distant to be recognised, but may be distinguished by the fire sticks they carry with them. One of them, Pung-ngane was the first ancestor of the tribe of the Red men, and he had a brother named Wingarope. His mother, with whom he was a favourite, took him into the bush and provided him with every aboriginal luxury and there he became a skilled hunter and great warrior. Pung-ngane stayed by the seashore with his two wives, and it so happened that having to go upon a long journey he left his wives at home. Many months elapsed, but the husband did not return, and the wives thinking themselves deserted desired to offer their charms to Waijungngari, a hunter and warrior of no little repute, with whose prowess they had doubtless been smitten. The desire was quickly acted upon, and at dead of night the two deserters from the domestic camp fire of Pung-ngane arrived at their selected protector's gunyah, and stationing themselves one on each side of the door imitated the cry of the emu. Upon hearing this, Waijungngari arming himself with a spear, rushed out and confronted his midnight visitors, who informed him of their mission to which he readily conceded.

When Pung-ngane returned, he naturally made inquiries and instituted a search for his missing wives, and when he discovered what they had done his disconsolate heart dictated that the best course of punishment was that effected by supernatural means in which he
was a staunch believer. He therefore, after casting a few magical spells, probably learnt at the original Bora, went to the gunyah where resided Wajungngari, the unpronounceable, with his stolen brides, and casting some magical fire upon it, uttered the mystical words "Kun nda jan," signifying "let it burn slowly." When the wrongdoers retired to rest that night the fire fell upon them, and they knew they were under the powerful spells of a mighty wizard, and in terror and haste they rushed from the scene and never rested until they reached a secluded spot along the far distant coast, from which place through the mediation of the Ancestral God of Wajungngari, they were translated to the starry heavens. But deep within the heart of Pung-ngane still surged the jealous passions, and nurtured in his brain

Saf fell revenge, gnashing her teeth for ire.
Devising means how she might vengeance take,
Never at rest till she have her desire.

And when he heard his wives and detested rival had been translated to the sky, he cast upwards a spear specially prepared with a Karaji's curse to indicate that he would follow them even through the silent wastes of grim eternity. At last his preparations were complete, and he threw upwards a barbed spear with his enchanted message to the gods, asking them to detain the objects of his wrath in some part of the sky where he could pursue and despatch them. At length when his ancestral gods sent their fell messenger to call him to his last home, he, his mother and brother, repaired to the hiding place of
his faithless wives and the man whose destiny they had so sadly marred, and there with due solemnity despatched them after the manner of great criminals, and even to this day the old Karajis, pointing to the bright track of the Milky Way, show the knowledge-seeking initiates the camps where all these things came to pass, the glimmering ashes and the smoke from innumerable fires where Pung-ngane and his family regale themselves upon the ever plentiful emu, kangaroo and other game provided in the aboriginal hap; y hunting ground for the favourites of the gods.

In the Kamilaroi tribe the following are some of the astronomical names:—Mirri, the stars. Venus is Ngaije-Kindawa (the star that laughs at you.) Mars is Gumba (fat). Saturn is Wung-gal (a small bird). Arcturus is Guembila (red). Canopus is Wamba (stupid or deaf).

It will at once be observed that compared with Grecian mythology the myths of the Australian aborigines are at a much more primitive stage of construction and so they would of necessity remain until another Homer arose in their midst, and wrestling from the ancestral gods much of their semblance to man, placed them upon higher pedestals and transformed them into more ethereal and majestic creatures.

In aboriginal myth we have a key to the classic mythology the origin of which has in past years puzzled many a giant brain. The effort to solve the reasons for the Zodiacal names kept many a student burning his midnight oil.
The belief in animal and human stars is almost universal, and is the natural result of the barbaric ideas which gave rise to the many fables portraying the earliest guesses at astronomical truths. To quote from Thomas Carlyle “Consider what mere time will do in such cases, how if a man was great while living, he became ten-fold greater than dead. What an enormous camera-obscura magnifier is tradition: how a thing grows in the human memory when love, worship, and all that lies in the human heart is there to encourage it . . . why in thirty or forty years, were there no books, any great man would grow mythic.” Little wonder then that the untutored aboriginals after some few years recounting the deeds of daring and skill of an ancestor, whose good qualities increased at each recital, finally discovered him shining placidly in the heavens a beacon light for the guidance of all who wished to follow in his footsteps. Viewed in this light it will be easily recognised that if there were no permanent record, floods such as those of 1893 would gradually increase in proportion until in some few scores of years they would develop into an universal deluge devastating in its wild career not merely a district but the entire world.

Mr. Herbert Spencer’s school in the main recognises in Zeus, Odin, and in many mythological gods anti-historical characters who once existed, and sees in them “ancestral ghosts raised to a higher power;” but this hypothesis cannot be accepted as applying to all myths. The Murray river myth account-
ing for the two pointers, Agenor and Bungula, is clearly an ancestral one. The Brush Turkeys (Burowa) were the tribe of that totem who were being assailed by some more powerful tribe whose totem is not mentioned. The two deliverers were two ancestors, to whose bravery the overpowering of the enemy has been evidently attributed, and who duly received the usual reward of astral elevation. There are many myths both of the old and new world which may be construed in similar manner, but there are others whose origin can be traced to the mere resemblance or fancied resemblance of a constellation to some terrestrial object. Corona for instance is like a crown, or as the black-fellows perceive, it is like a boomerang, and so we can easily understand why the name of crown in the old and boomerang in the new became attached to it.

Little wonder that the aborigine acquired a sound knowledge of the relative positions of the stars, and were inclined towards Sabaeanism, that in his primitive observatory the Karají kept a three days' and three nights' solitary vigil within a stone circle on a mountain top, communing with Wanda, the Unknown Spirit, and there, like Moses on Mount Sinai, beneath the circling stars, “the poetry of heaven” under the potent spell of the infinite immensity of the heavens

“Standing upon some lofty mountain, thought
And felt the spirit stretch into a view

Mr. R. A. Proctor (Myths and Marvels of Astronomy) says “The first observations of the heavens were of necessity made by men who depended for their subsistence on a familiarity
with the stars, and doubtless preceded by many ages the study of astronomy as a science.” Here in Australia where in the trackless bush, with nothing on either side but dense scrub, nothing overhead but eucalypti, “Where every mile of country is exactly like the last” here, indeed, would the black find the need of some “guiding star” some “star of hope” to point the way to his destination.

Strange as it may seem through the medium of these puerile and fanciful myths of our blacks, we may arrive at and ascertain the impulse which brought about the beautiful structure of the Greek religion, which produced the masterpiece of Homer, and may even understand more of the uncertainties which lie deep down in the influential religion of Christianity with its attendant Dante and Milton.

RELIGION, SUPERSTITIONS, AND TRADITIONS.

Speculations as to the origin and destiny of man have occupied the thought of savage and sage, both ancient and modern; and at the present time we seem to be but little nearer absolute truth than the primitive barbarian. The traditions and mythology of the savage have made way for scientific hypotheses based upon more or less evidence invariably capable of several constructions. From the primitive rude germs of myth and tradition have been gradually evolved more complex and anthropomorphic forms, until ultimately the limits of natural and positive science have been attained. Here in Aus-
tralia we can observe the infantile brain putting forth its puny efforts to explain metaphysical problems and natural phenomena about which, with all our Universities, we are more than dubious, and from this point of view alone these primitive ideas should prove of interest.

It is impossible to place before the reader any clear and concise explanation of the aboriginal religion, as its nature has been jealously guarded by the elders, and imparted reluctantly, incompletely, and often with intent to deceive. Simple monotheism does not exist, and the dreamy indefiniteness of their theology having neither sequence nor connection, makes it somewhat difficult to state with any exactness even the first principles of the barbaric faith.

The most prominent figure in aboriginal theology is Baiamai, who, as the word signifies, was the creator—literally, the “cutter out.” He is regarded by the Kamaroi, Walaroi, Wiradhuri, and Kuriggai tribes with the greatest degree of respect, he being the rewarder of good and punisher of evil. Having once been on earth he is intimate with the actions of men, and sees all things; he is omniscient through the aid of a secondary deity, Turramullan, who acts in the capacity of mediator between the inhabitants of earth and their creator.

Baiamai first made man at Marula, a mountain between the Barwon and Narran rivers, and he then rested. On one of the stony ridges between these two rivers the Elders point out a large indentation in the rock, two
or three times larger than a man, where, after performing his works, Baiamai enjoyed a dolce far niente. At the completion of his work on earth he suddenly vanished and made for himself a beautiful hunting ground in the Milky Way. He still provides the race with food, and so he will continue until the time comes when many moons hence he will return and take up his abode on earth. The following myth relating to the creation of man, his subsequent death, the revealing of an after life, the knowledge of good and evil deities, the population of the earth and confusion of tongues, was current in the Barwon district 30 or 40 years ago.

Baiamai first made (literally, “cut out”) two men, one of whom he called Boobardy, and one woman named Numbardy, and put them into a deep sleep from which they suddenly woke in the prime of life, and found themselves surrounded by a glorious, game-abounding taurai. One of the men would not understand his circumstances, and, notwithstanding his comrade’s entreaties, refused to kill and eat the game which sported near him, and he ultimately died. When Boobardy found that he could not wake his comrade, he shifted his camp, and, with his consort, Numbardy, went a little distance off, and waited his awakening. But the dead man came not, and Boobardy went to the spot where he had left him lying, and, to his great surprise, found that he had vanished, and the ground where he had lain was swept perfectly clean, as though by Mirri-Mirri, the fearful god
who rides upon the whirlwind. Upon closely examining the place, he discovered, like a primitive Robinson Crusoe, a human footprint; following it, he came upon others; and, the spirit of tracking having entered into him, he traced the tracks through the brush, over ridges, through gullies, until about sunset, when, having gone a considerable distance, he saw his comrade walking just ahead, and thereupon hailed him, saying, “Turrawulla ngai dhurudi” (“Come back, my friend”); but at this the first man pointed towards the setting sun, and exclaimed, “Yugar ngutta” (“Not I: I go that way”), and continued on his journey. Whereupon, Boobardy cried, “Ngutta ngintaba yurri” (“I will go with you”), and followed him. He observed that his comrade was hurrying directly to an enormous tree, the like of which he had never seen. Its trunk was as the trunks of twenty giant eucalypti, its foliage mingled with the clouds which floated round it, hiding its top from view. The “man who was” reached the tree and then searched for and found a suitable stone, with which he cut notches in the bark and climbed up about four men’s heights, when he arrived at a landing or stage and discovered a large square hole in the tree trunk. This he entered, and disappeared from the astonished gaze of his follower, saying: “Turruwulla, turruwulla, guiya ngaia kaoai” (“Go back, go back; I go onward”). Still eager, Boobardy made up his mind to follow, and as he was about to place his toe in the first notch of the tree, he
perceived an enormous head, as of a huge blackfellow, with eyes like glowing coals of fire, start out of the opening in the trunk, whereupon he turned and fled swiftly from the scene, retraced his steps, and returned to Numbardy, his gin. Once only he looked back and saw that the tree had vanished in a cloud of smoke. This beautiful tree, which the tribe can never hope to see during life, is now the Southern Cross, and the notches, whereby the spirits of the dead climb to Baimaui, are pointed out as being Mundewur—one of the stars in the constellation Serpentarius. The evil spirit or demon, Wurra-wilburu, whose figure so scared Boobardy, now resides in the dark space near Scorpio, ever ready to devour all who have been remiss in performing their duties.

The original pair thus created by Baimaui, lived in the midst of plenty, and had eight children, four of each sex. Male: Murri, Kubby, Ippai, Kumbo. Female: Matha, Kubbitha, Ippatha, Butha. And from these sprang the Murri race. However, after some years of contented happiness as the one family, some of the clans became wamba or foolish, fell away from the primitive stock, changed their language, and discarded many of the old customs.

Many years ago two brothers were head men, and one was good, the other bad. The bad one conspired against his brother and much bloodshed ensued. He invaded the good man’s taurai and did much evil, but the fire-god stretched out his hand against the invaders and they perished. After this the
different tribes received distinctive marks upon their breasts and arms, and the boundaries of the several districts or taurais were fixed beyond dispute.

It may be thought that these traditions or legends have internal evidence of contact with Europeans, but such is not the case. Custom has been the parent of them all. They account for the creation and death, the institution of tracking, the origin of totemism and group marriage, the different dialects, districts and tribal workings, and the reason why one aborigine will not ascend a tree while another is in its branches.

There is scarcely a legend of creation, in which a tree does not occur—the tree of the Hesperides, the ash Yggdrasil, the tree of Paradise, the oak of the Druids. It stands between heaven and earth, the gods descend upon it, the souls find the road to heaven by it, it becomes a rough beam for them to totter across,—in short, all creation has come out of it. The region in which men are conceived as sprung from trees embraces the continents of Europe, Asia, Africa, America and Australia. As a geographical fable it has preserved its connection with that of the home of souls. One of the Canary Islands, held to be of iron, and therefore waterless, is said to be watered by a huge tree covered by a dense cloud; the leaves received the water and constantly dripped. This was believed in Europe down to the 17th century. Students of mythology will call to mind Ash and Elma, the original parents of the Norsemen, who were made from trees by the sons of Bor; and the many
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gods who dwelt in trees, were killed upon trees, and from whose blood sprang trees. So voluminous are the instances that many books have been written upon tree worship and its attendant rites alone. The Australian aborigine, in addition to his totemic beliefs set out in one of my previous articles (the Bora ceremony), believe that their lives are bound up in the life of certain trees, which are selected for them during their infancy, and in this they are, shall I say imitated, by the late Lord Byron, who held firmly to the same extraordinary idea.

A tradition of another tribe says (I quote from Dr. Carroll) that originally the race consisted of one tribe whose totem was the great serpent, and from this tribe arose two families or classes, Makquarra and Kilparra, Eaglehawks and Crows, and that in order to avoid the wars between them the elders separated them into two marrying classes. Another tradition states that Kumbo and Butha came from afar across the great Western Inland sea and allied themselves with Ippai and Ippatha, a family with curly hair, and Kubbi and Kubbitha, the ugly dwarfs, and in the Aboriginal system of caste Murri is the highest and Kubbi the lowest grade. Another in the far remote times, Pundjel, being angered by the tribes who had neglected the sacred rites, determined to punish them and he obtained the assistance of Ngarang, the spirits of evil which cause the whirlwind, and Ngar Beek, earth demons, and the spirits of air and water, to unite and bring about a great flood Bulingo Lowerner which lasting many days destroyed
most of the evil doers. A Gippsland legend says that some children having found a murrawan or bull-roarer showed it to some women, whereupon the earth opened and heaved like a sea, and a great flood swept over the land and destroyed all the people.

Of all the traditions relating to the very earliest days of the human race upon earth, none is more widely spread nor more generally credited or wrangled over than the story of a great deluge. The Egyptian priests, it is true, who, from the dawn of history, kept in the papyrus archives of their temples faithful records of all notable events, disbelieved in the universality of a flood and derided the Grecian philosophers who held that all mankind perished in the deluge of Deucalion. However, Solon was informed by them 600 years B.C., that their writings recorded an account of a terrific cataclysm, during which the great island, Atlantis, disappeared in one day and one night, amid throes of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, and that this event had occurred 9000 years before his visit to Egypt. It is the general scientific opinion that this legend relates to some volcanic disturbance which caused the disappearance of a small island in the Mediterranean or Atlantic Ocean, and that the tale, as travellers’ tales are apt to do, gained considerably at each recital.

Reviewing the Australian deluge traditions, of which there are several, I am inclined to add them as evidence in support of Mr. Ernest Favenc’s geographical paradox of Australia, the large shallow sea which, in that writer’s
opinion, at one time occupied some two-thirds of the Australian continent. The comparative inferiority of the western to the eastern coast aborigines, the distinct botanical, zoological, and geological differences, all point in this direction, and it is within the bounds of possibility that a legend of this description might be retained by the blacks, handed down from time immemorial a relic of an age when “Change was written on the tide
On the forests’ leafy pride,”
and a continent emerged from the waves, which receding, left the great chain of saline lakes of Eyre and Torrens, amid “an awful expanse of barren nakedness.”

The mind of the aborigine is not always vainly soaring towards the shadowy heights of speculative philosophy, and when in the cool of the evening the gunyahs are illuminated by a central fire, and the silhouettes of the tribesmen create an animated shadow world, then an elder will gather the dusky children round him, and twisting his fingers, will form in shadow on a tree-trunk a dingo chasing a young kangaroo, and relate a tribal myth regarding the occurrence. A young gin near by sings a barbaric lullaby to her Kai, while the sound of friendly chatter fills the air. There are no wars or rumours of wars to disturb the tranquility: the picture is of a life simple, self-centered, breathing of primitive homely contentment. At such gatherings as this are told the thousand and one tales of the Australian nights. Here is the story of the frog and the deluge, “Once long ago there was a big frog. He drank himself full of water. He
could not get rid of the water. Once he saw a sand-eel dancing on his tail by the seashore. It made him laugh so that he burst, and the water all ran out. There was a big flood, and everyone was drowned except two or three men and women who got on an island. Past came a pelican in a canoe; he took off the men, but wanting to marry the woman kept her till the last. She wrapped up a log in an opossum rug to deceive the pelican, and swam to shore and escaped. The pelican was very angry; he began to paint himself white to show he was on the war trail when past came another pelican, who, not liking his looks, killed him with his beak, since which event all pelicans have been partly black and white.”

There are hundreds of tales such as this scattered through the unwritten literature of the aborigines, and high in honour is he who knows them all and relates them best.

The deeds of tribal warriors are handed down in song, just as we find in Beowulf the story of Hrothgar’s ancestors was sung. The Greeks had their bards who recited page after page of Homer’s verse. With the Druids, the Welsh, and the Norse Vikings, the bard was as necessary as the horn which was to hold the mead. At the karabari or corroboree the raconteur of the tribe is in his glory. In glowing and picturesque language he paints for the edification of those who believe him, the deeds of daring and strategy, the wonderful assaults and prowess by which he overcame the white invader, amid the applause of his admirers he shouldered his club “and shows how fights are won.”
The Karabari takes many forms, and may be classed as one of the chief amusements of the aborigine, it is doubtless their nearest approach to dramatic art. The various sports and hunting raids are therein depicted, and the minor tones and monotonous voices of the participants, accompanied by the beating of time-sticks and weapons, and the drumming of rolled greasy kangaroo rugs, lend a somewhat distinctive charm to the performance. In it the rude music forms a by no means small incentive, and an inspiring allegretto movement of the primitive orchestra is responded to in a very vigorous manner by the dancers. The songs are exceedingly soft, plaintive, and not entirely wanting in melody. The most effective part of their singing is achieved by the sudden heightening or lowering of their voices by an octave. Their dancing has a certain charm in the considerable gracefulness of its action and the astonishing energy the dancer can instil into his limbs. In these dances the Aborigine represents certain events, illustrates as he relates tribal myths, or caricatures well-known individuals.

One is the Eaglehawk dance wherein animals and birds are represented as showing their allegiance to that exalted bird. The one who represents the Eaglehawk, and it is no mean position, is covered from head to foot with eagle down and feathers, which are stuck on his body by the aid of honey. The actors representing kangaroos wear plaited grass tails, and, as the dance becomes more exciting, they strike the ground with
their hands, spring high into the air, even through the flames of the fire, singing, shrieking, and jumping, until sheer exhaustion ensues. To the gins, who are generally the musicians and time-beaters, is the duty of satisfactorily terminating the proceedings, and at a given signal they rise, and, with the greatest degree of contortions of face and body, each dusky beldame endeavours, with all her energy, to outscreech her sable sister, yelling, howling, and general pandemonium is now the order of the night, until utterly tired out they sink in disordered heaps round the dying embers of the fire.

Personal adornment in the shape of pipe clay daubs and a strip of native dog’s skin bound round the head and confining the hair as in a net is affected at the Corroboree, and the black beady eyes peering through whitened faces below the grotesque head dress when viewed through the smoke of the camp fire, and to the accompaniment of the melancholy songs and wild wierd dances, conjure up a scene in Tartarus or an invocation by “demons dire” of Asmodenus their master, the prince of devils.

Amid the grandeur of modern European civilisation many customs and superstitions are of daily occurrence. Seemingly absurd when viewed in the light of their surroundings, they are of deepest ethnological importance. They have remained in the present state for ages. Nations have risen from savage hordes, flourished and decayed; wayside villages have developed into cities which are now only monuments of the past; but these
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barbaric customs and belief have survived them all. In the far distant dawn of the earth's history, before the Nomadic Kushite tribes had exercised their influence upon the Aryan race, prior to the internal disturbance which caused the latter's great division, long before a stone had been laid on the site of Babylon's ruined walls, ere India had conceived the roughest sketch of her involved theogony, generations prior to the evolution of the triple triangle and the sacred word Om, before Isis wandered weeping by the sacred Nile searching for her lost Osiris, ages before a prophet arose in Israel, these customs and superstitions existed. In the vast sepulchre of the past are buried most of the religions of man, much of the speculative philosophy which has evolved, but quaint memorials of them still exist, survivals of the customs and beliefs created by the tiny germ of adoration and fear experienced by primitive man with regard to natural phenomena which his savage nature could not comprehend. To understand these irrational and senseless customs so existing amid our civilization we must pass backward from age to age until we reach a time when our race was at such a stage of barbarism that such customs were no longer anomalous, but occupied a foremost place in tribal or national life. And to construe them correctly we must, as Mr. Andrew Lang puts it, "when an irrational and anomalous custom is found in any country, look for a country where a similar practice is no longer irrational or anomalous, but in
harmony with the manners and ideas of the people among whom it prevails.”

We have already seen that a considerable portion of the Bora ceremony is reflected in strange May-day and midsummer customs of modern Europe. This seems strongly to confirm the assertion that at one time the indigines of Europe enacted as a religious rite just such a ceremony as the Bora, and that ages ago our own race was at a stage of barbarism similar to that of the Australian aborigine. The institution of marriage with most of the aboriginal tribes was—by reason of the marriage restriction imposed by totemism—merely a capture and taking possession. In the Hunter and Wollombi districts, among the Kurriggai tribe, when a man sought a wife he went to a camp where there were men and women sitting round the camp fire, and threw a boomerang. If the men threw it back at him he knew he must fight for his dusky bride; if otherwise, he need only step in, thrust his spear through the tangled locks of the one fairest to his eye, provided she be of a different totem or marriage class to himself, and lead her away. This practice is followed by the Apaches and among the nomad Tartars or Kalmucks. What happened in ancient Europe? The Greeks used to thrust a javelin amid the locks of their female prisoners whom they spoke of “gaining at the spear’s point.” In the ancient Finnish Epic the Kalevala is a description of a marriage; at the marriage feast the bridegroom is congratulated on the courage he must have shown in stealing a girl from a hostile tribe. Instances
of this form of marriage are common in Arabia, Poland, Circassia, from Kamchatka to the country of the Turcomans, and in the Irish traditions and the rustic customs of Wales.

The divining rod has been used in England for the purpose of detecting thieves and murderers within the last three centuries. It is used now in our midst for the purpose of finding water. In rural England the movements of a Bible suspended like a pendulum have within the last few years been declared to point out the guilty. Most of the tribes of Australia use this form of divination in actual practice, tying round the stick some hair of the person whose fate is to be ascertained. And yet rural England would speak of our aborigines as the most degraded race on earth.

Only the other day a resident of West Maitland told me that if he had the good fortune to be able to touch a certain piece of wood, which he informed me existed, he would be cured of all his complaints. Some years ago, on the Clarence, an aborigine told me that he had a gibber, or quartz-crystal, by which he could cure toothache and many other evils man is heir to; and I have been vainly endeavouring to ascertain the difference, even in degree, between these two primitive ideas.

Spiritualism and mediumship have ever been powerful adjuncts to religious ceremony, and the priesthood, especially in ancient Egypt, put their mysteries to great use in the government of their dupes. Mr. Brough
Smyth, who is confirmed by Messrs. Fison and Howitt, describes an aboriginal séance among the Kurnai of Gippsland, Victoria. The spirits are called Mrarts, and are those of departed aborigines. The mediums are Birraarks, and were consulted as to matters past, present, and future. When a séance is to be held the Birraark leaves the camp, the fire is kept low, and some of the tribe cooee at intervals in a low wailing manner. Then a noise as of a hollow tree being slowly struck by a tomahawk is heard, then distant whistles, until at length during a silent spell the Mrarts are heard “jumping down.” Questions are put to them which they answer, but they very naturally decline to approach the fire. After the séance is over the Birraark is discovered entranced, either where the supposed spirits have been talking, or at the top of an adjacent tree, up the trunk of which no marks of climbing are to be discovered. In maleficent magic the Birraark, in his capacity of sorcerer, has his head, body and limbs wound around with stringy bark fibre. This scene will, doubtless, call to mind the spirit rappings of modern European spiritualists, the childish frauds of modern sorcerers, and the celebrated Davenport Brothers in their bound and knotted cabinet test exhibitions.

Totemism is a religious and social system, common to the aborigines and many other primitive folk, and traces of its existence in the early ages of Europe are discernible. “In its religious aspect it consists of the relations of mutual respect and protection between
a man and his totem. In its social aspect it consists of the relation of the clansmen to each other, and to men and women of other clans. The members of the clan call themselves by the name of their totem, believe they were actually descended from it, just as the Mongols believe themselves descended from the moon, and the clan of the sun in Egypt and Peru were children of the sun. There is scarcely an animal, reptile, bird, or fish in Australia that is not the totem of some one or more clan or individual. No member of any clan might kill or eat the totem of that clan. In order to put himself more fully under the control or protection of his totem, the aborigine wears or carries about the skin or some portion of his totem, and marks his body by cicatrices, tattooing, or paint to represent the totem. In the far North aborigines have been seen bearing dugongs, snakes, and stingrays cut into the skin. In addition to the tribal totemic scars which the blacks always carried on his breast, sides, or shoulders, he makes use of a system of private owners' marks or monbarai with which he marks his rugs, weapons, and other property, and by this means all may recognize the true ownership. This was a system of heraldry perfectly intelligible to all the tribes, and is surely a primitive germ of ideographic and phonetic writing. “The crests of our armorial bearings have little or no meaning now, but they can be traced back to a time when they represented the ancient totem which had as powerful a function in the older of the old.
communities as it has among many savage tribes of the present day."

On the sandstone ridges of the Wollomby and Hawkesbury districts are to be seen hundreds of drawings, carvings, impressed and stencilled hands and weapons which form an illustrated chapter to the unwritten history of the tribes. There is nothing remarkably beautiful in the designs. The aboriginal ideas ran along certain well-defined grooves, and as a consequence his art adopted a certain stereotyped form. An unmistakeable racial expression pervades the groups: the same form is seen depicted over and over again, and the impressed or stencilled red, white, or yellow hand ever presents itself. Extraordinary frog-like men, geometrical-triangular headed individuals, and grotesque figures are sometimes visible, but in almost every cave, with uplifted arms and sphinx-like expressionless face, may be seen the imposing figure of Baiamai, the aboriginal embodiment of the good principle. There is little question that these drawings and carvings are very ancient, and antedate the advent of the white man to these shores, but their meaning up to the present time has been indefinitely solved. There can be no doubt that some definite purpose brought them into existence, as men whose most trivial dances and actions had an important and fixed meaning would naturally do nothing but what served a practical purpose, and purely decorative art would, under the circumstances, be scarce. But, whatever their meaning was, the aborigines of to-day has either forgotten or never knew.
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All the figures are the outcome of untutored taste, the awakening art-consciousness of the savage trying to express itself for some vague purpose. The best group I have seen, and which is complete in itself, is one which Mr. A. J. Prentice, Mr. W. J. Enright, and I discovered in a cave on the Narrone Creek, Wollombi. In this group, of which I have a drawing, is depicted with great vigour a marriage by capture, described earlier in this article: the woman and her champion are being dragged along the ground by the exultant bridegroom amid the dancing and evident delight of his own tribe or clan, while the woman’s clan are depicted in attitudes of terror and dejection. In one corner of the cave is a drawing of a death-adder—the totem of the captor; while a stencilled right hand points out one clan, and a stencilled left hand signifies the other. The whole is perfectly intelligible, and needs but a knowledge of the aboriginal marriage custom to enable anyone to construe it. Not all the groups are of this character, however; and, as with the mysterious hands, considerable ingenuity is necessary to call forth an intelligible construction of their meaning. And this method, unaccompanied by actual knowledge of fact, is scarcely sufficient whereon to base scientific hypotheses.

Aboriginal journeyings were not the aimless wanderings of a homeless people, but had always a definite purpose in view. Sometimes they meant war, but more frequently these were hunting and fishing excursions, which came round with the seasons. The abori-
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gines taurai or district is his home, and seldom will he venture beyond its limits, and then not far, as he always dreads dying out of his taurai, and exhibits remarkable uneasiness if taken ill in a strange land. Here then is this rude germ of that noble sentiment, which directed toward a home becomes a poet's happiest theme, and directed toward a country swells to the proud title of patriotism.

When our race first invaded their land the number of the Murri tribes must have been very considerable, especially round Sydney, the Hawkesbury, and the Wollombi, where the natural conditions were so favourable to their existence, and this number represented many tribes, which when grouped according to the philological rules, disclosed distinct families or stocks differing one from the other almost as widely as the Aryan and Semitic families of our own race. To develop each of these stocks a long period of isolation must have been necessary, and there are many speculations as to their origin, but it yet remains an open question. It has been demonstrated that Australia has been long occupied by man, but the most patient investigations cannot bridge over the great chasm lying between his advent here, and the era of our first acquaintance with him. Many curious contradictions exist among the aborigines of to-day. On the one hand we have tribes speaking mutually unintelligible languages, with perhaps only one or two root words in common for the development of which it would seem ages of isolation were necessary, and on
the other hand we find a striking similarity between their customs, tribal organisations, marriage laws, religious beliefs and worship, domestic life, and tribal ceremonies,—especially with regard to the great initiation ceremony which may be said to be common to all the tribes—so that it is quite possible to have at one “Bora” several tribes to whom the spoken ritual would be unintelligible, but who could perform the whole of the ceremonial action, dances, and customs, without fault. These are contradictions which have not yet been explained away. The distinction of being the most backward and degraded of our species has been generously accorded in turn to most of the primitive races, but the statement is merely a rhetorical figure, which, in the eyes of those who have considered the subject, has ceased to have importance or even meaning: the statement was the outcome of ignorance, and has been fostered by general opinion. From the elevated pinnacle of the traveller’s self-importance he finds no expressions too strong to point out the enormous gulf which separates his own wonderful self from the barbarians he ignorantly criticises. I hope I have done a little towards dispelling a popular fallacy.

A valuable link between man as he is and man as he was the aboriginal tribes remained for unknown ages beyond foreign influences, outside the pale of that civilization which either makes or mars, cures or kills. When first observed they were in the midst of the early stone epoch, and studying their characteristics we may obtain a picture of the early
indigines of Europe, upon whose bones has been erected a noble monument of books signed by the masters of modern science. In these articles I have attempted neither to lay down nor refute any theories concerning the original land owners of our country; my sole object was to make known in a popular manner a few of the customs, ceremonies, and traditions of the blacks which were not generally known. No attempt is made to carry any of the subjects beyond a stage that would be readily accepted by the general reader, and although the tribes have been greatly slandered, I have no desire to treat them as Mr. Fenimore Cooper did the North American Indian, and find ideal demigods among naked howling savages. The subject has great possibilities, some of the most important ethnographical truths; the primitive germs of many a noble institution of our civilization have their place in aboriginal tribal history. Some of these I have touched upon, but there are hundreds of others which lack of space precluded mention.

Savages as they are, it is painful to record the fact of their rapid disappearance from the continent, and sadder still the cause. On coming in contact with white men, their social systems became disordered, their ancient customs fell into disuse, rites ceased to have their primitive meaning. Those whom the natives took almost for gods and protectors were transformed into devils and persecutors. In the midst of masters and convicts their minds were bewildered by questions of good and evil. Then came
muskets and rum. The chiefs of the tribes—
noble-minded men of their race—felt degraded
when hounded down by a gaol-bird from
across the sea, and before the thunder of
small arms the sorcerers and Karajis became
aware of their impotence to cope with the
magic of the invader.

In losing all confidence in themselves they
lost all pleasure in life, and then came the
demon rum. Dozens of the tribes died daily,
one single year saw the death and dispersion
of nearly all the Wollombi tribes, which in
the thirties could be counted in hundreds, and
in 1848 numbered 54. The death warrant of
the aborigines has long since been signed.
Our civilisation extirpates the tribes it in-
vades, because they cannot instantly bend
themselves to the transformation which has
cost us twenty centuries of solid work. Born
a hunter he will die a hunter, and will go
silently down into that dark sea of oblivion
which engulfed the Incas, the Aztecs, the
Mayas, and the Tasmanians, leaving behind
him a record of which many superior races
might be proud, but which has yet many
chapters to be written. May the information
for these chapters be collected before the
tribes have entirely disappeared.

THE END.

Note.—On page 64 the dialect used is, in all but two
instances, Turrubul, the remaining two are Kamilaroi; there
is not very much difference between them, but the latter
dialect is the one which should have been used by my
informant.—In my description of the Bora sacrifice, an error
has been made in calling the victim a betaira; however, the
indulgences allowed to the female victim of the Kundu and
the male victim of the Murri are in character so much alike
that the term is not altogether the error that at first sight
may appear.—W.A.S.