

1864.

—
VICTORIA.

FOURTH REPORT

OF THE

CENTRAL BOARD

APPOINTED TO WATCH OVER THE INTERESTS

OF THE

ABORIGINES IN THE COLONY

OF

VICTORIA.

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY'S COMMAND.

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REPORT.

Melbourne, 15th August, 1864.

SIR,

The Central Board appointed to watch over the interests of the Aborigines have the honor to submit the Fourth Report of their proceedings.

The Board have met eighteen times during the past year, and the average attendance has been four. To avoid unnecessary delay, much of the merely routine business connected with the accounts, the correspondence, and the carrying out of the details of plans approved of by the Central Board has been transacted by the Vice-President and the Secretary; but in every case the papers relating to the action taken by the Secretary, even in these matters, have been submitted to the Board, and their decision in regard to the several cases entered in the minutes.

The Central Board have to deplore the loss of their President, the Honorable Richard Heales. They cannot adequately express their sense of the valuable services rendered to the Aborigines by the deceased gentleman. Though his time was much occupied by other duties, involving the heaviest responsibilities, he was constant in his attendance at the meetings of the Board, and at all times was ready to give advice and assistance. His wise counsel, and his earnest advocacy of the interests of the Aborigines in Parliament, helped largely to effect those changes which have resulted in the improvement of the black population throughout the colony. It was his compassion for this people that led him to take steps to aid them; he was chiefly instrumental in founding the Central Board; and as regards the work the Board was appointed to perform, he labored earnestly and effectually in promoting its accomplishment. The members of the Board who have worked with him know how pure were his motives, how kind his heart, how impatient he was of wrong, and yet how slow to blame. Each of them knows how great is the loss the Aborigines have sustained, and how much such assistance as he so freely rendered is beyond praise.

The Honorary Correspondents continue to give useful aid to the Board in all parts of the colony, and they take a warm interest in the work of improving the condition of the blacks. Many of them discharge quite arduous duties; and in no case is the duty of ministering to the wants of the blacks very light. The blacks look up to the Honorary Correspondents as their guardians and protectors, and constantly visit them for the purpose of receiving food, clothing, and medicines for the sick. In all their difficulties, and sometimes when they quarrel, they go to them for advice; and it is gratifying to be able to state that in many cases known to the Board the Honorary Correspondents have prevented evils, and removed the grounds of animosities which might have led to dangerous conflicts between individuals and tribes.

Their returns, which from the more important stations are rendered monthly, show that they are careful and discreet in the issuing of stores, and methodical in recording the names of the persons receiving aid. They likewise bestow attention on the sick, and often are put to much trouble in procuring medical comforts and in preventing the blacks from disobeying the instructions of the medical advisers.

Mr. William Thomas, the Guardian of Aborigines, who has labored amongst this people for twenty-four years, is still actively and zealously employed. He furnishes reports regularly on all matters relating to the blacks more immediately under his care ; and he frequently makes useful practical suggestions touching the management of the Aborigines generally. He is always ready to go, even to remote parts of the colony, to attend to their wants ; and he continues to give valuable aid in all cases where Aboriginal criminals are brought to trial.

Supply of Stores.

A Table appended to this Report shows, that from the 1st August, 1863, to the 31st July, 1864, there have been issued :—

Flour	...	...	...	...	112,195 lbs.
Tea	...	...	...	...	3,370 "
Sugar	...	...	...	...	30,412 "
Tobacco	...	...	...	...	1,426 "
Rice	...	...	...	...	1,530 "
Oatmeal	...	...	...	...	232 "
Soap	...	...	...	...	2,529 "
Meat	...	...	...	...	4,838 "
Salt	...	...	...	...	200 "
Blankets	...	...	...	...	1,404 pairs
Serge Shirts	...	...	...	...	486
Twill Shirts	...	...	...	...	489
Trowsers	...	...	...	...	637 pairs
Flannel or Lambswool Shirts	...	...	...	...	73
Women's Dresses	...	...	...	...	244
Petticoats	...	...	...	...	180
Jackets	...	...	...	...	65
Boys' Jumpers	...	...	...	...	12
Blue Serge	...	...	...	...	200 yards
Striped Cotton	...	...	...	...	70 "
Calico	...	...	...	...	210 "
Cotton Print	...	...	...	...	500 "
Flannel	...	...	...	...	250 "
Plaid and Woollen Stuff	...	...	...	...	168 "
Chemises	...	...	...	...	148
Brown Holland	...	...	...	...	140 yards
Towelling	...	...	...	...	100 "
Tomahawks	...	...	...	...	142
Pint and Quart Pots	...	...	...	...	132
Panicans	...	...	...	...	252
Canvas	...	...	...	...	140 yards
Wheat, for seed	...	...	...	...	8½ bushels
Potatoes, for seed	...	...	...	...	2 tons

The table shows, also, that, in addition to the above, there have been issued medicines, medical comforts, implements, utensils, &c., suited to the requirements of the several stations.

Many complaints have been made regarding the mode in which stores are supplied. It is true that, in consequence of uncertainty as to the sum which will be voted by the Parliament for the blacks, it is often late before contracts can be made for the supply and carriage of stores ; but very serious blunders have occurred in no way due to this cause, and the Central Board, somewhat reluctantly, have recommended that a change be made. They have submitted a scheme to the Government, which, if adopted, will certainly prevent delay, give satisfaction to the Honorary Correspondents, and, in enabling the Board to take advantage of the cheapest mode of transit in dry weather, as well as the state of the markets, may result in the saving of money as well as time. The Board would have recommended a change long ago, had they not been anxious to give a fair trial to the old system. That system has, in many instances, failed, and if it be not quite done away with, and something better substituted, it is not to be expected that gentlemen, on whom it is not incumbent to do the work of the Government, will continue to give their services as Honorary Correspondents. The position of an Honorary Correspondent is a trying one at all times, but it is rendered more difficult and more trying by delays in the furnishing of stores.

The Central Board stated, in their last Report, that they had commenced the erection of a school-house for the use of the blacks at Coranderrk, near the junction of the Coranderrk Creek and the River Yarra. They are happy to say that it is now completed, and that it is in every way suitable for the purpose intended. The large school-room is airy and well lighted, and the three bed-rooms adjacent are properly placed and well built. Aided and instructed by Mr. Green, the Aborigines have built nine excellent bark huts; eight of these are inhabited by the blacks, and one is used as a store-room. Each of the huts in which the blacks live is provided with a fire-place, and is divided into two compartments, one of which is used as a sleeping place, and the other as a common room, where they take their meals.

Coranderrk.
Upper Yarra.

The site selected is a good one. The little village is situated on the eastern extremity of the range separating the Coranderrk Creek from the Watts River, and is close to the first-named creek, where there is always an abundant supply of good water. The spot is quiet, and the Aborigines appear to like it very much.

The Aborigines have done a great deal of hard work on this station. They have grubbed and cleared fifteen acres of land, and fenced altogether about a mile in length with good posts and rails, which they prepared and put up themselves.

They manage the stock on the station, and take much interest in the place generally.

They have made a great number of rugs, which have been sold for about £70.

The Aborigines—two men, two women, and six children—formerly maintained at Franklinford, were removed to Coranderrk on the 20th April, and they have since then lived very happily with the tribes located there.

In April last the Secretary of the Central Board visited this station and reported as follows :—

I went to Coranderrk on Saturday, the 23rd instant, and returned on Monday, the 25th instant. The weather was bad, rain fell almost uninterruptedly during my stay, and I saw the station under unfavorable circumstances.

I found the huts occupied by the blacks both clean and orderly. The adults were well clad, the children were as neat and as clean as Aboriginal children in a partially civilised state can be expected to be, and the infants seem to be well cared for.

I was informed that all the blacks were healthy; and there has been little or no sickness on the station.

The children and adults brought from Franklinford have settled down comfortably; they looked very well indeed; and Mr. Green informed me that they were on friendly terms with all the other Aborigines. There were fifty-nine blacks present when I was there: some were absent.

The way in which the Aborigines conducted themselves at prayers, and on the Sunday during Divine service, was remarkable. I was particularly impressed with the orderly, quiet, almost solemn manner, in which they entered and left the school-house. They have evidently been carefully taught; and if they but faintly understand the object and purpose of the service which they attend every morning and evening, the effect on their minds cannot be small.

The short time at my disposal prevented me from examining into the mode of tuition adopted, or from ascertaining by examination how much the Aborigines have profited from the teaching of Mr. and Mrs. Green.

The soil seems to be good, and there is plenty of good water. The situation is beautiful, and Mr. Green informs me that there is plenty of fish and game.

I inspected the stores, and they appeared to be carefully arranged: the stock I saw was in good condition.

Mr. Green states that the young men, the young women, and the children are very regular in attending the school, and that their progress is satisfactory. The education of the adults is attended to by the teacher, and many of them have shown an aptitude for learning which was hardly to be expected in men whose lives have been spent in the forest, and whose time has been given up to hunting and wandering. By the study of their nature and aptitudes, the teacher will, day by day, become better fitted for the task

he has to accomplish ; and when he shall have gained their confidence, and brought them under proper control, he may fairly look for success.

Wonga and Barak, who have made homes for themselves at Coranderrk, and who are now receiving instruction, are very intelligent men, and in their behavior would compare favorably with the better class of other races.

The Central Board have employed a good carpenter to instruct the blacks in the use of tools, and it is hoped that in a short time they will be skilful enough to erect such additional buildings as may be required for the young men and young women who shall settle at Coranderrk.

Instructions have been given to Mr. Green as to the manner in which he shall conduct the station, and as to the reports and returns which he shall furnish every month ; and the following general rules have been printed and placed in the school-room :—

1. The hours of attendance at school shall be, for children of both sexes and for women, from ten o'clock a.m. until half-past eleven a.m., and from half-past one o'clock p.m. until three o'clock p.m. ; and for men, from six o'clock p.m. until eight o'clock p.m. throughout the year.
2. All the Aborigines shall be mustered at eight o'clock every morning, and they shall be inspected by the Master and Matron, whose duty it will be to see that their persons are clean and their dresses clean and orderly.
3. The men and boys who are not attending school during the day shall devote at least four days in every week to some kind of useful handicraft labor, either on the farm, in the garden, or in building houses or huts, or in obtaining materials for building.
4. The Teachers are required to encourage the Aborigines to hunt the native animals when they require food or when they need skins for any useful purpose, but they are to be prevented from destroying them wantonly. One day in the week should be devoted to hunting or fishing, or some other harmless amusement.
5. The Master shall, every day, inspect the huts used by the men ; and it shall be his duty to see that they are kept clean and in good repair, and that the implements and utensils are arranged in an orderly manner.
6. The Matron shall, every day, inspect the rooms and huts used by the unmarried women and girls. The rooms should be kept clean, and the clothes used by the females should be kept clean and in good repair, and when not worn they should be put away in an orderly manner.
7. While it shall be the especial duty of the Master and Matron to inculcate habits of order and cleanliness, as likely to lead to good conduct and morality, it shall devolve on them also to encourage all pursuits which are likely to preserve health, engender good feeling, and promote mirth and happiness amongst the Aborigines.

There has been only one case of drunkenness on this station during the past twelve months, but that case brought to light some facts which induced Mr. Green to report the matter to the Central Board. They communicated with the Chief Commissioner of Police, and, with the assistance of his officers, were successful in bringing to punishment four persons who had been in the habit of selling intoxicating liquors to the blacks.

There are at present sixty-seven Aborigines at Coranderrk, and the average attendance is fifty-three. There are some very old men on this station, and one, yet active and strong, and a keen sportsman, is surrounded by his children and grandchildren.

The average number of Aborigines who attended this station during the past year was thirty-two, but as many as ninety-six sometimes remained at the station for several days in succession. Mr. Speiseke has not been able to induce the Aborigines to cultivate the ground. The most of the land is unfit for cultivation, and it is only with great difficulty that he can raise a few vegetables in his garden. This unfavorable result is due partly to the climate (which is very dry) and partly to the soil (which is poor). A neighbor, Mr. Wilson, was good enough to give several sheep to the blacks, and the flock is increasing rapidly ; already they can kill one sheep a week. There are four substantial log huts on the station, containing five rooms, which are used by the blacks ; and there is a large house for the boys and young men, and a little room, attached to Mr. Speiseke's residence, for the girls.

The average number attending the school is fourteen. A few read pretty well and write fairly, and all of them are able to read and write a little. Some are taught singing, and some arithmetic. Mr. Speiseke has sent a specimen of the writing of Bab-ab, a little fellow only eight years old, which is very good indeed.

Mr. Speiseke has great difficulties to contend with at Lake Hindmarsh. The old men wander about continually, and their example is followed by the young, who but for them would remain constantly at the station.

During the shearing season the blacks easily find employment, and they work hard, but only for the sake of saving a few shillings, which they expend in the purchase of intoxicating liquors.

Though Mr. Speiseke is not very sanguine of achieving great success, it appears from his own reports that many of the blacks have relinquished their old habits, and now live quietly in good clean houses of their own construction.

The average number of Aborigines who attended the Yelta station Yelta during the year was sixteen.

It appears that there are only two children in the school.

There is one hut on the station for the boys, and five huts which have been partly erected by the Aborigines themselves, in which they occasionally reside. In warm weather they prefer to camp out. One man has enclosed and partly cultivated a patch of ground, but without irrigation little can be done in the way of cultivation, and, moreover, the aphid is very destructive, so that there is little encouragement to pursue this industry.

Mr. Goodwin's last report is not very cheering; and looking at the results, it is apparent that the site of this station is not the best that could be chosen for the Aborigines of the Lower Murray.

Mr. Goodwin has furnished a report and a return every month, showing the number of Aborigines attending the station, the quantities of food and clothing distributed, and the stores on hand.

Mr. Bulmer continues to labor with unabated zeal at Lake Tyers. Lake Tyers, The average number of Aborigines attending the station exceeds fifty, and many of them have shown a desire to receive instruction, and some have willingly given their time and labor to improve the reserve. On the 22nd August, 1863, Mr. Bulmer reported that there were seventy-five Aborigines on the station. During one week the men had cut three hundred sheets of bark for the proposed school-house and sleeping apartments; at that time they were, with two exceptions, healthy. Kar-ran, a young man, had made some progress in reading and writing, and Mr. Bulmer forwarded with his report a specimen of Kar-ran's handwriting, which, in regard to distinctness, might be imitated, with advantage to the public, by those amongst the Europeans whose business it is to write.

On the 22nd September, 1863, there were eighty-seven blacks on the station, belonging to the Swan Reach tribe, the Snowy River, and Sale. As soon as they met they proceeded to settle many complicated matrimonial quarrels, and Mr. Bulmer's exertions failed to prevent frequent fights. Some of them who were prevailed upon to inhabit the huts soon showed that they were but half reclaimed, and that their habits rendered a life in confinement unpleasant to themselves and to their guardian.

In October, 1863, Mr. Bulmer employed some of them in planting potatoes, but they were indolent and careless.

On the 23rd February, 1864, there were twenty-six Aborigines on the station, many of whom were employed in fencing land for cultivation; they worked cheerfully.

On the 22nd March, 1864, Mr. Bulmer began to make arrangements for putting in a crop of tobacco. This proposal was very pleasing to the Aborigines, and they promised to afford assistance.

On the 24th June there were sixty-eight blacks on the station. Mr. Bulmer distributed clothing to a large number, and Mrs. Bulmer made twenty-one dresses for the women.

On the 22nd July seventy Aborigines were in attendance, and six young men evinced a strong desire to receive instruction, and they attended to their lessons with regularity.

It would appear from Mr. Bulmer's report, that the Aborigines of Gipps Land have not yet lost the habits, manners, and feelings which belong to the Australian in the unreclaimed state. The members of different tribes sometimes quarrel when they meet, and severe wounds are not infrequently inflicted, though wars between tribes, formerly so common, are now rarely heard of.

One young man belonging to the tribe more immediately under Mr. Bulmer's care has lately married a half-caste girl. He is industrious and intelligent, and a short time ago made application for a piece of land, where he proposes to make a home. He is disinclined to mingle with other Aborigines, and has evidently advanced so far as to be able to appreciate some of the advantages of civilization.

As to the general condition of the Aborigines, and the results of his labors, Mr. Bulmer says:—

I must say, I cannot see any marked improvement. They are certainly comfortable, so far as clothing and food go, yet still as a people they are as low as they possibly can be. Of course there are a great many exceptions, especially amongst the young men, who give evidence of improvement. Many of them have been living with or near white people, and in many particulars they follow the customs of civilized life; but the tribes generally, manifest the same restless spirit which invariably characterises savage nations. With regard to their physical condition, I may say that, on the whole, they are healthy. When I had the whole of the tribe here, during the months of June and July, there was only one case of serious illness, though a great many were complaining, but more from a fear of being requested to work than from real disease. Their moral condition, I must say, is very bad. It is rather astonishing to see even some of the young men, who ought to know better, follow the gross immoralities of the unreclaimed savage. A case occurred a short time ago, which shows that some of them do not possess manly feelings. A black, having one wife, got possession, by some regulation amongst themselves, of a second. The young men determined to take her from him; and of course a fight took place, in which the poor girl, in being pulled from one to the other, got her arms severely injured. The young men seemed to have no idea that they had done the poor woman wrong, neither would they allow her to go to a doctor, though the affair occurred within a mile of the residence of a surgeon, living at the Mitchell township. They were afraid, no doubt, that the affair would be looked into. As it did not come under my own notice, I did not interfere, and besides, there was some dispute as to who did the injury. I am happy to say that many of the young men were ashamed of it, and took care to clear themselves. * * *

The young man named Kar-ran, who has been with me two years, still shows the same love for the place which he had when he first determined to settle. He does not possess so much intelligence as many others of the tribe, yet I have no doubt he will, with steady application, beat others who are quicker at learning.

The other young man has not been here long. He came in February, and has kept to his lessons ever since. He is an intelligent black, and speaks good English, and I have no doubt, if he remains, he will make progress in learning. Nearly all the young men know their letters, but they do not remain long enough to make much progress. They visit me occasionally, but do not settle, consequently they get no further than the first lessons in reading. The same remark will apply also to the children. They generally go away with their parents, so that Mrs. Bulmer, who teaches them, cannot do much for them; but I am happy to say that when the tribe went away the last time many of the parents left the children under my care. I have no doubt as the blacks get to know us they will have more confidence in leaving their children. Mrs. Bulmer is giving the girls lessons in reading, writing, and sewing. They are not far (if at all) behind white children in intellect. I have had experience in teaching white children and black, and I must say I prefer teaching the latter. They are so much more attentive to things said to them. * * *

As to fencing, I got the blacks to assist me to put up a kind of *dog-leg* fence. I suppose the piece of ground fenced in is about five acres. I also got them to cut down and grub some of the trees, but I was not so successful in getting them to dig the ground. They

dug about a quarter of an acre, and went away, though they had promised me they would dig a large patch. My old friend Kar-ran has got a piece of ground under crop. A neighbor presented a few fruit trees which I planted for him, and he then dug a large piece for potatoes, and he is now preparing more ground for other vegetables. When he sees a good crop turn out, I have no doubt it will stimulate him to further exertions, and perhaps others may follow his example.

The reports from Lake Wellington are very encouraging. Though Lake Wellington. the station has been established little more than a year, much useful work has been done ; aided by the blacks, Mr. Hagenauer has built a good store-room and a mission-house. Some of the young men have built a good bark hut, twenty-five feet by twelve feet, consisting of two rooms, with a verandah ; they have also laid out a garden, and planted fruit trees, and prepared the ground for potatoes, onions, melons, &c. ; they have also assisted in fencing several small paddocks, and labored cheerfully in clearing the land, which is everywhere covered with heavy timber. Other young men living on the station have expressed an intention to follow this good example.

Many of the Gipps Land blacks are yet unacquainted with the English language, and therefore Mr. Hagenauer has had the greater labor in imparting instruction. The want of a school-room is also a drawback. There are eighteen scholars now receiving instruction, of whom two are able to read an easy book ; and some of the others make good progress in their lessons : some, it is feared, will never improve. It is Mr. Hagenauer's intention, by and by, to employ one of the more advanced pupils as a teacher, which will have a marked effect on the Aborigines in this part of the colony, and lessen the difficulties the Protector has to contend with.

Mr. Hagenauer very wisely encourages every kind of health-giving amusement, and it is pleasing to know that the natives at Lake Wellington not infrequently spend their hours of recreation in playing cricket, and other games ; and that, in their camps at evening, they sing good old English songs.

It appears that the vice of gambling is not uncommon among the Aborigines ; they use cards almost as skilfully as Europeans, and their little properties are lost and won with the same rapidity and ease as amongst the whites. Mr. Hagenauer has had some trouble in putting a stop to this amusement, but he has not been unsuccessful.

The average daily attendance at this station is thirty-two, and sometimes one hundred and thirty are present at one time.

It appears that the blacks are well satisfied with the site chosen by their Protector ; and they expressed their joy, when it was known it had been secured for their use, by giving three hearty cheers for the Queen.

The health of the blacks, at present, is generally good ; but some serious cases of illness and some deaths are recorded as having occurred during the past year.

In one case evidences of insanity were apparent, a thing rarely heard of amongst savage tribes.

The Aborigines of the Lower Murray are under the care of Mr. Tyttyndyer,
Lower Murray. Peter Beveridge, who forwards to the Central Board, from time to time, very interesting reports. He is unremitting in his labors, and appears to be thoroughly acquainted with the habits and customs of the blacks.

In a report dated the 27th July, 1864, he writes :—

There is very little improvement perceptible in the moral condition of the Aborigines during the past year. Their sanitary condition, I am happy to say, is much better than it has been in past years. This I attribute, mainly, to the warm clothing supplied to them by the Central Board, as also to the food received from the same source ; without these the old and frail blacks in the vicinity of the township would with difficulty get through the winter months. In fact, many of them would perish if this aid were withdrawn. The medical attendance they have received this last year has also been a great boon. Many of them have to thank the doctor for being in life at the present time.

A good store-house has been built at this station, in which the clothing and food provided for the Aborigines are kept.

Neglected Children.

As soon as the buildings at Coranderrk were finished, and the establishment was in such a state as to permit of suitable arrangements being made for receiving children, the Central Board caused a circular letter to be sent to the several Honorary Correspondents throughout the colony, asking them whether there were any neglected Aboriginal children amongst the blacks under their care who should be maintained and educated by the Board. The letter had reference only to orphans and children who had been abandoned ; but it was made known at the same time that the Central Board would be willing to take charge of any children surrendered to them by the Aborigines themselves.

On enquiry it was found that the blacks are reluctant to give up their children. They are, usually, very kind to their offspring, and they are jealous of any interference with them by the whites ; so that, up to the present time, the Board have not removed any of the younger members ; but Mr. Porteous, of Carngham, is in communication with Mr. Green respecting some of the children in his district, who can be taken away without offence to the tribe to which they belong.

Until an Act be passed by the Parliament authorising the removal of half-caste girls and orphans against the wishes of those persons who may have assumed charge of them, the Central Board will not be able to use the means at their disposal for their education, nor to protect them from the perils which now surround them.

Already there are a great many children at Coranderrk receiving instruction, but arrangements could easily be made to provide for the education of a larger number if the Board had authority to take them away from the tribes with which they are living.

Sale of Intoxicating Liquors.

The sale of intoxicating liquors to the blacks has been checked : the business is not so profitable as it used to be. The publican cannot receive the clothing of the Aborigines without risk of detection ; and when the blacks pay money for intoxicating liquors, it is in most cases easy to obtain a conviction.

The Honorary Correspondents, aided by the police, have succeeded in bringing to punishment a great many publicans during the past year ; and praise is due to Mr. John Green, the Inspector of Stations, for his skill and perseverance in dealing with offenders of this class.

The Chief Commissioner of Police continues to give energetic aid ; and there is reason to believe that the active zeal of his officers will, in time, put an end to the sale of spirituous liquors to the blacks in the towns and on the gold-fields. In localities remote from police stations, the trade will still be carried on.

The Honorary Correspondents have been requested to prevent the blacks from visiting towns and gold-fields ; but all their exertions are insufficient to prevent their wandering occasionally to the centres of population. On the gold-fields they readily obtain money by exhibiting their skill in throwing the boomerang and spear, and the results in every such case are drunkenness and quarrels.

Applications for Land.

During the past year several applications have been made to the Central Board for allotments of land for Aborigines. Many of those who have expressed a wish to obtain land are quiet industrious persons, who have for some time past maintained themselves by their own labor. In every such in which it was proper to do so, the Board supported the application ; and though some experiments of the like kind have failed, it is right that an opportunity should be afforded to every industrious Aboriginal to reclaim and cultivate the land.

The Central Board would be compelled, even had they means at their disposal, to refuse applications for stock, implements, &c. In the existing state of the law, it is impossible to protect such property when it is placed at the disposal of the Aborigines, or to prevent clandestine sales.

An application has been made to the Trustees of the Melbourne Cemetery for a piece of ground to be set apart for the interment of Aborigines. In the old Cemetery the blacks had a corner allotted to them ; but now, in the new ground, the bodies are buried in the space set apart for the Chinese, and the practice of heathen rites by this people lately led to some disagreeable results.

Place of Interment for Aborigines.

It is hoped that the Trustees will make such arrangements as will prevent the desecration of the graves of the Aborigines.

In the month of August, 1863, the attention of the Central Board was directed to the injury done to the Aborigines by the wholesale destruction of eels by netting at Lake Boloke and Mordialloc. The Chief Commissioner of Police was at once written to in reference to the matter, but at that time his officers were unable to protect the interests of the blacks, as the law relating to fisheries did not apply to the waters of Lake Boloke, or to the streams at Mordialloc. Application was, therefore, made to Lieutenant-Colonel Ross, for advice, and he readily and cheerfully gave assistance. Acting on his suggestions, the matter was submitted for the consideration of the Honorable J. G. Francis, the Commissioner of Trade and Customs, with the proposal that the 11th Clause of the *Fisheries Act* should be extended to Lake Boloke and the creeks running thereinto and therefrom, and to the Mordialloc Creek and its embouchure. Mr. Francis promptly complied with the wish of the Board, and a proclamation was duly made in the *Government Gazette*.

Protection of Fisheries.

Since then an application has been made for some relaxation of the order so far as it applies to the Mordialloc Creek ; and to this the Board have not offered any objection.

The necessity for an Act of Parliament to provide for the management of the Aborigines is frequently apparent. The Central Board have had some difficulty in dealing with cases where settlers have taken Aborigines into their employment. The responsibility resting on the settler and his duties towards his servant are, in some instances, unrecognised or misunderstood. For instance, a boy in the employment of some settlers in Gipps Land received severe injuries whilst engaged in his master's service ; medical attendance was provided, and the account was forthwith sent to the Central Board for payment. It is scarcely necessary to say that it was not paid by the Board.

Aboriginal Servants.

Subsequently an Aboriginal engaged in cattle driving (and, it is believed, in regular employment) came to Melbourne with his master. He was sick, and, on the application of the settler, Mr. Thomas, the guardian, caused the Black to be placed in the Melbourne Hospital. On his recovery it became necessary to remove him, and the Central Board were obliged to procure clothes for him and send him to his employer, who, up to the present time, has not reimbursed the Board the expenses incurred, nor has he answered the Board's letter on the subject.

Another case. A settler engaged several blacks to work on his station, and when they clamored for payment for their services he wrote a letter to the Board, stating that the Aborigines on his station were in a sadly neglected condition and in urgent want of stores.

Instead of sending stores, the Board directed the Inspector to proceed to the spot and examine into their condition ; and his report was such as to induce the Board to take steps to remove the blacks from the neighborhood.

While it is proper to draw attention to such cases as the above, it is also right to state that, but for the unselfish kindness of the settlers generally throughout the country, the blacks would suffer many hardships, and frequently perish for want of food and attendance.

The cases cited are not of common occurrence, but they show that some legal provision should be made for compelling masters to deal fairly with their Aboriginal servants.

Statistics.

On the 4th December, 1863, the Central Board had under their consideration a Despatch from His Grace the Duke of Newcastle, and your Excellency's minute thereon, in reference to the labors of Miss Florence Nightingale on behalf of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Her Majesty's colonies, and suggesting that careful statistics should be compiled and furnished to Miss Nightingale, in the form given in a printed pamphlet accompanying the Despatch.

The Central Board regret that they were unable to supply the information asked for. The form suggested for the returns is probably applicable to Her Majesty's colonies generally, but is unsuitable for this. The Aborigines of this colony are not collected in masses, they are seldom sent to hospitals when they are sick; and the labors of the teacher have not generally gone so far, nor have they been conducted under such circumstances, as to permit of any approximate statement being made as to the results of the attempts to impart instruction.

The Board could give a statistical statement, but it would probably mislead. As the Honorary Correspondents in most cases have enough to do in relieving the physical wants of the blacks, it would be impracticable to obtain accurate returns as to the diseases, sanitary condition, or the progress of education; and it is not proposed, therefore, to call upon them to furnish returns in the form suggested by Miss Nightingale.

Habits and Customs of the Aborigines.

Much valuable information has been collected respecting the manners, customs, and traditions of the Aborigines.

Lieutenant Pasco, R.N., Mr. Peter Beveridge, Mr. John Green, and Mr. Bulmer, have furnished many interesting facts, and the several Honorary Correspondents have sent weapons, implements, nets, canoes, &c.

Presents to the Queen.

The presents forwarded to the Queen and to the Prince and Princess of Wales were graciously received by Her Majesty and their Royal Highnesses; and when, in obedience to your Excellency's commands, the gracious sentiments of Her Majesty were made known to the blacks, they appeared to be sensible of the kindness and favor shown to them.

Those who take an interest in the welfare of the Aborigines will read the despatches appended to this Report, from His Grace the Duke of Newcastle, with pleasure and satisfaction.

Thomas Bungele.

Thomas Bungele is now under the care of the Secretary of the Central Board, and he is usefully employed in the office. He writes very well; he is generally attentive to the instructions given to him, and is making fair progress in learning. He has some knowledge of arithmetic, and he is gradually gaining a knowledge of the use of mathematical instruments: already he can plot from a simple field book, and can draw plans tolerably well. He appears to like the work he has to do.

Credit is due to Captain Norman, of the C.S.S. *Victoria*, for much of this. On board the *Victoria* he was very troublesome; but the discipline of the ship has certainly been beneficial to him. His temper is still peculiar, but less violent than it was when he was younger; and some hope is now entertained that he will lead a steady, reputable life.

Every care will be taken to teach him useful knowledge, and to qualify him for a higher position than has yet been attained by any native of Australia.

A comparison of the Tables of population appended to the previous Reports of the Central Board would lead to the conclusion that the Aborigines are very rapidly decreasing. In the first Report the rough estimate of the population was 2,341 ; in the second, 2,165 ; and in the third, 1,908. A careful perusal of the remarks appended to the tables, however, will show that the decrease is not very rapid, considering the position which the Aborigines occupy in the colony.

The first estimate was a very rough one, and several tribes were included in it which ought to have been omitted. The second was, also, but a rude approximation, though more accurate than the former, and when it was made the Board were in possession of the names of 1,140 blacks. The third estimate was a very accurate one, for which the total number set down was 1,908 ; the Board were in possession of the names of 1,788.

Last year it was stated that, after making allowance for errors, which in compiling a return of this kind could scarcely be avoided unless the Board incurred an expense altogether out of proportion to the value of the result, the decrease was thirty-three only. It was stated, also, in the same Report, that instead of looking at the totals, which are liable to error, we should compare the returns made by Honorary Correspondents, who have a complete knowledge of the blacks under their charge, and who keep accurate accounts of the births and deaths. This method will show that, having regard to the past circumstances of the blacks, the decrease is not startling.

No attempt has been made to compile a Table this year ; as it is considered unreasonable to require the Honorary Correspondents to furnish such returns very often ; but those who have large numbers of blacks under their control have given some interesting information.

The Reverend Mr. Speiseke reports, that amongst 195 blacks in the Lake Hindmarsh District, there have been, during the past year, sixteen deaths and one birth. The Reverend Mr. Hagenauer states that, amongst 210 in Gipps Land, there have been nine deaths and six births. Mr. Beveridge informs the Board that, amongst 170 Aborigines in the tract of country lying between the junction of the River Loddon with the Murray and Euston, there have been eleven deaths and one birth. And at Coranderk, the new station on the Upper Yarra, where the blacks are kept together, there have been, amongst sixty-seven, three deaths and five births.

The total results are as follows :—Amongst 642 Aborigines there have been thirty-nine deaths and thirteen births. This decrease is alarming, and very painful to contemplate, but there is reason to believe it has received a check. Mr. Green, the Inspector, states, in a report dated 23rd July, 1864, that, during the first year the Central Board had charge of the Aborigines, there was a decrease of nineteen in the number of the Goulburn and Yarra blacks ; in the second year there was a decrease of nine ; in the third year the number of births and deaths was equal ; and during the past year there was an increase of two.

Before the Central Board commenced their labors, and previous to the appointment of the fifty-two Honorary Correspondents, who are constantly watching over the Aborigines throughout the colony, it is well known that the blacks were in the habit of visiting the towns and gold-fields very frequently, where they readily procured intoxicating liquors. They were ill clad and ill fed ; their children were uncared for, and the old, the sick, and the infirm perished for want of food, for want of medical attendance, or for want of shelter. There were tribal wars ; and murders, the result of quarrels between individuals, were frequently committed. In a great measure these causes of death and disease have been removed ; wars between tribes are now unheard of, and quarrels between individuals seldom occur. The Aborigines have now good clothing supplied to them, and, when necessary, they receive sufficient food ; the sick are ministered to and their ailments relieved, and the infirm can always find shelter and attendance.

A great many huts and houses have been erected ; and some blacks, who formerly were indolent, careless, and drunken, are now engaged in cultivating the ground, and forming for themselves and their families comfortable homes.

It must not be forgotten, however, that the Central Board are dealing with a people enervated by sickness, and weakened by indulgence in the vices of the whites. The worst diseases have spread amongst them ; and the older men and women are dying, not from present neglect, but in consequence of past indiscretions ; and there is abundant evidence to show that the lowest point has been reached, and has been passed.

The Rev. Mr. Goodwin, of Yelta, says, " There is a great gap between the ages of children in the district. With one or two exceptions, there is no child between the age of six and fourteen years, but there are several below the age of six." This fact, considered in connection with the report of Mr. Green, would seem to show that the care bestowed on this people by the Honorary Correspondents is likely in time to counterbalance, to some extent, if it cannot obliterate the remembrance of, the neglect and cruelties which, in past years, have reduced the numbers of the Aborigines, and brought the remnants of numerous tribes to their present sad condition.

General condition
of the Aborigines.

The Central Board adhere to the opinions expressed in the first Report, both with regard to the system of managing the blacks, and also as to the duties and responsibilities of the colonists.

The Board regret that their urgent solicitations for some amendment of the laws affecting the blacks have not yet received attention. They work under many disadvantages at present ; many of their schemes are thwarted, and some have been abandoned solely for the want of power to give effect to them ; and they would wish again to invite the attention of the Government to this matter. A very short Bill would contain all that is necessary to enable them to extend their labors ; and it is but reasonable to suppose that a measure of this kind would be favorably considered by both branches of the Legislature.

The general condition of the blacks, though far from satisfactory, is better than it was. In some districts, where it is impossible to obtain the services of gentlemen competent to act as Honorary Correspondents, their state is bad ; but the number thus unprotected is very small.

It is as difficult now, as formerly, to keep the blacks from rambling about the country. The Central Board cannot control their movements ; and it is only by the exercise of the personal influence of the Honorary Correspondents that they are prevented from visiting the towns, which they would do very frequently if they were left to follow their inclinations.

The Board, in bringing to a close this their Fourth Annual Report, feel that it would be an act of injustice to their Honorary Secretary, did they not refer to the disinterested zeal, intelligence, and persevering industry, with which, from the commencement of their proceedings, he has continuously and courteously applied himself to his very onerous and sometimes difficult duties.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your Excellency's most obedient Servant,

THEO. J. SUMNER,
Vice-President.

To His Excellency Sir Charles Darling, K.C.B.,
Governor-in-Chief of the Colony of Victoria,
&c., &c., &c.