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salt have been gathered from the evaporated surface of several of these natural manufactories. The best description of this article is procured from Lake Bolack, to the north west of Karangamite, whence many hundred tons have already been procured, which have been extensively applied to the curing of meat and other purposes.

The ground or bottom of these lakes is generally, or perhaps invariably, a blueish clayey substance, strongly impregnated with salt. I believe that, invariably, their locality or neighbourhood bear the impress of volcanic action. Some are partially surrounded with a bank, like an escarpment; others have a remarkably circular appearance with perpendicular sides, and sunk several feet below the surface of the ground. One, near Lake Colac, above a mile in circumference, unites in itself all these features, and is almost entirely surrounded with a grassy ridge, twenty or thirty feet in height, which shallows out before reaching the margin of the lake, leaving an intermediate plain of twenty to fifty yards in width. These circumstances, and the resemblance of the clayey substance that is found in them, to what is seen at the bottom of undoubted craters, suggest the idea that the salt lakes were themselves either regular craters, or the site of subterranean commotions.

ART. XX.—*On the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land.* By
R. H. DAVIES, Esq.

[The British Association for the Advancement of Science having published a series of queries respecting the human race, the writer was favoured with a copy, and a request that as far as he was enabled he would answer such of them as bore upon the aborigines of Van Diemen's Land. The following paper is the result; but, to avoid repetitions, modified so as to make it a continuous narrative, instead of a series of answers. The writer has endeavoured, as much as possible, to confine himself to the results of his own observation, together with such authority as he deemed he could depend upon.]

THE aborigines of Van Diemen's Land are a full average height, very sinewy and wirey. Stout muscular men occur but rarely; this is in accordance with their habits, in which activity rather

than strength is called into action. Their colour is bluish black, less black than that of African negroes, but slightly more so than Lascars. Their hair is black and woolly, but apparently not so much so as that of negroes. The hair of the female appears more woolly than that of the male; this is probably owing to the female keeping her hair cut extremely close, leaving a narrow circle all round, as if a basin had been put over the head, and the hair inside of it cut away. The men allow their hair to grow very long, matting each lock separately with grease and ochre. The eyes are dark, wild, and strongly expressive of the passions; forehead high, narrow, running to a peak; nose flat, and nostrils wide; the jaw bones are large, strong, and prominent, and shew a great width in front; the mouth is very wide, and the teeth large, strong, and even; the lips are not *full*, like those of negroes, at least not generally so. The men grease their bodies, and streak them with red ochre, and a variety of plumbago; this is partly done for ornament, but they say that it in a great measure protects them from the inclemency of the weather: unconnected with this besmearing, a very peculiar odour proceeds from their bodies. Their skulls must be very thick, judging from the blows which they receive on them with impunity.

Their language is very soft and liquid, ending, I think without exception, in vowels; as *loro loubra* (a white woman), *loro whanga* (a white mountain), *ringarooma*, *boobyalla*, &c. The dialects are numerous, and the language in different parts of the island appears to be wholly different: to the westward they call water "*mocha*," and "*mogana*," to the eastward "*lina*."

The aborigines from the westward, and those from the eastward, did not at first understand each other, when brought to Flinders' Island (the present establishment of the blacks), but they afterwards, in common with the whites, used a kind of lingua franca. It is apparent, however, that there was a considerable analogy between their languages, as they joined in the same corrobories, singing the same songs; these were principally those of the easterns, and it is possible that the westerns did not understand the purport of the words. The aborigines shew great facility in attaining the pronunciation even of English words, dissimilar as

that language is to their own ; they cannot, however, pronounce the hard letters, as *d* and *s* ; doctor, they pronounce togata, or tokata ; sugar, tugana ; tea, teana.

Their language is, in all probability, extremely limited, or at least was so before their intercourse with whites, but so many words have since crept in, and been naturalized as above, that it would now be impossible to find out to what their original language was confined : I much doubt their ever having separate names for all the different kinds of birds with which they were conversant ; “ yula ” (a bird) appeared to answer for most. The lingua franca before alluded to as spoken at Flinders' Island, is a mixture of English, words from the different tribes, and a number of words from the New Holland tribes, and even from other countries ; these last have been introduced by the women, aborigines of Van Diemen's Land, who have lived for many years with sealers, and been with them to the continent ; even negro words have been introduced. From these circumstances it may be perceived, how difficult it would be to separate their absolutely primitive language from that now in use.

The following is a song of the Ben Lomond tribe ; I cannot translate it, nor, could I do so, is the subject very select :—

Ne popila raina pogana,
Ne popila raina pogana,
Ne popila raina pogana.

Thu me gunnea,
Thu me gunnea,
Thu me gunnea.

Thoga me gunnea,
Thoga me gunnea,
Thoga me gunnea.

Naina thaipa raina pogana,
Naina thaipa raina pogana,
Naina thaipa raina pogana.

Naara paara powella paara,
Naara paara powella paara,
Naara paara powella paara.

Ballahoo, Ballahoo,

Hoo, hoo !

(Their war-whoop, very guttural.)

There can be no doubt but that the aborigines of Van Diemen's Land are scions of the continental tribes, their habits, weapons, &c., being so similar, and the chain of islands extending across the eastern extremity of Bass's Straits forming a comparatively easy communication. From the circumstance, however, of the name for water amongst the western tribes being similar to that used by the natives near Cape Leeuwin, it is extremely probable that the latter furnished the first inhabitants for the western portion of Van Diemen's Land. This is rendered the more likely, from the peculiar form of the south-western coast of New Holland, as a canoe driven to sea from the vicinity of King George's Sound would, from the prevailing winds and currents, be apt to reach the western part of Van Diemen's Land.

When a woman was taken in labour, the tribe did not wait for her, but she was left behind with another woman, and afterwards followed as she best could. I have no reason to suppose that infanticide existed amongst the aborigines in their former wild state; there is little doubt, however, but that it was common of later years, driven to it as they in all probability were by the continued harassing of the whites; in fact, when their fear of the latter prevented their killing the kangaroo in their usual manner, dogs became so extremely valuable to them, that the females have been known to desert their infants for the sake of suckling the puppies. Their usual method of killing kangaroos, was by surrounding a scrub, setting fire to it, and spearing the kangaroos as they came out.

The women carry their infants in a kangaroo skin at their backs, and suckle them over their shoulders; the breasts of the females are consequently preposterously long. They suckle their infants for a very long time; I am not certain, but believe, for upwards of two years.

Practising throwing small spears, and other savage exercises, appear to be the whole education and employment of the children. Both the men and women hold themselves very erect; indeed the men, probably from the habit of balancing the spear, throw back the shoulders so much as almost to make it appear a deformity.

When the males arrive at the age of puberty, they are deeply

scarified on the thighs, shoulders, and muscles of the breast, with a sharp flint or glass. When I witnessed the operation, a female was the operator, and such I believe is always the case. The subject was a young man named "Penderoine," brother to the celebrated western chief, "Weymerricke;" the instrument was a piece of broken bottle, and although the fat of his shoulder literally rose and turned back like a crimped fish, he was during the whole operation in the highest glee, laughing, and continually interrupting his operatrix by picking up chips to fling at our party, in play. These scarifications are intended as ornaments.

With respect to the general nature of their food, that depends in a great measure on their locality. The western portion of the island is more mountainous, wet, and thickly wooded than the rest; kangaroos are more difficult to obtain, and the natives consequently live more on shell-fish than on the eastern coast; these are principally the haliotis and crayfish, which they obtain by diving, at which they are extremely expert, the women being generally, if not at all times, the divers. They take down with them a small grass basket, slung round their waist, into which they put their shell-fish. The tribes in the interior subsist upon kangaroos, wallaby, and opossums; more particularly the latter, as being most easily obtained. The natives, especially the women, get them by climbing trees; their senses of seeing and hearing are particularly acute, and a glance will suffice to tell them when there is an opossum in the tree. They always carried with them a small rope, made of kangaroo sinews, and their mode of climbing the trees was as follows:—They first, as high as they could conveniently reach, cut a notch with a sharp stone in the side of the tree; then throwing the bight of the rope up, and leaning back, it held against the tree by their weight, until with its assistance the climber got his right great toe into the notch that had been cut; then grasping the tree with his left arm, the rope by a sudden jerk is thrown higher up the tree, a fresh notch is cut for the left toe, and so the climber proceeds. If branches interfere, they are an hindrance to the climber, but he then throws the end of the rope over it, and, holding both ends, raises himself up.

Their only mode of cooking is by roasting on the fire, whole ; they do not take out the entrails until after it is done, which it is supposed to be when heated through. Some tribes, or portions of tribes, will not eat the female wallaby, others will not eat the male : to what superstition this is attributable, I am ignorant. Others will not eat scaled fish ; and it appeared to me, when at Flinders' Island, that the western natives would not eat the smooth shelled haliotis, though the easterns did. The smooth shelled haliotis is more numerous on the east coast than the other species, and the reverse on the western coast ; but that seems scarcely a sufficient reason to induce the western natives to reject it.

Besides the paltry indigenous fruits, hardly worthy of the name, almost the only vegetable production they use, is a kind of truffle, or underground fungus (*Myliitta australis*), which has much the taste of cold boiled rice, which cooking does not appear to alter. They use besides, parts of the tree-fern and grass-tree, (*Xanthorrhæa*) but they can scarcely be esteemed articles of food. A large white caterpillar, about two inches in length, found in rotten wood and in the banksia, together with the eggs of the large ant, are considered luxuries. Before their intercourse with Europeans, they do not appear to have had any knowledge of boiling water. They were often a long time without food, and then ate it in great quantities. When they are short of food they tighten a string of kangaroo sinews, which they wear round their middle. The enormous quantity of food which they are capable of eating, when they have an opportunity, would scarcely be credited. A native woman at the settlement at Flinders' Island, was one day watched by one of the officers, and seen to eat between fifty and sixty eggs, of the "sooty petrel" (*procellaria* sp.), besides a double allowance of bread : these eggs exceed those of a duck in size.

The men go quite naked, with the exception of the string of kangaroo sinews ; this, besides the uses already mentioned, they use for carrying their waddies in. The women generally wear a kangaroo skin, likewise the kangaroo sinew belt, and another round and over their breasts. I have seen the women scarified, but whether for ornament, or from surgical treatment, I know not.

The aborigines are capable of great, but not of lasting exertion. They cannot stand continued fatigue equal to a hearty European, nor, what will appear singular, can they, like him, bear constant exposure to bad weather; when such sets in, they will cower round their fires, under the lee of their break-winds in a sheltered situation, until a change takes place.

The men are very indolent, and, as is the case with most uncivilized nations, make the women their beasts of burden, and do all their servile operations, such as cooking, &c. The men appear to think it beneath their dignity to carry anything, and when with them I have in many instances found them extremely sulky, if asked to carry birds, &c. that I have shot or taken. If the ground is smooth upon which they are walking, as a beach for instance, they have a habit of trailing their spears after them, the point held in some manner between their great toe and that next it; this seems to be that they may have their waddy ready to heave at any small object that may appear. The spear is transferred from the foot to the hand in an instant. While the men are thus taking it easy in front, the women follow some short distance behind, sweltering under a load of one or two children on their backs, a couple of puppy dogs in their arms, and a variety of miscellaneous articles slung around them. The men are extremely selfish: if, after being short of food, one kills a kangaroo, he does not divide it with the others of the party, but after his wife has cooked it, and taken her place behind his back, he satisfies himself with the choicest parts, handing her from time to time the half devoured pieces over his shoulder; this he does with an air of the greatest condescension, without turning round. His dogs come in for their full share, and if any is left, the tribe or party may have it; but they are not asked to partake. They are an extremely improvident race, for although dependant almost entirely upon the produce of their hunting for subsistence, yet, should they come to a place where kangaroo or wallaby abound, they will slaughter them indiscriminately long after they have supplied themselves with sufficient for their present use. Some nine or ten years since, the settlement at Flinders' Island was frequently short of food, and on these occasions the natives,

accompanied by one or two of the officers, would go out on a grand hunting party for two or three weeks, when this slaughter would often take place; nor did experience teach them to alter this plan, however much they might suffer by it. They appeared much to enjoy the tortures of a wounded bird or beast, nor did I ever see them put such to death to relieve it from its misery.

Their principal amusement consists in their corrobories or dances. These are sometimes held in the day time, but far more generally at night: they light a large fire, round which, quite naked, they dance, run, and jump, keeping time to their own singing, which is far from unmusical. These songs are various, each having its own peculiar dance, intended to illustrate some action or effect from causes. One is called the kangaroo dance, and is, along with some others, most violent; in this the party (I have seen as many as ninety joined in one corrobory) commence walking round the fire slowly, singing in a low monotonous tone. After this has continued for some time, they begin to get excited, singing in a higher key, walking faster, striking their hands upon the ground, and springing high in the air. By degrees their walk becomes a run; their solitary leaps, a series; their singing, perfect shrieking: they close upon the fire, the women piling fresh branches upon it. Still leaping in a circle, and striking the ground with their hands at every bound, they will spring a clear five feet high, so near to the fire, so completely in the flames, that you fancy they must be burnt. Excited to frenzy, they sing, shriek, and jump, until their frames can stand it no longer, and they give up in the uttermost state of exhaustion. Some of their dances are evidently lascivious; some are medicine, &c.; though had I not been told by themselves that intended to represent making bread, taking such was the case, I never should have perceived any analogy.

Perhaps, between fifty and sixty would be considered old age; old "Huana," at Perth, is a great grandmother, and I should not think that her age exceeded sixty.

The aborigines certainly use charms, and they wear the dead bones of their friends slung round their necks as such.

Those that I have seen, have been most commonly the jaw-bone, or the bone of the thigh; as also the skulls of children, the latter wrapped up in a skin. These bones are worn by people in perfect health, most probably as mementos of deceased relations; but if so, they lend them to others of their own tribe when ill, who wear them as charms round their neck. As before mentioned, the natives scarify themselves in different parts of the body, for the purpose of ornament; I have, however, been informed, that they likewise do so in cases of rheumatism, and where they wish to draw out inflammation.

Pulmonary complaints appear to be by far the most prevalent, particularly rapid inflammation of the lungs. Rheumatism is said to be common amongst them, as is likewise face-ache. They all suffer more or less from scabby sores. In the children these are dreadful, and disgusting in the extreme; with them all parts of the body are affected: with the adults the sores are more confined to the head: these are doubtless caused by their coarse living, aided by their dirty habits.

When a death occurs in a tribe, they place the body upright in a hollow tree, and (having no fixed habitation) pursue their avocations. When some time has passed, say a year or upwards, they return to the place and burn the body, with the exception of the skull; this they carry with them, until they chance (for I do not think that they lose time in seeking it) to fall in with a cemetery, in which a number of skulls are heaped together, when they add the one with them to the number, and cover them up with bark, leaves, &c. They do not bury them in the ground. I have never been able to ascertain that they put either weapons or food in the tree with the dead.

It is hard to conceive that they have no idea of a future state, particularly as such is so contrary to the general belief of other savage nations; and yet from every enquiry, both from themselves and from whites most conversant with them, I have never been able to ascertain that such a belief exists. It is extremely difficult however to arrive at the truth, as those who have had the slightest connection with the whites, will tell you what they have

been taught, not their original opinions. They believe in the existence of an evil spirit, called by some tribes, "Namma," who has power by night; of him they are much afraid, and never will willingly go out in the dark. I never could make out that they believed in a good deity, for although they spoke of one, it struck me that it was what they had been told; they may, however, believe in one who has power by day.

During the whole of the first night after the death of one of their tribe, they will sit round the body, using rapidly a low continuous recitation, to prevent the evil spirit from taking it away. They are extremely jealous of this ceremony being witnessed by strangers; but I had, upon one occasion, an opportunity of being an ear-witness of it the whole night.

They have no fixed habitations, sleeping round their fires in a circle; but in blowing weather putting up to windward break-winds of bark and branches. Near Pieman's River, on the west coast, one tribe was discovered living in a village, if it may be so termed, of bark huts or break-winds, of a better description than usual, and having somewhat the appearance of a fixed residence. It is probable, however, that being good hunting-ground they merely intended making a lengthened stay there.

With the exception of the weapons for war and hunting (which are of the rudest description), their only works of art are a small basket of dried rush or grass, the kangaroo sinew rope before-mentioned, and a rude necklace of small sea shells, polished with grease and sand. Their weapons are confined to the spear and waddy, both made of *leptospermum* or *melaleuca* (hard, heavy woods). The waddy is merely a cudgel, about two feet long, the end bluntly pointed, and the grasp notched.

They have no domestic animal, unless a young tamed kangaroo could be esteemed such; and it is much to be doubted whether in their wild state they even had this. Of later years, as before-mentioned, they have had dogs. Each tribe, or portion of a tribe, is under a chief, who does not appear to be hereditary, but to attain his rank from his daring in war.

They do not appear given to pilfering, although instances have

occurred. Each tribe occupied certain tracts of country, but they were constantly invading and at war with each other.

In personal quarrels each party fights with a waddy, standing each other's blow on the head, without defending it. If an offence be committed against the tribe, the delinquent has to stand whilst a certain number of spears are, at the same time, thrown at him : these, from the unerring aim which they are thrown, he can seldom altogether avoid ; although, from the quickness of his sight, he will frequently escape unhurt : he moves not from his place, avoiding the spears merely by the contortions of his body. Another mode of punishment is to place the offender upon a low branch of a tree, point at and jeer him.

When they move from place to place they carry fire with them : when they had it not, I have been informed that they obtained it by rubbing round rapidly in their hands a piece of hard pointed stick, the pointed end inserted into a notch in another piece of dry wood.

The natives here, unlike those of the continent, use neither the boomerang, club, nor throwing stick, &c.

So much of the island was impracticable for their purposes, on account of dense scrubs that would not burn, that in all probability the number of inhabitants was extremely limited at any time. Now, the whole number of the aborigines of Van Diemen's Land amounts to only about fifty, who are settled upon Flinders' Island in Bass's Strait, where they have been treated with uniform kindness ; nevertheless, the births have been very few, and the deaths numerous. This may have been in a great measure owing to their change of living and food, but much more so to their banishment from the main land of Van Diemen's Land, which is visible from Flinders' Island ; and the natives have often pointed it out to me with expressions of the deepest sorrow depicted on their countenances. The same thing has occurred on board the vessel when passing some part of the coast with which they were acquainted.

The woman of the late " James Munro," the sealer, was a native of some part of the coast of New Holland, opposite to Van

Diemen's Land. She was much better looking than the aborigines, and had very fine long silky hair. She told me that the tribe to which she belonged were cannibals; that they had originally come from the northward, and killed the tribe whose country they had invaded. May it not have been a remnant of this latter tribe, that first peopled the north-east coast of Van Diemen's Land?

November 12, 1845.
