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1878.

Mr. Carmichael, F.R.S.L., than read the following paper.

A BENELECTINE MISSIONARY'S ACCOUNT *of the NATIVES of AUSTRALIA and OCEANIA.*

FROM *the ITALIAN of DON RODESINDO SALVADO.* (ROME, 1851.) *By C. H. E. CARMICHAEL, M.A.*

WE are indebted to the Press of the College of the Propaganda in Rome, for the work which forms the subject of the present paper.\* With a considerable portion of the volume, of which the courtesy of Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies has enabled us to estimate the value for Anthropological purposes, we are not directly concerned. Writing for a general rather than a scientific public, and with a view to exciting interest in the Australian missions, in which he had borne no small part, Monsigr. Salvado necessarily devotes many pages either to matter with which we are familiar, such as the history of the rise and progress of our Australian Colonies, or to subjects more immediately connected with his missionary work. The general impression, I may remark, which is left upon my mind by a careful perusal of the more purely scientific portions of the book, is that, so far as his personal observation extended, the accounts given of the aborigines by Bishop Salvado are trustworthy, although I might be inclined to suggest the allowance of a certain margin for the favourable view likely to be taken of a race which yielded the first two children to the family of St. Benedict from "Terra Australis." The seat of the mission of New Nursia was in Western Australia, north of the Swan River, in the diocese assigned to the Roman Catholic Bishop of Perth, in 1845, when the ecclesiastical separation from Sydney took place. The company of missionaries of which Don Rudesindo Salvado was a member, seems to have been very mixed in its nationalities. At the head was the new Bishop of Perth, Monsigr. Brady, an Irishman. Next came Don Serra and Don Salvado, both Spanish Benedictines; then Don Confalonieri, from the Italian Tyrol, followed by three French Priests, another Irishman, an English sub-deacon, a French novice, and a Roman, while the student catechists, and the Sisters of Mercy, who accompanied the mission, were all Irish.

\* *Memorie Storiche dell' Australia, particolarmente della Missione Benedettina di Nuova Norcia, e degli usi e costumi degli Australiani, per Mgr. D. Rudesindo Salvado, O.S.B., Vescovo di Porto Vittoria. Roma, Tip. S. Cong: de Prop: Fide. 1851.*

Sailing on the 17th September, 1845, from Gravesend, it was on the 7th January, 1846, that the cry of "land" was raised, and the ship which bore the Benedictine Mission cast anchor in Fremantle Bay.

Landing in Australia entirely ignorant of the language of the aborigines, the method adopted by the missionaries was to write down in a pocket-book every word of which they found out the meaning. The first word whose repetition struck them was "maragna,"\* which they discovered to mean "food." And the first opening of friendly relations with the natives, on the foundation of the mission station of New Nursia, was due to the offering of bread and sugar, by which the amicable intentions of the Benedictines were made manifest to the native intelligence. Indeed, Don Rudesindo repeatedly affirms the necessity of providing missionaries with means to clothe and feed would-be neophytes, and to reclaim them from a nomad life. "What you tell us may be true, very true," says the native, "but I am hungry, will you give me some bread?" And if the missionary could not give it, the native would turn his back at once upon Christianity and civilisation. The Benedictines appear to have found the natives ready to work, for they owed the completion of their mission-hut to the help which was willingly offered after they had once established confidence by means of "maragna."

The feelings of gratitude and affection seems also to have been drawn out by the missionaries. After curing some of their native friends, they received the expression of their gratitude in a shape that must have been somewhat trying to the gravity of Benedictine monks. "We are altogether yours," said their late patients, "our wives are your wives, our children your children, all that we have is yours." The principal medicines used are stated to have been salt, English tea, and rice, and fortunately, they always seem to have acted favourably on the sick, so that the missionaries were on thoroughly friendly terms with the natives. They did not hesitate to interfere between them when they saw two parties about to fight. Sometimes the mere presence of the missionaries stopped the intended conflict. When, as happened at other times, the passions of the contending parties were too much roused to admit of so easy a pacification, the monks placed themselves, crucifix in hand, between the two sides, and let the darts hurtle by them until they brought about a truce.

Though often consenting only with a bad grace, the natives

\* The word sounded suspiciously in the ears of the Spanish monk, for in his native Galician dialect it happens to mean "deceit." "Memorie," p. 168. "Maragna nel mio dialetto Gallego significa inganno."

never either absolutely refused to give up their weapons into the hands of the missionaries, or fled to avoid giving them up. Their ill humour found a sufficient vent in repeated leaps into the air, and loud cries.

The first attempt made by their diocesan to visit the mission-station of New Nursia proved a failure, through the Bishop loosing his way in the scrub. Upon this Don Rudesindo remarks that although Europeans who lose their way may not see a single native, they are constantly observed by numbers hidden in the bush, who watch their every movement, but never think of coming to their assistance, because it does not occur to them that the white man cannot find his way as easily as themselves.\* This seems a probable explanation of what might otherwise be set down to suspicion of the European.

In regard to their religious beliefs, the Benedictines found their native friends singularly and obstinately reticent. If they inquired of a young man, even though he might be more than thirty years old, he professed to be too young to be able to tell them anything, and recommended them to ask the old men. When the elders were questioned, they answered with jests, or pretended not to understand. The most favourable time for talking unconstrainedly with the natives, and learning something from them, was found to be the evening meal, when the men return from the day's chase, sit round the camp fire and tell stories like the Arabs. "These," says Monsignor Salvado, "are moments worth many months of tramp among the scrub to the missionary who knows how to make use of them." Eventually, the way was found by Don Rudesindo to make some investigations into the question whether his neighbours believed in the immortality of the soul. His procedure was as follows.† "I am not one," he said to some of the natives, "as you think, but two." Upon this they laughed. "You may laugh as much as you like," continued the missionary, "I tell you that I am two in one: this great body that you see is one; within that there is another little one, which is not visible. The great body dies, and is buried, but the little body flies away when the great one dies." To this some replied, "Caia, caia (*i.e.*, "yes, yes"). We also are two, we also have a little body within the breast." On asking what they called this little body, the answer was "Càcin." Then they were asked where the little body went after death, to which various answers were given; some saying behind the bush, others into the sea, and others again that they did not know. Don Rudesindo very wisely did not press the natives further on this occasion, knowing how tenacious they

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 196.

† *Op. cit.*, pp. 208-9.

were of the secrecy of their beliefs. But on a subsequent occasion he heard the legend of "Càcin" from some other natives who were on confidential terms with him, and he gives its substance in the following words.\*

When a native dies, his soul remains on the branches of a tree,† singing mournfully like a bird, until someone takes her up. When it is known that a soul is going from tree to tree, the natives approach, bent and in single file, beating two little sticks against each other, and making with their voices the sound "ps, ps, ps." Often the soul remains among the trees; but sometimes it comes down, and enters the mouth of the nearest native, remaining within him if he is alone, but if there are others, passing out at his back, through the next, and remaining in the last man.

From the accounts given him by one of the natives, named Bigliagoro, who became attached to the missionaries, Don Rudesindo acquired the conviction that in cases of extreme hunger the Australian aborigines are anthropophagous. By the close of 1848, the Benedictines heard no more of this custom, and hoped that they had succeeded in putting an end to it, as well as to the killing of the third or fourth child by its mother. The natives no longer fled from the white man, but even sought permission to build houses for themselves and their families near the mission station. Of the honesty of the Western Australians the missionaries evidently entertained a very high opinion, never having experienced any losses either of goods or cattle at their hands, and having always found them zealous in going in quest of any cattle that had strayed. Speaking generally of the impression which appears to have been made upon Monsignor Salvado and his companions by the aborigines among whom they had lived, it is in favour of the possibility of raising the Western Australians to a fairly high pitch of civilisation. The idea of the Benedictine missionaries concerning the best means to begin efforts in this direction, was to make their station the centre of an agricultural and industrial village, in which the natives should dwell, each family receiving from the missionaries what was necessary to start them in work on their own account. So the Benedictines hoped they might eventually see around them a village of pro-

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 209.

† With this idea may be compared that of the Land Dayaks of Upper Sarawak, of whom, in a paper under that title in vol. iii of *Memoirs* read before the Anthropological Society of London (Longmans, 1870), p. 199, Dr. Houghton says, "The Dayaks (*sic*) believe very dimly in a future life; they say the soul is changed into a spirit, which hovers about the hills and places in the jungle. These spirits are objects of fear and superstition. Customs are observed on account of them." (The italics are mine, not the author's.)

prietors of land, tillers of the soil which they owned, or rented, and also artisans, so far at any rate as the needs of the village required. This, no doubt, would be, as Don Rudesindo truly observes, a work of years, but it would be a work not unworthy of any missionaries, and would add a fresh title of honour to those already assigned in the pages of history to the illustrious order of St. Benedict of Nursia, for many centuries famed for its protection of learning and civilisation in Western Europe.

Besides the details scattered through the main body of the "Memorie Storiche dell' Australia," Monsignor. Salvado gives further information in the last part of his volume (p. 277 *et seqq.*), from which I shall add a few extracts, so far as they are the result of his personal observation.

In Western Australia the Bishop says that he never met more than one native who was black. Their hair he found in the west to be not woolly (*capelli lanuti*) but smooth (*lisci e biondi*), and often so fair that it would have been envied by a native of Northern Europe.\*

He observed this fair and smooth or glossy hair also in a native of the eastern portion of the continent. The Bishop's testimony on this point is rendered stronger, I cannot but think, by the fact, incidentally mentioned, that he had constantly washed and combed the hair of the natives, amongst his varied missionary labours.

As to the probable numbers of the Australian aborigines, Monsignor. Salvado will not venture upon a guess. But whatever they be, he sees with regret that they are rapidly diminishing. This is, indeed, so much the case, that at a meeting of the Anthropological Society of Paris in 1872,† shortly after the reading of M. Topinard's Paper on the Australians, a member quoted the following extract from an English colonial newspaper, the "Australasian," of Melbourne, under date 16th December, 1871, given as an item of news: "A wild man has been seen in the Inigeva Ranges." And as long ago as 1845, the report of a Select Committee on the condition of the aborigines, published in Sydney, gave statistics which are quoted by Monsignor. Salvado,‡ showing that a tribe in the

\* Monsignor. Salvado was probably thinking of the Scandinavians when he wrote this sentence. But it may be worth while to note in connection with it an assertion made by Virchow, at a meeting of the Anthropological Society of Berlin, to the effect that in certain parts of Finland, where there is no trace of any immigration, there are inhabitants so fair as to have given rise to the proverb "as fair as a Fin." ("Revue Scientifique," 2nd January, 1875, p. 642.)

† *Bulletins de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris*, Tome vii (II<sup>e</sup> Serie), p. 420.

‡ Report, &c., Sydney, 1845, pp. 1-2, quoted, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

neighbourhood of Sydney had dwindled from about four hundred to four, viz., one man and three women. Why the Australian race should have died out at such an excessively rapid rate after the settlement of the European colonists, is not, I think, quite obvious from the account of it given by the Benedictine missionary. I should be inclined to think that his estimate of the power of the race and of the position which it is capable of filling, may be somewhat coloured, however unconsciously, by the apparent success of his mission.

When Monsignor. Salvado speaks from his own personal knowledge of the physical and mental characteristics of the natives, whether of the western, northern, or eastern parts of Australia, with whom he had come into contact, I think his statements worthy of acceptance as those of a careful and intelligent observer. But I am unable to reconcile the indubitable fact of the total extinction of one portion of the Australian race,\* viz., that which inhabited Tasmania, and the extreme attenuation of the numbers on the mainland, as testified by authoritative sources of information, with the relatively high estimate of their capacities formed by Don Rudesindo. Perhaps a solution may be found for this difficulty in M. Topinard's view of the co-existence in Australia of a superior and an inferior race. It would then be quite according to analogy that the inferior race should die out before the European, and that the superior race should remain, only perhaps receding more and more into the interior as the European advanced. Indeed, it might be questioned whether the expression cited by Monsignor. Salvado from Byrne's "Emigrant's Guide,"† that such and such tribes of three or four hundred souls had "disappeared" within ten years, is not as consistent with simple retirement into the interior, as with disappearance by death. But it is only fair to Monsignor. Salvado to state his argument in reply to the objection that education has been tried with the Australian and has failed. To this he replies that a purely intellectual education alone has been tried, and that after the savage had been caught in his childhood, and sent to school, where he learned to read and write, and even to perform some of the operations of arithmetic with unexpected rapidity, he has then been taken by the shoulders and thrust back into the bush, where he finds that reading and writing will not enable him to satisfy his hunger.

\* I leave this phrase as I originally wrote it, notwithstanding some criticisms passed upon it in the course of the discussion, because I hope to return to the subject and show that there is some authority for its use in the ethnological sense which I had in view. Meanwhile, it may be taken by its opponents in a purely geographical connotation, to which there can be no objection, I conceive.

† "Emigrant's Guide," p. 70, quoted in *op. cit.*, p. 281.

Now although intellectual education is one of the constituents of civilisation, in the case of the savage it ought to be a secondary one. The first step, continues the bishop, should be to give the Australian the power to supply himself readily with the means of existence through a knowledge of agriculture and the simpler crafts, and afterwards to open his mind to learning, and the outer polish of civilised society. This is in accordance with the system partially carried out by the Benedictine himself, and it seems, *mutatis mutandis*, to have been adopted with good results among a much lower race, the natives of Tierra del Fuego. In that wildest and bleakest part of the American continent, a mission station, established by the English Bishop of the Falkland Islands at Oostrovia, on the Fuegian coast in 1868, has, we learn, increased from a single hut to a settlement of more than one hundred Fuegians, while it is resorted to at certain seasons of the year by several hundreds of the natives.\*

As to the quickness with which the Australians learn their letters, Monsignor. Salvado bears a very decided testimony. He states that one of the boys whom he taught learned in ten minutes forty letters, partly capitals, partly small text, of various types, comprising five different kinds of letters. Another boy, after a few lessons, would repeat backwards or forwards any numbers composed of from two to nine numerals, augmenting them in succession, but not progressively. A third, of about the same age as the first (unfortunately it is not stated what this age was), learned some arithmetical operations in a few weeks, although the numbers known to the natives do not go beyond three. From a captain of a ship, the Bishop heard of an Australian lad, not yet ten years old (non ancora bilustre), who from merely seeing the master take his meridian with a sextant, accomplished the experiment himself successfully, and repeated it several times in the presence of many persons, to show that it was no mere chance. This last incident of course did not occur within Monsignor. Salvado's own knowledge, but what he does vouch for is sufficiently remarkable to suggest a doubt whether the influence of the "glorious Patriarch St. Benedict" may not sometimes have been supposed to intensify the mother-wit of the pupils of the mission of New Nursia.

But throughout his work, Don Rudesindo asserts the great quickness and intelligence of the Australian race. The acuteness (*perspicacia*) of the natives, he says, is so great, that they read in the face the wishes of those who are conversing with them, and answer their questions, even, it would seem, on trivial

\* "Pall Mall Gazette," 22nd June, 1877.

matters, as they think the interrogator desires. If asked whether it is likely to rain the following day, or not, instead of answering in accordance with their experience, they reply as they think the questioner wishes.

Two letters, written by natives of Western Australia, whom Monsignor Salvado took to Italy with him in 1849, and placed in the great Benedictine Monastery of Trinità di Cava, seem to me worth recording in our Proceedings, as specimens of the mastery over writing in a European language which can be reached by this race. The first, written soon after their arrival in Europe, when they were, it is stated about (forse) eleven years old, is couched in short, imperfect sentences, and exhibits the use of the infinitive, probably the first part of a verb which they learned, both for the imperative and indicative. The second, written a year later, displays very marked progress. I am only afraid that it is a little too perfect for the time that had elapsed between the two letters, and I should like to be certain that some of the good monks of La Cava had not touched it up, before sending this specimen of their pupils' progress to the guardian who had placed him under their charge. It is only fair, however, to mention that Monsignor Salvado professes to transcribe both the letters faithfully (*fedelmente*). They are, perhaps, the first of the kind brought to the notice of the Institute.

*Letter I.*

Carissimo Rudesindo, molto noi piace ricevuta lettera tua, e molto noi piace state bene. Noi molto pregare Dio per Australiani e voi. Perchè tu niente venuto monastero luna nuova? Tu venir subito subito a noi fare grande piacere. Noi stare bene assai e contenti. Io Francesco studiare bene; Giovanni così così, ma sempre portare meglio. Tu baciare piede Papa, per Francesco e Giovanni Padre Maestro tutti tre. Tu pregare per Francesco e Giovanni a messa. Noi volere una figura pure. P. Maestro baciare mani te, e tutti miei compagni. Noi baciata lettera tua, baciata mano te e dona benedizione.

CAVA, 25 *Ginguo*, 1850.

FRANCESCO CONACI,  
GIOVANNI DIRIMERA.\*

*Letter II.*

Illustrissimo Monsignore, Con sommo piacere ricevemmo la vostra carissima con la data Luglio per mezzo della quale conoscemmo che stavate bene in salute, lo stesso vi assicuriamo di noi. Speriamo che le vostre faccende vi lasciassero libero

\* "Memorie," pp. 293-4.

almeno pochi giorni, affinchè potessimo avere la consolazione di rivedervi e baciarvi la mano. Per darvi un attestato della mia condotta nello studio vi rimetto un decreto, che ebbi nei saggi pubblici di Settembre insieme alla medaglia di argento col grado di moto bene, la qual le tiene conservata il P. Maestro. Vi ingraziamo dell figurine di santi che ci avete mandate, e vi preghiamora e portarci un libretto di orazioni dove vi sia il preparamento per la SS. Comuione. Vi bacciamo caramente la mani e fanno lo stesso e miei compagni, specialmente D. Silvano; e chiedendovi la santa benedizione mi soscrivo.

CAVA, 18 Luglio, 1857.

Vostro Affmo. in Cristo,  
FRANCESCO SAVERIO CONACL.\*

To the question, what is the religion of the Australian aborigines, Monsignor. Salvado gives an answer based, as he tells us, on close study of the subject during three years of mission life at New Nursia. The conclusion at which he arrived is that they do not adore any deity, whether true or false. Yet he proceeds to tell us that they believe in an Omnipotent Being, creator of heaven and earth, whom they call Motogon, and whom they imagined as a very tall, powerful, and wise man of their own country and complexion. His mode of creation was by breathing, *e.g.*, to create the earth, he said, "Earth, come forth," and he breathed, and the earth was created. So with the sun, the trees, the kangaroo, &c.; unfortunately, the Bishop does not mention whether he had told the natives the Mosaic account of the creation before they gave him this version as their own. Montogon, the author of good, is confronted, according to Monsignor. Salvado's report, by Cienga, the author of evil. This latter being is unchainer of the whirlwind and the storm, and the invisible author of the death of their children, wherefore the natives fear him exceedingly. Moreover, as Motogon (possibly worn out by his goodness) has been long since dead and decrepid (the epithets are those supplied by Monsignor. Salvado, and I do not pretend to explain how a dead person, or spirit, can be decrepid), it is no wonder that they no longer pay him any worship. What is remarkable, however, says Don Rudesindo, is that, although the natives believe themselves to be afflicted with calamities by Cienga, they do nothing to propitiate him. The Bishop's words on this point are unequivocal, and all the stronger from his evident surprise. Never, says he, did I observe any act of external worship, nor did any indication suggest to me that they practised an internal worship.

When a sudden thunder storm comes upon them, they raise

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 294.

hideous cries, strike the earth with their feet, imprecate death and misfortune upon Cienga, whom they think the author of it, and then take refuge under the nearest trees. The Bishop, who is here evidently speaking from recollection of such a scene, says that he remained out in the storm, rather than shelter himself under the dangerous cover of the trees; but the natives assured him that the lightning never struck the bent and twisted (*tortuosi*) trees under which they took refuge. And this the Bishop found to be the case, so that it may be said of the Australian native, that there is a method even in his seeming madness. One day the Bishop met a young girl after sunset, standing still in terror, because she said that Cienga was on a neighbouring tree, looking at her. The Bishop, thinking it might be a bird, threw some pebbles at the tree, and finally took the girl's hand, and led her towards it. Before reaching the tree she cried out in a loud and glad tone of voice, "there he goes." But the Bishop saw neither bird nor demon. The general belief, he says, is that Cienga prowls about at night among the trees, and for this reason the natives can scarcely be got to stir from their fire after sunset. Only mothers who have lately lost a child will brave these dangers to go in quest of its soul, and if they hear the cry of a bird in the bush, will spend hours there calling upon it, and begging it to come to them. So strong is the Australian mother's love.

If a native is killed by a thrust of the "ghici," a wooden spear, about 9 English feet long, and pointed at its thickest end, his countrymen think that his soul remains in the point of the weapon which caused his death, and they burn it after his burial, so that the soul may depart. They think that the soul feels the night chills, and therefore light large fires after the burial, and sometimes keep them up for about a month.

They believe that anyone who dies from sickness dies under the influence of their medicine men, whom they call "Boglia," and whom they believe to be able to kill at great distances. This power to slay is considered to reside in certain stones in the stomach of the "Boglia," and to pass from father to son among that class.

They regard the sun as a friendly, the moon as an unfriendly power. They consider the moon to be masculine, and the sun to be its consort. The moon is accompanied on its passage through the heavens by numerous hounds, whom it sends on the earth to procure it food. When it comes down itself for food it often carries off the children of the natives, but is compelled by the sun to restore them. They abuse the moon in the very strongest language they possess. They think that the stars are married, and, like the sun and moon, have large families. They believe

the stars are offended at being named; the morning star they call "Tonder." They seldom mention the names of the dead, and then only in a low voice (*sotto voce*).

To cause rain, they tear off the skins that they wear, and breathe upon them, so as to blow them in the direction from which they want the rain to come. When they wish to stop rain, they set fire to a piece of sandal wood, and strike the ground sharply with it. They are afraid to drink water at night from any large pool, because they think it the habitation of the great serpent Uócol,\* who will kill them if they drink. Monsignor Salvado found that they would not go, and at first they would not tell him the reason. At last one native said to him, "if we go and take the water we shall be killed; if you go you will not be killed." Seeing that some superstition was at the bottom of this terror, the Bishop went towards the water and quenched his thirst, the natives following him in a row (*tutti in fila*), and in silence. When he had drunk as much as he wanted, and moved away from the pool, the natives immediately called out to him to stop. In going home they ran ahead of him in a body, so that he should be the last; and when he scolded them for their foolish belief, they answered him scornfully, "you know nothing about it." For fear of this same serpent Uócol, the natives never bathe in pools whose dark colour is a sign of their depth, as they say he lies at the bottom, and they dread him even in daylight.

Concerning the native system of government, Monsignor Salvado thinks the ordinary application of the word tribe, which many people, he says, apply to any body of more than half a dozen natives, is inaccurate. According to the researches which he was able to make, each family is an independent society, governed by its father or head, and he was unable to perceive that any such head claimed the right to command other chiefs, or those subject to them. If a native is injured, he himself takes vengeance, and if he is weaker than his enemy, calls upon his relations and friends for help. According to Bishop Salvado, therefore, the Australian aborigines live under the family rather than the tribal system. Although each family is subject solely to the laws of its own chief in most matters, there are yet certain

\* A somewhat similar superstition regarding the occupancy of pools and swamps by a gigantic serpent, is related of the Indians of the Mosquito Territory, in a paper by Mr. John Collinson, C. E., in vol. iii of the *Memoirs* read before the Anthropological Society of London, p. 153. "These mythical reptiles are called wowlvahn, and are believed by the natives to inhabit certain out-of-the-way swampy pools and marshes, where they grow to an enormous size, live for ever, and have the capability of swallowing a canoe full of men at a time. No Indian will stop near their supposed abode for fear of arousing their anger, and so compassing his own destruction."

laws of general application, which might be termed laws of the community, in so far as the aggregation of families in a loose sort of tribal federation may be held to constitute a community beyond the limits of the family. There is, for instance, a general law that no young man shall marry under thirty years of age, and if one confess that he has done so, he may be killed by any of the eders who hates him. It might have been expected that under such a system land would have been held by the family, rather than the tribe, or the individual. But Monsignor. Salvado asserts that each individual has his own portion of land, where he may hunt and gather gum and roots. "Often," says the Bishop, "have I heard a native say to another, this is my country, yours is Canturbi (a place near New Nursia), go away." But here, I think, there is a contradiction in the Bishop's own language, as well as an inexactitude, for immediately afterwards he says, "each family, therefore, forms, as it were, its own peculiar and exclusive district, which is used in common by other neighbouring families who are at peace with it." What the Bishop's testimony seems to indicate is family ownership, as distinguished both from tribal and individual ownership. It is an adverse possession, for if a stranger or an enemy is found within its limits he is put to death. But I think the Bishop's language is consistent only with the conclusion that the individual has not yet emerged among the Australian aborigines, and that the ownership of the soil is in the family. Of the language of the natives, Monsignor. Salvado says that it possesses both the gravity of the Spanish, and the softness of the Italian.

The general similarity of the language\* in different parts of the continent, leads him to believe that all the dialects spring from a common stock. He also believes the race to be one, while M. Topinard and others have argued strongly in favour of the existence of two races in Australia. In their poetry, says the Bishop, there is a repetition which would be irksome to us Europeans, while to the Australians it is a source of delight. Some of their songs are improvised as occasion gives rise to them, but others have been handed down by traditions, or have

\* In proof of this similarity and original identity, Monsignor. Salvado adduces at p. 304 the following table of the words for hand and eye in various parts of Australia:

	New Nursia.	Perth.	King George's Sound.	Adelaide.	Sydney.	Moreton Bay.
The Hand	Mara	Mara	Mur	Mara	Mura	Mara
The Eye	Miel	Miel	Mil	Mena	Miel	Mil

come from distant parts, so that it happens not unfrequently that the musical motive alone remains, while the words of the song have been altered. When a native returns from some distant part of the country, he brings back with him some of the songs which he has learned among the tribes whom he was visiting. If he likes them he sings them in their original form, but if he does not like them he is apt to change both the words and the air, and make them ridiculous. Their war songs rouse them to frenzy; their laments move them to tears. For the hunt and the dance they have songs that make them merry. They accompany their singing with the clash of arms, and with the same accompaniment they mark the rhythm of their dance. Of the songs of the Australians, Monsignor. Salvado does not\* give us any specimen, but he quotes one fragment of a funeral song of the natives of Oceania, which may not unfitly conclude my brief and, I fear, imperfect summary of the Benedictine Missionary's interesting volume.

"The time that remaineth is a perpetual night unto us,  
 The sun that cheered us is eclipsed.  
 The moon that lightened us is darkened.  
 The star that led us has vanished.  
 We have lost our all.  
 What will become of us without the glory of our land?  
 Our life henceforth will be a burden to us."

#### DISCUSSION.

Mr. CORNELIUS WALFORD suggested that the dying out of the native race referred to in the paper, was not necessarily due to contact with civilisation. Other influences came into operation. It was indeed stated in the paper that the natives killed their third child if it chanced to be a female. He assumed from that fact that polygamy did not prevail with the race in question. Polygamy and infanticide combined would reduce the population of any country. Under such conditions more girls than boys would be produced; and if the female children were killed off, of course the numbers must in time die out. Again, where the means of subsistence were precarious, small families were regarded as a necessity. So too in countries where property was divided equally among all the children. The parents in such cases thought two children, to take the place of themselves when they died off, were sufficient. But those who were familiar with the law of mortality, knew that in order that two children might survive their parents, something like an average of four children in each family would be needed—two would die off in their parents' lifetime; the other two would survive, and take the place of their parents. France, by a neglect or disregard of this fact, presented, at least in the towns,

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 14.