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“that the warrior may be enabled to strike round the shield, or eleman, of his adversary.” Mr. G. F. Lang<sup>1</sup> relates a case where an intended husband, when beating an eloped girl, “finished by driving the point of his liangle into the crown of her head.” The object of striking over the guard, afforded by the shield, with the point, has been confirmed by Messrs. Meston and Grant, both of whom have seen the *Leonile* used. Mr. Grant further states that when a combatant wishes to strike side-wise and from himself with a back-handed blow, the round, and not the point, of the *Leonile*, is used. Perhaps, after all, the most peculiar mode of using it is that related by Lumboltz, who says that about the Herbert River, fighters “try to hit the kidneys of their opponents,” that being the most vulnerable point to the aborigine mind.

As in the case of the basket, I am indebted to Mr. Charles Hedley, F.L.S., for the accompanying drawing.

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*An AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL MUSICAL INSTRUMENT.* By  
R. ETHERIDGE, Jun.

THE recorded instances of the use of Musical Instruments amongst our aborigines are, comparatively speaking, so few, that the description of an authenticated instrument will probably prove welcome. For an opportunity of describing the present example of what may, for the want of a better name, be termed a rattle, or perhaps even “castanets,” I am indebted to the well known Australian traveller and explorer, Mr. Harry Stockdale. The instrument was obtained 100 miles inland from Port Douglas, near Cairns, on the north-east coast of Queensland. Before proceeding to describe this interesting object, I may perhaps, be allowed to refer to what is generally known of the use of instruments of music amongst the Australian aborigines, or, at any rate, their rough and ready make-shifts for the more finished appliances of cultured peoples. During the widely spread dance generally known as the *Corroboree*, or, more particularly in Victoria as *Ngargee*, or *Yain-yang*, the women of the tribe, who take the part of musicians, are seated in a semi-circle, a short distance from the large fire lit on these occasions holding on their knees opossum rugs tightly rolled and stretched

<sup>1</sup> “Aborigines of Australia,” 1865, p. 11.

out. These are struck by the right hand, in time with the action of the master of the ceremonies, usually one of the old men. He carries in each hand a corroboree stick, and these are struck together, accompanied by a nasal drone. Many of the dancers are similarly provided.<sup>1</sup> This use of the opossum cloak and clanking of the sticks appears to be the most primitive form of musical instrument, if it can be so termed, amongst our aborigines. The eminent surveyor and explorer, the late Sir F. L. Mitchell, in describing<sup>2</sup> their "universal and highly original dance," refers to the rolled up skins in the following words—"and thus may be said to use the tympanum in its rudest form." On the Maranoa River in Queensland, a modification of this opossum-cloak drum is in use, by rolling up earth inside the skins, and then striking with a stick.<sup>3</sup>

The Rev. G. Taplin states that amongst the Narrinyeri, a tribe inhabiting the country about the Lower Murray River, and the Lakes Alexandrina and Albert in South Australia, the rolled up skin drums are called *planggi*, and the act of drumming, *plangkumbalin*. The corroboree sticks are *tartengk*, and the act of striking them together is termed *tartembarrin*. The dance is known to this tribe as *ringbalin*.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, amongst those of the Northern Queensland tribes who use boomerangs, the latter are employed in the dance in place of one of the sticks, or to beat time.<sup>5</sup>

In Western Victoria, amongst the local tribes, the rolled up rugs sometimes contain shells, so as to produce a jingling sound. According to Mr. J. Dawson,<sup>6</sup> who mentions this fact, the "music stick" is made of hard wood, 9 inches long, by 1½ inches in diameter. It is rounded, and tapers at each end to a point. One stick is held fast and struck by the other, producing a clear and musical sound. A still further modification exists on the Herbert River, in Central Queensland, where the female musicians beat "both their open hands against their laps (or, more probably, their buttocks) thus producing a loud hollow sound."<sup>7</sup>

The Brothers Tardine, during their memorable journey, in 1867, from Port Denison to Cape York, saw two drums in use near Newcastle Bay, obtained by barter from the Torres Straits

<sup>1</sup> Smyth, "Aborigines of Victoria," 1878, i, p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> "Three Expeditions into the Interior of East Australia," 1838, ii, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> G. S. Lang, "Aborigines of Australia," 1865, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Wood's "Native Tribes of South Australia," 1879, No. 1. "The Narrinyeri," by Rev. G. Taplin, p. 37.

<sup>5</sup> Palmer, "Journ. Anthropol. Inst. Brit. and Ireland," 1884, xiii, p. 287.

<sup>6</sup> "Aborigines of Australia," 1861, p. 80.

<sup>7</sup> Lumholtz, "Amongst Cannibals," 1890, p. 236.

Islanders, and clearly of a Papuan type. These were neatly made of a solid piece of wood scooped out, in shape like an elongated dice-box. One end was covered with the skin of a snake or iguana, and the other left open. Such drums were termed *waropa* or *burra burra*.<sup>1</sup>

The use of drums also extends to Western Australia, for Ogle observes that a "kind of drum, made of kangaroo skin stretched over a bundle, and beaten with the fists," is employed.<sup>2</sup>

Advancing a step further, to instruments of a more truly musical nature, we find that Capt. J. Lort Stokes, R.N., saw in use at Port Essington, during a corroboree, a bamboo trumpet. It consisted of a piece of bamboo, thinned from the inside, through which the performer blew with the nose, producing a kind of droning noise. This pipe was from 2 to 3 feet long, and was called *ebroo*.<sup>3</sup> It is evidently the same instrument as that spoken of by Dr. Coppinger,<sup>4</sup> who saw at a camp of the Larikia Tribe, in the vicinity of Port Darwin, pieces of "hollow reed," about 4 feet long, that were blown "like cow-horns," and produced a "rude burlesque of music." In the forthcoming "Macleay Memorial Volume" of the Linnean Society of New South Wales, I have described similar trumpets in detail, used by the Alligator Rivers Tribe at Van Diemen's Gulf, North Australia.

The rattle now under description consists of seven shells strung on string, and suspended from a vertebra. The shells are two species of olive, *Oliva episcopalis*, Lamk, and *O. elegans* Lamk. The apices have been completely ground off, leaving only two body whorls, and these have been transversely cut through. The string, which is two-ply, and made of fibre, dyed brown, is passed through the hollow body whorls of the shells and out through each slit on the backs. The two parts are brought together and knotted, so as to form a loop. One of the free ends is then put through the neural canal of the vertebra, and tied. In two of the shells the string passes directly through the slits, and not vertically down the body whorl at all. The vertebra is one of the anterior dorsal of a dog. The jingle caused by shaking the shells is pleasant and melodious, the vertebra being held in the hand.

The genuineness of this rattle as an Australian instrument, in the first instance, is, of course, not absolutely assured, for the type seems to me to have a decidedly Papuan appearance. Whether

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Smyth, "Aborigines of Victoria," 1878, i, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> "Colony of Western Australia," 1839, p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> "Discoveries in Australia," 1837-43, i, 1846, p. 394.

<sup>4</sup> "Voy. 'Alert,'" 1883, p. 204.

it was simply adapted from a Papuan pattern, or directly obtained by means of barter, is, of course, open to conjecture. At any rate, it was found in the hands of blacks, 100 miles inland from Port Douglas, situated to the north of the town of Cairns, on the north-east coast of Queensland. (No. 3.)

Count D'Albertis figures<sup>1</sup> a few New Guinea musical instruments, amongst them what seems to be a cluster of shells, nuts, or some other small and like objects attached to the end of a flexible handle, and used, I should imagine, as a rattle. Similarly Prof. A. C. Haddon describes<sup>2</sup> the musical instruments in use by the Western Tribe of Torres Straits Islanders as consisting of drums, a primitive kind of rattle, and two sticks that are beaten together. He also adds that "empty seeds (*goa*) or shells are often attached to masks or drums to serve as rattles. When dancing, the rattle seeds may also be attached to a stick held in the hand, or slung on a belt and hung in a bunch behind, or rattles may be tied on to the arms or ankles."

These quotations show, I think, the derivation of our shell rattle from the Papuan idea, and indicate, in conjunction with a number of other facts which could be brought forward, the close relation that has existed at times between our aborigines and the Papuans by means of their intermediaries, the Torres Strait Islanders.

The extensive system of barter carried on over the whole continent of Australia, may almost be described as a natural characteristic of the aboriginal Australian. The great distances that articles of utility as well as what may be called nick-nacks travel, passing from tribe to tribe, is remarkable, and according to Mr. A. W. Howitt<sup>3</sup> is "spread all over the interior of the continent." In nothing is this more prominently shown than the occurrence inland of marine shells. Hodgson<sup>4</sup> saw mother-o'-pearl in the Condamine country that must have travelled as much as 100 miles inland. Leichhardt relates several instances: thus at Ant Hill Creek, in the Mount Lang District, Queensland, the local tribe journeyed to the sea coast in quest of shells, particularly the pearly nautilus, "of which they make various ornaments"<sup>5</sup>; this party found a *Cymbium* in the dillybags of the Lynd River natives,<sup>6</sup> a subsidiary stream flowing into the Mitchell River in Cape York Peninsula; and at the camping place<sup>6</sup> of the Albert River men a *Cytherea* and a *Dolium* were

<sup>1</sup> "New Guinea," 1880, i, pl. opp. p. 305, f. 20 and 31.

<sup>2</sup> "Journ. Anthropol. Inst. Gt. Brit. and Ireland," 1890, xix, p. 374.

<sup>3</sup> "Journ. Anthropol. Inst. Gt. Brit. and Ireland," xx, p. 76, *note*.

<sup>4</sup> "Reminiscences of Australia," 1846, p. 248.

<sup>5</sup> "Overland Expedition, Moreton Bay to Port Essington," 1846, p. 257.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

observed.<sup>1</sup> Even as far inland as the Dieri Tribe, who inhabit the country about Coopers Creek, East Central Australia, the single valve of a large marine shell was seen by Howitt.<sup>2</sup>

For the excellent drawing accompanying this paper I am indebted to Mr. Charles Hedley, F.L.S.

### *The ABORIGINES of NORTH-WEST AUSTRALIA.*

By P. W. BASSETT-SMITH, Surgeon R.N.

[WITH PLATES XVIII AND XIX.]

FOR rather over three months after joining H.M.S. "Penguin," a surveying ship employed on the Australian station in 1891, it was my good fortune to see many of the aboriginal natives of that country, who, in the north-west part, are and have been less in contact with civilized or western man than in any other portion.

The personal observations of the natives themselves were obtained near Port Darwin, and particularly from a camp on the Adelaide River, 80 miles from that place, where there is a station on that part of the northern commencement of the trans-continental railway which as yet only reaches the gold fields, some 160 miles up; here the only Europeans were the stationmaster and his wife, with a single police trooper; also from Roebuck Bay on the West coast, lat. 18° 0' S., at the so-called town of Broome, there being only the telegraph establishment with six Europeans, one wretched hotel for use of the "pearlers," a post office, and an agent of Streeter's with a few Japanese, so that here the influence of outsiders cannot be very great on the natives.

Observations of their camps, &c., were also made on a few of the islands, and once on the mainland, but on these occasions I never saw any natives, though there is good reason to believe that they were sometimes very close by. Before I joined the ship, however, boating parties had been attacked by small troops of natives coming out with a rush, and throwing spears, sticks, paddles, &c., so that great care had always to be taken, and they were frequently sighted by officers at different times.

A short description of the climate and general character of the country is necessary to enable us to understand the natural conditions under which the people live.

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 348, 356, and 359.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 76, *note*.