

ON the 29th July 1853 His Excellency Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe addressed a circular letter to a number of the remaining early settlers (noting that many had already passed away by this time), requesting information as to the time and circumstances of the first occupation of various parts of the colony of Victoria, Australia.

Letter from William Thomas – Assistant Protector

TO HIS EXCELLENCY CHARLES JOSEPH LA TROBE, ESQ.,
LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR OF THE COLONY OF VICTORIA.

BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE ABORIGINES OF AUSTRALIA FELIX.

Their government is patriarchal, the head of each family having control over his household; nor is he accountable to the community for his conduct touching them, even after his children come to years of discretion, if they be unmarried. They, however, are by no means arbitrary, nor cruel; and with the children are foolishly indulgent. It is only in passion that their conduct is revolting, and then they are generally checked by one or more powerful friends arresting the angered, while others try to appease him by reason. Although the head of the family is not accountable to the community, a mother will not tamely see her child ill-used, and when a son is grown up, if his mother is ill-treated he will show fight. I have witnessed some dreadful frays between father and son on the mother's account. Should one kill his wife, the friends or relatives of the woman will have satisfaction; when the tribes meet, the slayer must show himself naked among them, and unflinchingly await their anger.

Each tribe has a chief, who directs all its movements, and who, wherever he may be, knows well where all the members of the community are. About once in three months the whole tribe unite, generally at new or full moon, when they have a few dances, and again separate into three or more bodies, as they cannot get food if they move en masse; the chief, with the aged, makes arrangements for the route each party is to take. In their movements they seldom encamp more than three nights in one place, and oftener but one. Thus they move from one place to another, regardless of sickness, deaths, births, &c. They will not wait for anything when they have an object in view. I have known instances of females having an infant at night, and compelled to tramp in the morning, and the men to carry their sick from one encampment to another. A fine noble chief is opposed by his son, a fine youth about eighteen years of age. I have many curious anecdotes of their determination to rove when any particular subject is on the carpet. Not long since, in order to be present at the punishment of two aborigines for murder, two blacks came one man, who take charge of the small community, and give instructions in the morning where they will encamp at night. They seldom travel more than six miles a day. In their migratory moves all are employed; children in getting gum, knocking down birds, &c.; women in digging up roots, killing bandicoots, getting grubs, &c. ; the men in hunting kangaroos, &c., scaling trees for opossums, &c., &c. They mostly are at the encampment about an hour before sundown the women first, who get fire and water, &c., by the time their spouses arrive.

They hold that the bush and all it contains are man's general property; that private property is only what utensils are carried in the bag; and this general claim to nature's bounty extends even to the success of the day; hence at the close, those who have been successful divide with those who have not been so. There is "no complaining in the streets" of a native encampment; none lacketh while others have it; nor is the gift considered as a favour, but a right brought to the needy, and thrown down at his feet. In warm weather, while on the tramp, they seldom make a miam they use merely a few boughs to keep off the wind; in wet weather a few sheets of bark make a comfortable house. In one half-hour I have seen a neat village begun

and finished. The harmony that exists among them when none of another tribe is in the party is surprising. I have been out with them for months without a single altercation. Wherever one is born, that is considered his or her country. They have no regular burial places; their bones lie scattered through the bush. Over the men, according to their importance, an oration is delivered, the purport of which is that they, his survivors, will avenge his death, and begging the defunct to lie still till they do so. Over the women and children no ceremony is performed. After the body is interred, the encampment breaks up, leaving a fire at the east of the grave. Orphans are taken great care of. It is considered a great honour to have an orphan added to the family.

They have many ceremonies on particular occasions, such as when a youth or maiden comes of age, instalment of the bush, marriage ceremony, &c., &c. To give them in this brief account is impossible; one must suffice.

Marriage. The men engross the right of giving the women; the women have neither choice nor will in the matter; they are the property of the father; if he is dead, of the brother; if there is no brother, of the uncle. There is seldom a marriage without much fighting, as there is a great preponderance of males over females, and the old chiefs' not being satisfied with less than two and sometimes four, increases the value of the women. Most females are purchased. The general price is two large koogrs (or opossum rugs), two or three dozen opossums, and other trifles. The woman is handed over to her spouse, who has scarce got her when some others those who were desirous to obtain her may be seen naked, discharging wonguims, &c., at the bridegroom. A general family fight takes place, and the bridegroom seldom gets off without a broken head. At night the dame is sulky, and when her spouse is asleep generally creeps to her mother; and when he awakes and finds her gone, he claims her; her father in a rage knocks the poor girl about Avith his bludgeon or tomahawk, drags her by the hair of her head 1 to her koolin, where she gets another drubbing. This is often continued for two or more days, till the poor creature is regularly broken down. She resigns to her fate, and generally proves a constant and affectionate wife.

Laws. Of laws 2 they have three principal, viz., to punish murder, theft, and adultery. Murder is punished by the whole of the tribe throwing a spear and a wonguim at the murderer; if he escapes without any material injury, the male who is the nearest of kin to the murdered may with his bludgeon or leonile strike at the murderer's head (no other part) till he is tired. During the punishment the murderer is not allowed to throw a single weapon, but may ward off the spears, &c., with his shield. I knew an instance of a man having 100 spears thrown at him, who warded them every one off.

Theft is of rare occurrence, and is punished by blows on the head of the thief by the party wronged. I never knew but one case of this kind.

1. Of course these scenes are not practised now in any encampment. I merely state their customs as I found them.
2. These are among their own community.

Adultery is a crime that keeps the encampment (when two or more tribes are present) in continued broils; the adulterer and adulteress are both punished the latter awfully severe; but the former having (what the poor females have not) a way of warding off the weapons, comes better off.

There is one particularly amiable trait in the aboriginal character, which is, that no animosity remains in their breasts, nor does any shrink from punishment. At the close of a fight or punishment, those who have inflicted the wounds may be seen sucking them and doing any other kind office required.

Most tribes have intercourse or hold a kind of alliance with three or four neighbouring ones, with whom they barter for lubras, &c. They generally once a year at least unitedly assemble. There are many disputes, imaginary or real, to settle which cannot be done without some fighting. When all is settled they will

corrobboree night after night till they separate. All the tribes beyond the district of their friends are termed wild blackfellows, and when found within the district are immediately killed.

The blacks were formerly very superstitious. The most awful superstition is that they believe that man would never die unless he were killed; that the sick man has been opened, and that his kidneys and fat have been taken out, which has caused death; and that nothing short of the kidneys and fat of another will appease the dead. They also believe that, as the kidneys and fat are the life of man, the eating of the same gives double strength and vigour to those who partake of them; hence they never kill a "wild black," as they term him, but they rob the body of that part. They also have another cruel custom of sacrificing the fruit of the womb till a male is born; so that, should a female have three or four girls, all are killed until a male is born. The poor innocents are put out of the way by strangling or smothering, and generally on the ninth or twenty-first day.

To go into the various traditions they have of the creation of the world, man, woman, and animals, stars, &c., is impossible here. Suffice it to state that they are a people that have names for particular stars, as the Southern Cross, Magellanic clouds, &c.; and their traditions are not more ridiculous than those of other savage nations. They have also an idea of several imaginary beings, almost all of the dreaded class; also superstitious notions of certain birds, native bears, and extraordinary appearances in the heavens.

Dances.

They have various kinds, day and night. Although a stranger, after seeing one, may think the whole alike and merely a monotony of sounds and motion, such is not the case; the song and words are to the motion of the body, like our country dances and reels. One ignorant of dancing would look upon the movements as monotonous; there is as much sense in the one as in the other. If the blacks' orchestra is inferior, their time and motion are better.

Games.

They have many, all admirably adapted to strengthen and expand the corporeal powers, as running, jumping, throwing, &c.; but the most manual is wrestling; and certainly everyone who has ever seen them at this exercise has acknowledged that it is equal to any description given of the ancients, and destitute of the brutality often resorted to by the ancients, to gain the mastery. The aborigines' is sheer, fair wrestling. They challenge each other by throwing dust in the air towards those they desire to strive with, which is answered by a return; they run towards each other; on approaching, each puts his hands on his antagonist's shoulder, and it is not till both are nearly exhausted that one is down.

I should have stated that besides chiefs they have other eminent men, as warriors, counsellors, doctors; dreamers, who are also interpreters; charmers, who are supposed to be able to bring and drive rain away; also to bring or send plagues among other nations, and to drive away the same, as occasion requires. Although they have chiefs, doctors, counsellors, warriors, dreamers, &c., who form a kind of aristocracy, yet these are in no way a burthen to the community. The chiefs govern, doctors cure, counsellors advise, and warriors fight, without pay. All alike seek their food, and He who is mindful of the ravens is not unmindful of these sable sons of Australia.

Their war implements are:

1. The **Wouguim**, thrown in battle and useful in the bush to knock down birds.
2. **Kurruk** or throwing-stick, with which a reed spear is hurled out with great force.
3. **WorraWorra**, a common club used in single combat.
4. **Leonile**, the most dreadful hand weapon, used in single combat only.
5. **Kudgerin**, a thick club very weighty at the end, used in close combat only.
6. **Mulga**, a shield used in single combat only, to defend the head from the hand-clubs 3, 4, and 5.
7. **Geam**, a large shield used to ward off long spears.
8. **Tirrer**, a reed spear used for distant objects.
9. **Tare**, a long spear pointed at the end, used for distant combat.

10. **Nandum**, a jagged spear a dreadful weapon.
11. **Mongile**, a double glass-jagged spear, the most fatal of their weapons.
12. **Wa-voit**, mostly used in play; it is thrown by the hand; the knob end bounds on the hard ground a considerable distance as a stone would do when thrown on ice. He whose wa-voit is the greatest distance is considered victor.

MEN COMPOSING THE NATIVE POLICE ON 1ST JANUARY 1843.

Billbolary (Bil-li-bel-la-ry) was chief of the Yarra 7 tribe ; he stands foremost, and justly so, as ever having been the white man's friend generous, frank, and determined as he was. Having received intimation that Government was desirous of forming a native police, I consulted this chief who had often protected my life. I remember well the day I and Captain Dana, on a huge gum log, on the 17th February 1842 made known to Billibellary the Government's intention, and to further it stated that his influence was applied to first. He begged seven days to think. Night after night did this faithful chief address the encampment. True to the day, on the 24th he had the company together, leading the train. After stating the duties, he signed his name first, not, however, before saying, "I am king; I no ride on horseback; I no go out of my country; young men go as you say, not me." Through his influence the native police was first formed. This good man used often, after the first fortnight, to appeal to me, on being ordered to march up and down for two hours; nothing like command would do for him length brought Captain Dana to consent that he be permitted to 'be on duty when he pleased; regimentals, gun, &c., were at his disposal. Generally an hour before sundown the chief would dress himself, and take it into his head to march to and fro from his lubra's miam to my tent which invariably was adjacent.

This good man died on the 10th of August 1846. After preserving the lives of the first settlers checking in the bud any jealousy or revenge in the precincts of Melbourne towards the whites he was engaged with the Mount Macedon tribe in transferring the land to Batman, Simpson, Swanston, and others.

Fostering all missionary and other exertions to better his race, he lamented much the deterioration of his people; he lived to see them become drunkards, and refractory to their own laws; he was the last chief who was recognised as having any power.

On his demise, missions, schools, and police began to totter, and were subsequently kept up, I may say, through pressing from distant tribes.

Buckup (Bug-gup). A fine intelligent young man. After two expeditions he was made a corporal, and received pay; he continued in the police till his death; had been on much arduous duty; from the effect of one very long day's ride, somehow his ankle was hurt by the stirrup-iron, which was not considered of any consequence; however, after some months, it so affected his leg, then his thigh, that to save his life, amputation above the knee was required, which he consented to. He was one of the first in the colony who underwent an operation under the influence of ether, and did well; the operation was performed by Drs. Hobson, Thomas, and Barker; he lived a year after the operation, making himself useful at the police quarters till his death on the 2nd September 1848, after nearly six years' service.

Boro Boro (Bur-bor-rougK). This black remained but a few months in the service; his habits and disposition were too restless for restraint, and too immoral to be kept in subjection; he latterly was a notorious drunkard; and on the last meeting of the tribes was killed (while drunk) on Richmond swamp, and shoved into a rut, 29th May 1852.

Benboo. This harmless man, like Billibellary, was but a short time in the service; in fact, was not by nature or disposition adapted for the police; he, however, to the time of his death was seldom seen out of uniform, which was generally that of a commissariat in full dress, except the cocked hat. Mr. Erskine used invariably to give him his left-off uniform, and Benboo never shrunk when he wanted uniform from asking for it. This good and inoffensive chief died on his way to Moody Yalloak, at Little Brighton, on the 5th July 1852; his few subjects were drunk for three days previous, and neglected their king.

Berring. This young black, who continued in the service for some time, was in two journeys; he subsequently went to the Devil's River, and has not been heard of since.

Cnlpendurra (Kul-pen-dure). This fine young man was son of Billibellary, but widely different in disposition and character. I think he went but two journeys; he was an awfully dissipated character after his father's death, and was eventually killed at the Goulburn in a drunken fray with the Goulburn blacks.

Curra Curra (Kur-rek-Kur-reK). Remained but a few months in the police. Afterwards he was continually going to and fro to Gippsland, where he died some time in 1848.

Coonerdigum. I cannot recollect or find in my papers a name in the least like this; those enrolled on 24th of February 1842, were all correct. I wrote their names down.

Gellibrand. Was a faithful black, much respected by the whites, especially the gentry; he took his name from the unfortunate gentleman who was lost with Hesse; his real name was Beruke (a kangaroo-rat). It is said that while he was being brought into the world a kangaroo-rat ran over his mother. The natives invariably consider such occurrences as omens for something, and he was named after the animal. He was one who accompanied the whites in search of Gellibrand. He remained in the police till his death, which was premature. Having come with the Government dray from Narre Warren for the month's provisions, he drank to such excess (as reported to me by the blacks) at the Club-house, that he died on his way back with the dray, and was buried near South Yarra pound. He had been on duty in all parts of the colony, was a corporal, and had received pay for years.

Giberuke. This was a noble-looking black, but sullen, and in no way to be depended upon; he soon left the service, after his first orders to accompany Mr. Commissioner Powlett to Mount Macedon; he went subsequently to the Goulburn, and, for aught I know, is still alive.

Murrumbean (Mur-rum-Mur-mm-beari). A fine powerful black, next to Billibellary of the greatest influence over the Yarra blacks. He, however, soon left the police. As they assured me afterwards, they only joined to set the example; he died on the 16th October 1849. He was never addicted to drink, and endeavoured, with his cousin Billibellary, to stop this growing vice. Many and many times have the young men's heads been split by these two worthy men; that is, those who came in drunk over-night to the encampment; but all to no avail. The vile whites made others drunk daily. Had this man and Billibellary the power such was their determination they would have summarily dealt with the case, and have taken a band with waddy and

spears, and have discharged the contents of every spirit cask in Melbourne, and have felt no repugnance (if opposed) in shedding blood to accomplish their object, for with aborigines murder is no crime when for the public good.

Moonee Moonee. This was a fine young man, who was sent two important journeys, and died in the service while at the Wimmera in August 1845.

Nangolibill (Ning-goolobin), alias John Bull. A fine powerful black; but no sooner were the police ordered upon distant duty than he and several others deserted. He being a man of importance, Captain Dana was awfully prejudiced against him, which prejudice on the Captain's part had nearly been fatal to the life of Ning-goolobin, insomuch that the second in command (for giving evidence which I compelled him to give) of the native police ever afterwards was under the displeasure of his superior. Ning-goolobin was afterwards tried for the murder of Booby, an aboriginal from the present Colonial Secretary's station. I was so convinced of his innocence, having daily intercourse with him at the time, that in spite of official opposition, which was truly unpleasant, I persevered in order to prove such, and at length, after four months, from circumstantial evidence brought forward, the jury (in spite of direct evidence), after a tedious trial, which lasted till eight o'clock at night, acquitted him.

Nunuptune. Remained but a few months in the force. He was a good-tempered fellow, but as restless as a hyena in confinement. He subsequently was (unjustly) accused of taking Mr. Willoby's child at Western Port, which so frightened him, that for years he scarce rambled further than along the coast from Mount Eliza to Point Nepean. He died near Mount Eliza 11th of August 1849.

Nerimbineek (Ner-rim-bin-ufi). Brother to the unfortunate Windberry (shot by Major Lettsom's party); he continued in the force for a considerable time; getting tired of it, he left, and for some years rambled along the Goulburn to the Devil's River and Moogolumbuk tribes. Like his unfortunate brother, by family connexion he seems to pass safely through different remote tribes. He is still alive, and left some months back our encampment by the ranges for Bacchus Marsh; he is a terrible drunkard.

Peripe (Pee-rup). There have been two of this name in the police. The one who was in the force in 1843 continued in it till 1847. After leaving it, he was scarce in his district for a month's continuance, going to and fro with others purchasing or stealing Gippsland lubras; he was subsequently, with two others, killed there in May 1850 on the Mitchell River through the treachery of a knowing Gippsland black named Tyers.

Perpine (better known as McNoel). An active, shrewd, able, and intelligent policeman; for two years highly serviceable. He had the boldness to be the first to fire at a white man, when with Commissioner Gisborne's police up the Yarra. On leaving the police, he, like most others, became a notorious drunkard, and was dangerous when so. In a drunken fray with two of his own tribe he received a spear wound, from which he died four days afterwards (on 2nd May 1850) at the encampment between the Merri and Darebin Creeks.

Polligary (Polligerry). An able-bodied black, intelligent, and to be fully depended upon. He went through a routine of service for Government, being selected for most of their important journeys. On leaving the force,

he accompanied Mr. Bunce and others in an expedition, I think, in quest of the lost Dr. Leichhardt; he is still living. In Bunce's correspondence he is designated as " Black Jimmy."

Munmungina (Mun-Mun-gin-ner). A fine and faithful black, of good disposition and temper; had been out on three expeditions; the Wimmera was the last, where he was taken ill, and returned before his comrades. The black doctors recommended rambling through the district, which he did, to no effect. He died at Mahoon, Western Port, on the 16th August 1845.

Tonmiel. A young, steady, and faithful policeman ; he continued in the service till his death. He had been on duty the whole round of the colony from Portland Bay west, to Gippsland east and the Murray north; he died at the police barracks, Narre Narre Warren in November 1850.

Tomboko. This black continued in the service for at the least three years; Captain Dana was particularly partial to him. His lubra was also of great service. She could wash, iron, and do needlework almost as well as a white woman. An altercation, however, took place at the police barrack, Narre Narre Warren. The sergeant brought Tomboko to Melbourne handcuffed, and lodged him in the watch-house. My blacks at the Merri Creek gave me information of it. I attended the police office next morning. No one appeared against him, and he was discharged. With all I could do I could not get him to return. He was industrious and sober. He went a few trips to Gippsland after the death of his lubra, where he now is, and has been for the last eighteen months, shepherding.

Waworong. This black continued in the service, I should say, at least four years beyond my expectation; so much so that, when Billibellary presented him, I told Captain Dana it was useless to have his name. Is either he nor any of the Murray family could be kept for any continuance from the Yarra Ranges; he, however, was enrolled, and proved a faithful servant of Government; but becoming at length constitutionally affected with the venereal disease, he left or had leave of absence. Dr. Jamieson and others gave him medicines; his disease gained on him, and, like all blacks in great affliction, wandering seems the last recipe; he went rambling with a few Yarra blacks, and died in the Yarra Ranges; the date I cannot exactly give, but it was between 1849 and 1850.

Wideculk (Wi-gee-gulk). Also a fine youth; was in the force nearly two years. After returning from the Murray River, he became tired of that kind of life, and, though continuing in the force, was continually asking for furloughs, and would come to Melbourne, plant his police clothes, and get drunk with impunity; he subsequently was tried for larceny on 15th July 1844. Since then he has led a dissipated life. He is at present (if alive) in Gippsland.

Yamaboke (Yam-mer-book). An intelligent and faithful black, good tempered, and no one on a bush excursion more to be depended upon; was a considerable time in the native police, and had accompanied most of the journeys through the district. On leaving the police he commenced, with others, to go to and fro to Gippsland, and is, for what I know, still alive in Gippsland; but he has for years been a notorious drunkard.

Yuptun (Yeap-lune). One of the coolest, commanding tempers that ever I knew in a black, but when drunk the most determined on mischief. Captain Dana and other officers have assured me that for patience,

perseverance, and other requisites in a long journey no European could equal him. This was the black who, in the conflict with the blacks to the westward, had the full opportunity of shedding blood to no small extent, but would not on his race, although he received several wounds two on his head being very severe in saving the life of his superior officer, for which he received on his return the commendation of His Excellency the present Lieutenant- Governor. He was made corporal and received pay. However, since he left the service and while in it when opportunity offered, he would get drunk, and to such excess that he was in continual trouble; the last time he was convicted with imprisonment. I advised him when I got him from the gaol to keep to the bush, which he has done since.

In every other respect a more kind-hearted, feeling black could not be found. In the early history of the colony, his father, mother, and elder brother were shot by the settlers in a sheep robbery between the Goulburn River and the Ovens, which left him to the care of Billibellary, chief of the Yarra tribe, to whom his aunt was married; he is still alive with the DeviPs River tribe.

WM. THOMAS.

Pentridge, 6th April 1854.

MEMO.

His Excellency will perceive that the names forwarded are strictly given, but when a material difference exists in the orthography, I have indicated in brackets the real name; thus, (Bil-li-bel-lary), &c., &c., &c.

W. T.

It will be seen that all these cases, except Bour-turning (alias Billy) merge into drunkenness, viz.:

Kulpendure, violently drunk, going to cut in two the rope at Richmond Punt because the puntman in an instant could not convey him across;

Bungerburnanook, leaving a butcher's in Geelong (in whose service he had been for some length of time) upon a drunken spree, forgetting to return the knife in his belt, was had up for larceny;

Yeapture, one of the best of blacks (and most faithful of the police) when sober and the worst when drunk, was figuring away among a mob of constables, and with difficulty secured.

The white man Gillmore was drinking hard, when he fell in with three blacks, two of them belonging to the police. All were drinking hard together. A dispute subsequently arose about a bottle of rum. Gillmore became frightened, and thought one was going to kill him; Gillmore shot at him, and he fell; fearful of the others, as he said, he shot and wounded another.

Bour-turning's case is more what I would call your attention to as it is more important to my mind than the others (though there was no loss of life); it is from such cases the danger of the aborigines may be calculated. My impression ever was, and is still the same, that, from the blacks as a body, to Europeans there is no danger whatever; it is our damnable drink that has made them so nauseous even to ourselves, without our for a moment calculating the beam in our own European eye. But to proceed with Billy his case was enveloped in mystery. From a child known in the neighbourhood from 8 years of age; with the native police highly respected by every officer, from Mr. Dana downwards; Hurst, Lydiard, and others assured me that he must be innocent. All rested on the evidence of the girl, who subsequently being found to be of a most

objectionable character, I lost no time in preparing a memorial to His Excellency for a commutation of sentence, which memorial was signed by the foreman of the jury, and by the whole, except two who had left for the diggings. More than one of the jury remarked to me that, had they known an hour before the trial what they knew an hour after, a verdict quite the reverse would have been given. My impression is still the same, that he is and was an innocent man, and as such I do not for a moment consider that the aboriginal character is in any way the least affected to its prejudice by this trial.

27/3/54.

THE GUARDIAN OF ABORIGINES.

RETURN DEC. 31st 1853.

Numbers. Tribes frequenting district

ABORIGINES IN PORTLAND BAY DISTRICT.

	Males	Females	Children	Total
Port Fairy	27	28	6	61
Colac	35	27	0	62
Lower Hopkins	16	13	3	32
Middle Hopkins	18	16	4	38
Upper Hopkins	38	29	3	70
Eumeralla	8	5	0	13
Grange	13	8	2	23
Wannon	26	16	4	46
Mount Emu	14	12	3	29
Glenelg River	130	55	40	225
Totals	325	209	65	599

W. N. GRAY, C.C.L.

GIPPSLAND. NUMBER OF ABORIGINES.

1843	1,800	
1853	131	
1854	126	<i>(February)</i>

Feb. 9th 1854.

C. J. TYERS.

NUMBER OF ABORIGINES UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE GUARDIAN OF ABORIGINES
W. THOMAS.

Yarra Tribe	36
Western Port or Coast Tribe	17
Gippsland Orphans	2
Total	55

For Return respecting the Mount Rouse Aboriginal Station, 1845-49, &c., see Council Papers, 1852-3.
See also Return printed at the close of Session 1853-54.

RETURNS WITH REMARKS

I. RETURN SHOWING THE NUMBER OF ABORIGINES IN THE YARRA AND WESTERN PORT TRIBES,
1852-53.

Year	Yarra Tribe.			Western Port Tribe.			Total Both Tribes
	<i>Children</i>			<i>Children</i>			
	M.	F.	Total	M.	F.	Total	
1852	22	17	39	11	9	20	59
1853	20	16	36	10	7	17	53

II. RETURN SHOWING THE NUMBER OF DEATHS 1 IN THE YARRA AND WESTERN PORT TRIBES, 1850-53.

Year	Yarra Tribe.			Western Port Tribe.			Total Both Tribes
	<i>Children</i>			<i>Children</i>			
	M.	F.	Total	M.	F.	Total	
1850	2	2	4	1		1	5
1851	1		1	1	1	2	3
1852	8	2	10	6	2	8	18
1853	2	1	3	1		1	4

III. RETURN SHOWING THE NUMBER OF BIRTHS IN THE YARRA AND WESTERN PORT TRIBES, 1850-53.

Year	Yarra Tribe.			Western Port Tribe.			Total Both Tribes
	<i>Children</i>			<i>Children</i>			
	M.	F.	Total	M.	F.	Total	
1850				1		1	1
1851							
1852							
1853	1		1				1

Grand total in four years in both tribes, two; and for three years previous in the two tribes there had not been a birth. However, these two both died or were killed within a month.

It is lamentable that the parents will leave the general body of blacks for seven or eight days, and invariably return in mourning, "their pickaninny dead."

IV. RETURN SHOWING THE NUMBER OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN UNDER INSTRUCTION, 1851-53.

Year.	Children	Year.	Children	Year.	Children
1851	2	1852	2	1853	2

N.B. These are the two orphan aboriginals; none other are under instruction.

Deaths. It will be seen by this return that, from the end of 1851 to the end of 1852, there was a mortality of 18 out of a population of 77 nearly. The mortality has been among the males principally, viz., 14 males, and but 4 females, one of the latter being an infant. Eight were murdered, and two of the murderers were subsequently arrested and killed. It is true sickness prevailed to a great extent among them, and, notwithstanding my continued attention, and the truly fatherly visits of the late Colonial Surgeon (Dr. Sullivan), 8 died. Three of these, however, were, during the drukea freaks of May and June, almost perpetually drunk. Five only out of the 18 may be said to have died by the visitation of God; the remainder by violence.

This year of mortality was ushered in as satisfactorily as could be; the Yarra blacks were engaged with the farmers by the Plenty, and most of the Western Port blacks in the county of Mornington were engaged at different stations. In February, some Western Port blacks returned from Gippsland, bringing about 10 Warrigal blacks with them. I tried to remove them; they promised day after day to leave. While engaged with them near Unwin's survey, south of the Yarra, some messengers were despatched, and Melbourne had in a few days three encampments within ten miles of it. They begged very hard to remain, and said they would leave in three weeks, and not come near the town. They had not met for years, and wanted to have once more some corroboree together. I got the three encampments at length to one spot in a Government reserve on a bend of the Yarra, about twelve or thirteen miles from Melbourne, and addressed His Excellency upon the indulgence which was granted, and night after night for fourteen days did they enjoy themselves. From the time, however, they visited Melbourne scenes of the most awful dissipation ensued. As they were shifted from one spot, they would be found two or three miles nearer Melbourne in another direction, until, in April and May, from morning to night there was naught but drunkenness. While I was taking one party off, two were murdered and three were subsequently found dead, which, with the previous murder at Brighton, regularly disgusted the public. After by the aid of police, I got the Goulburn, Barrabool, Booning, and Gippsland blacks off, assuring them that never more should there be an assemblage. By the end of June, the Yarra blacks were settled at the ranges, and the Western Port near the coast.

During this year, reserves were granted the two tribes, and provisions secured for them in the bush, so that they are now left without the least excuse. I may add that some important correspondence between the Guardian and the Government took place, resulting from the awful outrages of the aborigines inter se, touching their case. The difficulties, however, seemed to increase as correspondence went on, and the question receded to its former position, and justly so.

The fact is, that all must rest upon aboriginal evidence, to admit which (in their present state) would jeopardize the life of any they had a pique against. A proof of this is the murder of one Buller Bullup this year; I missed him for three weeks before any of the other murders were discovered. I made continual inquiries about him; received such evasive replies that I was far from satisfied; in fact, felt that he must have been killed by some of the number of strangers in the encampment. King Benbow, his brother, and another left for Williamstown for seven or eight days about the time. I was about getting a trooper or two to drive off the whole of the blacks, and said to a fine young man of the Yarra tribe, formerly of the native police, I

should like to know, if poor Buller Bullup is killed, what tribe did it, and I would have the black, if possible, before I sent them away. He took me aside and told me, in as cool and deliberate a manner as a man could, "That king Benbow, his brother, and another, had killed Buller Bullup on account of Yal Yal being killed at Brighton, and that they had buried him in a scrub near Williamstown". After a little further inquiry this appeared substantiated, and I reported the deed to His Excellency. Benbow subsequently returned, and I felt thoroughly convinced, from his protestations, that he was innocent. Buller Bullup's murderer, after all, I found out to be this very black and two others, and his body was found, not at Williamstown, but mangled near Richmond Swamp. I lost no time in communicating to His Excellency how grossly King Benbow had been accused.

W. T.

Before I close, there are three documents transmitted to Government, not noticed here, of some import, which will put His Excellency in possession of the whole of the history of the aborigines of the Melbourne tribes, viz.:

On 21st December 1852.

Particular statistics of aborigines from 1836 to close of 1851 numbers, schools, &c., with notes.

December 17th 1853.

Returns required by Legislative Council 3, 4, 5, with notes.

December 29th 1853.

Returns furnished to Registrar-General, viz., 1, 3, 36.

The above, with the particular returns I left as appendices to my last report as Protector, 31st December 1849, will make all aboriginal matters complete as respects returns. The manners, &c., of them are too numerous for me to be able to supply.

W. T.

There are, however, a few (and but a few) lines I can furnish in a day or two which are, nevertheless, necessary to make the whole complete, viz.:

Those blacks who have been committed and tried since the end of 1849, and the whites who have been committed and tried for outrages on the blacks since the same date (all previous are in Government returns), and though I had the honour of first compiling such a return, I must say it is a most important one, the more so as the Attorney-General at Sydney said, some years back, such could not be furnished.

SUPERSTITION, TRADITION, DEITIES

There is not a more diffident subject to treat upon than the superstitions of savage nations, for in treating of their superstitions wrongfully, you may be an obstacle on the one side to their minds being enlightened, and, on the other, place the people in the estimation of the world in a different light to what they should be.

There is not a portion of the aboriginal character that I feel less confident in remarking upon than their traditionary and superstitious notions, not but that I am aware that they exist, and that to a considerable extent, but to know their full import and meaning I feel persuaded that one had need become an aboriginal native.

And yet much has been written by individuals who have had little or no intercourse with them, which has materially bewildered the world touching the aborigines of Australia, as to whether they have not been so low in creation as to have no conception (judging from the vague accounts that have already emanated from different authors) of a Deity.

D. E., an intelligent writer, whose heart is warmly engaged in the cause of these poor heathens, remarks (in No. 2 on aboriginal subjects, which appeared in the Geelong Advertiser in 1844):

"It is doubtful whether there exists among them any notion of the existence of a Supreme Being which contains the slightest analogy to revealed truth," and, further, "that where any idea of a Supreme Intelligence exists, there have usually existed some outward indications thereof, as manifested in sacred relics, idols, rites, and ceremonies constituting religion; the entire absence of everything of this sort among the savages of Australia seems, therefore, corroborative of the utter loss of the knowledge of God." Equally, on the same ground of reasoning, may the conclusion be arrived at in this colony a few years since, by one travelling from Gippsland to the River Glenelg, and from the Bay to the Murrumbidgee, for what "outward indications" would he have witnessed among the white people? and had he come from some strange land, of a strange tongue not having any idea from whence we came, who or what we or our fathers were as far as "outward indications" are concerned, what other impression would the traveller have than that we had altogether lost (if we ever had had any) all idea of an intelligent Supreme, and upon the very same grounds adduced by this zealous writer, that there are no "sacred relics, rites, or ceremonies constituting religion" to be observed among us. We should consider, moreover, that people may have notions of what perhaps their very superstitious laws enjoin perfect silence upon, and much of this mute solemnity is to be observed in the character of the aboriginal inhabitants of Australia.

Mr. Assistant-Protector Parker, of the Loddon, has supposedly discovered "in their ceremonies and superstitions the obscure and nearly obliterated relics of the ancient ophiolatry or serpent worship," and this from the Mindye. The Miudye is certainly considered by them as a visible and invisible being. According to their account, he is seen and not seen at one and the same time; but there is no ceremony whatever that I can trace among them that bears any analogy to what he supposes can give me any belief that they have any notion of the "Ancient Ophiolatry" so prevalent formerly, and still known in India and Africa. The Mindye has its residence, and some old prejudices exist among the aged that a certain family has the power of enchanting or incanting this being. The small-pox brought forward by Mr. Parker is no more than any other epidemic occasioned by the Mindye. The being called the Mindye has no independent power; he is under the control of the Creator of all things, and, as they superstitiously believe, the family afore-mentioned. The term "Monola Mindye," as Mr. Parker has it "dust of the Mindye" is incorrect. "Lillipook Mindye," which Mr. P. has as a further proof "scales of the Mindye" is still more ridiculous. "Lillipook" means the cup which held the pock. The personages of the other Deities or Superior Beings spoken of by Mr. Parker do not tally with accounts received by me. Although I am in possession of much of their mythology, yet I am so dissatisfied

with my own belief of the real meaning that I venture only to give you what I think you may safely commit to the press, worked up in your own superior style.

What I give you has been tried over and over again from statements made by old and young of different tribes at various times. I have been so scrupulously doubtful of the accuracy, like Thomas the Apostle; I have done as much as could be done without becoming an aboriginal native to arrive at the truth.

Australian Deities.

The Australian aborigines believe in two principal Deities, viz.: **Punjil**, the maker of the earth, trees, animals, and man. Punjil, they say, had a wife named **Boi Boi**, but he never saw her face. She, however, bore him two children, one a son named **Binbeal**, the other a daughter named **Karakarook**.

Binbeal is committed the sovereignty of the heavens, and;

Karakarook the incidental occurrences on earth;

while great **Punjil** stalks like a "big one gentleman" in the clouds, on the earth, &c., always carrying a "big one sword".

The Australian's next Deity is Pallian, brother of Punjil.

Pallian made all seas, rivers, creeks, and waters; also all the fish in the ocean, seas, rivers, &c. He governs the waters; was always in the waters, walking, bathing, and going over the seas.

Creation of Man.

Punjil one day cut, with his large knife, two pieces of bark, mixed up a lot of clay, and made two black men, one very black and the other not quite black more like dirty red brick. He was from morning till night making them; it was not bright day then, but the sun was like blood all day. He began to make man at the feet, then made legs, and so on to the head. He then made the other in like manner, and, smoothing them both over with his hand from the feet to the head, he put on one's head curly hair and named him Kookinberrook; on the other straight hair and named him Berrookboorn. After finishing the two men, Punjil looked on them, was pleased, and danced round them. He then lay on each of them, blowing into their nostrils, mouth, and navel, and the two men began to move. He bade them get up, which they did (young men, not like pickaninnies); he told them their names; he showed his brother Pallian the two men he had made.

Creation of Woman.

The next day Pallian was in a creek paddling and beating in the water, in which he used to indulge. After some time the water got thick like mud, so that he could scarcely move; he plucked off a small bough from a tree that hung over the creek, and looked through the bough at the water, and said, "name you". He beat harder and harder, and saw near him come up four hands, then two heads, and so on, till breasts, and two human figures complete appeared. Pallian exclaimed, "like my brother Punjil, me make two Bagrooks." He beat again the waters, and the two lubras came above the water and fell on the land, but they could not move; he carried one and then the other to his brother Punjil, who breathed into their nostrils, mouth, and navel, and Punjil gave them names to one Kunewarra, to the other Kuurrook. They gave each koolin a lubra. Punjil put a spear in each koolin's hand, and Karakarook, daughter to Punjil, put in each lubra's hand a kannan (woman's stick). Punjil, Pallian, and Karakarook go out with them some days, showing them how to get their food. The two men were taught to spear kangaroos, emus, &c., and the two lubras to get gum, roots, bandicoots, grubs, &c. One morning, when they awoke, they "no see Punjil, Pallian, and Karakarook";

"they had gone up above". The blacks say that all this took place "very far, far away" to the N.W., not where "now blackfellows all about here sit down," alluding to their belief that man and woman were first created in other countries. All agree (I mean different tribes) in stating that that country was "far, far away," beyond what they know to the N.W., over seas. If the point they direct to be correct, it tallies with our position of the western part of Asia.

How Man first came in possession of Fire.

They say that long time after Punjil made man and woman, blacks had no fire, were very cold, and eat all flesh raw"; that some lubras went out to get food. They were with their kannan digging up murrar (piss-ants' eggs), when several snakes of all kinds came up out of the earth where they were digging; that they were terribly frightened; kept beating the snakes but could not kill them. To their relief came down Karakarook with a large kannan, and two young men named Tourt and Tarrer; that Karakarook and the lubras fought the snakes for a long time, when the end of Karakarook's stick broke off; from the piece broken off arose smoke. A bird (by their account of the same kind as a crow, only of a great size as large as an eagle) flew down and ran off with the fire. Tourt and Tarrer immediately flew up in pursuit of the crow, while Karakarook remained with the lubras. The crow flew to a mountain named Nun-nur-woon, where it was overtaken by the two flying young men. Tarrer returned with the fire safe, having pulled off bark from one tree and another to keep it from being exhausted. "Tourt no more come back"; he was burnt to death on a mountain named Munnio, where he had kindled a small fire lest what small quantity he had should be lost, and Punjil, for Tourt's good deed, turned him into a large star, that always looks like fire. Karakarook showed the lubras her stick, and, having examined the qualities of it, bade them never to be without fire. Tarrer afterwards directed them to where the stick might be found, and showed them how to make fire; disappeared, and was no more seen.

Notions of the Flood.

The blacks say that after they had fire they were all marnumuk (meaning comfortable), and increased to great numbers; and after many, many years "blackfellows get very bad (wicked), when Punjil and Pallian big one sulky." "Punjil come down with his big one knife and cut the earth all over like blackfellow cut up damper, and come up water, and Pallian drive all big one water from sea on land; then like great guns come up koor-reen (storms) and pull up all trees, and come up water everywhere, and very bad blackfellows drowned, and that great many not very bad, Punjil take up and make stars of, and that Punjil when all gone water, send another very good man and woman, named Berwool and Bobinger, and take and cut up one kangaroo and other animals into small pieces and they became a great number." Karakarook and Tarrer, directed by Punjil, again descend and make Berwool and Bobinger acquainted with the way to provide themselves with food and fire, but stop "only little time" and then leave them.

Tradition of the Dispersion of Mankind.

The blacks have also a tradition of the dispersion of mankind over all the earth. They say that mankind, after many years, got very many and again very bad, fighting, killing, and eating one another "no work, blackfellows only beat and make lubras get 'em tunanan (victuals); blackfellows all sit down only one country; Punjil come down again with his big knife, big one sulky, and cut into pieces all men, women, and children, kangaroo, and all living animals, but they not die. Then come up a great storm (koor-reen), followed by many whirlwinds (pit-ker-ring), and take up all the pieces and carry them everywhere far, far away and drop them in every country; then blackfellows in all countries; no blackfellows in all countries till then; and blackfellow no more see 'em Punjil; he too much sulky. Black doctors sometimes dream of him".

Tradition of the Origin of Wind.

Hurricanes and whirlwinds, as well as wind, the blacks have a tradition came from an immense flight of magpies a larger species than those at present seen. The blacks say that they came in great numbers like flights of cockatoos; that after they came a rushing wind and a number of large bags like sacks appeared in the air, at first not full; they filled as they passed along, as you would blow full a bladder, and when full "they busted, made noise like gun, and then came wind; no wind before this". It is singular that this occurred also "far, far away," and came from N.W.

Thunder and Lightning.

Thunder and lightning they believe to be the voice and fire from the eyes of **Binbeal** (*I should state in the Australian Deities that Binbeal is a god that has a face that encompasses the earth, and has a lubra that always accompanies him. Binbeal is the rainbow, and his lubra is the reflection which may be seen occasionally.*) when he is sulky with the elements, and will be obeyed; and when he has silenced all, he makes the sun stand before him.

Mvndye.

Of all the beings most dreaded by the blacks, the principal is the Mindye. It appears to have no independent power, but by the command of Punjil is sent to destroy or afflict any people for bad deeds, that is to say, when they have done very bad things, or not killed enough wild blackfellows for their dead. Its form is that of a snake, but of great size, though it can contract itself into a small compass extend or contract as we would a telescope. The blacks give awful accounts of this being; it can make itself extend miles in length. They say that there are little Mindye; that Mindye inhabits a country named Lillgoner to N.W. in this district, and resides on a mountain named Bu-ker Bun-nel, and drinks at a creek named Neel Kumm; that the ground for a distance round is so hard that no rain can penetrate it (kulkubeek); that no wood but mullin grows near it; and that the land is covered with hard small substances like hail. A family named Munnie Brumbrum, the blacks say, have been the only blacks that have ventured to put foot on this awful country where Mindye resides, and they are the only blacks that can stay the ravages of the Mindye, or send it forth. It differs from a snake, by having a large head and two ears; it has three fangs coming from its tongue, and when it hisses out its fury the earth around is covered with white particles like snow, from which the blacks say the disease is inhaled. It often ascends the highest tree in a forest, and, like a ring-tailed opossum, secures its hold, and stretches itself over a vast extent of 20 and 30 miles.

When Mindye is in a district the blacks run for their lives, setting the bush on fire as they proceed, and not stopping to bury their dead or attend to any seized. Many drop down dead on the road. When seized, pains seize them in the back, with violent retching. When they try to get up they fall down; those not seized are quite well. The celebrated Munuie Brumbrum, the blacks say, can arrest and stay the Mindye by a secret move with his hand or finger. Such is the nature of the attack of the Mindye.

Any plague is supposed to be brought on by the Mindye or some of its little ones. I have no doubt that, in generations gone by, there has been an awful plague of cholera or black fever, and that the wind at the time, or some other appearance from N.W., has given rise to this strange being.

Superstition about Consulting Bears.

The bear is a privileged animal, and is often consulted in very great undertakings. I was out with a celebrated Western Port black tracking five other blacks. The tracks had been lost some days at a part of the country where we expected they must pass. We ran down a creek; after going some miles a bear made a noise as we passed. The black stopped, and a parley commenced. I stood gazing alternately at the black and the bear.

At length my black came to me and said, "Me big one stupid; bear tell me no you go that way". We immediately crossed the creek, and took a different track. Strange as it may appear, we had not altered our course above one and a half miles before we came upon the tracks of the five blacks, and never lost them after. The bear, too, must not be skinned. The blacks have a strange tale of the bears having stolen all their tarnuk (buckets) and drained a creek of Avater, and so bewildered the blacks that Karakarook came down, and it was settled by Karakarook, on the part of the blacks, that they would no more take the skins from the bears' bodies, and on the part of the bears, that they would no more in any way molest the blacks in supply of water and vessel. The wombat (or warren) is also a sacred animal, and must not be skinned. Many birds are also sacred; some may be eaten by the aged only; others by the doctors only.

Superstitious Notions of the Warmum.

The blacks have superstitious notions of many places, in which, no doubt, in bygone days some awful calamity had befallen their forefathers. Warmum is a very high mountain N.W. of Gippsland and N.E. of Western Port. The blacks have a superstitious notion that whoever looks on this mountain direct will first be struck blind, and then dead; no one can look at it and live unless through some medium. The lubras veil their faces when they come within sight, or put boughs and twigs before their faces. The men, when prompted by curiosity to behold it, look along a stick as white people would do through a telescope. The blacks say that "big one Punjil once sit on that mountain".

Charmers or Enchanters.

There are characters among the blacks **Avho** are supposed to possess powers according to their various qualifications. When a continuance of rain is desired, the charmer is applied to, who sings,

" Won-ner-rer Nger-wein Barm-we-are Won-ner-rer
Tin-der-buk Koo-de-are Nger-wein Koo-de-are Tin-der-buk
Kar-row-lin."

During the time that this is sung the charmer sits in his mia-mia, and with a piece of thin bark, about a foot or eighteen inches long, continues throwing hot dust from the fire into the air, alternately mumbling and singing the above song; in fact, all their charmings are in mumbling language, not known to the rest of the blacks. I have not succeeded in getting a translation of this song, if indeed the words have any meaning at all.

We have the Western Port tribe a celebrated charmer-away of rain, old Bobbinary. I have known this man to be kept singing for hours. The blacks say, when Bobbinary was a child that it had been raining for some days, and "blackfellows all sad, their bellies tied up to keep off hunger; that the child Bobbinary began to sing, and that sun immediately came out, and no more rain. That ever since then he has been able to send rain away".

Doctors.

The blacks have various kinds of doctors for eyes, bowels, head, &c., and, like white physicians, are noted in proportion to the remarkable cures said to have been wrought. But the highest pitch of the profession is flying. Among the tribes who have visited the settlement there has been but one, that has come to my knowledge, possessed of this power, whose name is Malcolm, of the Mount Macedon tribe. I have known this man to be sent for 100 miles. The blacks say that he has power to soar above the clouds, and to fly like an eagle; he also can, in some cases, recover the marmbula (kidney fat) when it has been stolen. I have a most singular account of one of his serial journeys, together with the solemnity of the encampment during

his two hours' flight, but cannot trace it now. This Malcolm (aboriginal name Myngderrar) is said to have inherited this power from his father, who was famous before him.

Murrina Kooding, or Strength Lost.

In the encampment south of the Yarra, on the evening of I were Goulburn, Mount Macedon, Barrabool, Yarra, and Western Port blacks. The Goulburn lubras, quite naked, stole upon seven young men. No sooner had the women their hands on the heads of the young men than the latter appeared helpless; they cut from each young man a lock of his hair. As soon as the hair was cut the young men fainted; the women took the ornaments from the men's heads and decamped. The young men's friends came about them to comfort them, but life apparently could scarcely be kept in them. Their friends sat with them the whole of the night.

On the following morning, the doctors assembled; a fire was made about a quarter or half a mile from the encampment, and the seven young men were brought, each borne by two friends bearing pieces of lighted bark in their hands, to the spot; the young men were placed round the large fire at some distance, and before each was the bark brought by the friends. The doctors, mumbling and humming, with a piece of glass bottle commenced scraping off all the hair from the crown of the head to the feet, and then rubbed them from head to feet with werup (red ochre). The young men lay speechless during the whole of the time the ceremony was being performed, and every muscle of their faces seemed to be keenly noticed by the doctors. This ceremony lasted from sunrise to three hours afterwards. I understand that these young men would have died had not this ceremony been performed. Strength left them as the lock fell from their heads. (Is not this some semblance to Samson's case?)

Native Encampment.

Although there may be 150 mia-mias (native huts) erected on the formation of a fresh native encampment, no altercation, to my knowledge, has ever taken place touching site, or trees to be barked. They know beforehand where the chief's mia-mia is to be, and the distance required for his immediate connexions none asking his fellow permission or advice. They commence barking and building; in one half hour I have seen one of the most beautiful, romantic, and stillest parts of the wilderness become a busy and clamorous town, and the beautiful forest marred for materials for their habitation, and as much bustle as though the spot had been located for generations.

Although to a casual observer a native encampment may appear void of arrangement, such is not the case; if the whole or most of a tribe be present, it is divided into small hamlets of about six mia-mias each, distant from each other five or six yards, merely sufficient to prevent the fires of one from molesting the other. The hamlets are about twenty yards from each other, or more, according to the space of ground on which they are encamped. In each of these hamlets is one married man of consequence, whose duty it is to keep order, settle differences, &c. It often happens that one hamlet may have an altercation with another; a lubra may have been seduced, or what not. The two hamlets will settle the dispute early on the following morning, the other hamlets no more interfering than if nothing was on the carpet, precisely as in some of our courts and alleys in England when two neighbours quarrel, the others take no more notice than if nothing was the matter. I have often been much annoyed, when I have seen one knocking the other about and blood flowing from the head, to see an influential black of the next hamlet, coolly sitting at his mia-mia smoking his pipe merely looking on. They hold no animosity when the quarrel is settled by the magistrate of the hamlet. The combatants may be seen sitting together sucking or cleaning each others' wounds, or smoking their pipes and eating together.

Fight between Barrabool and Buninyong Blacks North of Melbourne.

When two or more tribes congregate, they are ushered in by the messengers, who had been previously despatched with their diplomas, 1 one of whom, some hours previous to the tribes' approach, will return, and state the success or ill-success of his mission. The new comers will sit down about half an hour, when the principal males assemble. If their meeting be hostile (which is known for days before), the war-cry is heard for a mile or more ere they arrive at the encampment. At length the party arrives; all males are seated together, their heads and faces daubed with clay; they look beastly and terrific. The one I shall describe took place 5th December 1844 at half-past four. The Barrabool blacks close lined ten lines, with eight and ten in each line, seat themselves W. of the Buninyongs. After half an hour, King William, chief of the Barrabool tribe, advanced and stated "that charges had been made against his blacks of killing two of the Buninyongs and stealing lubras; that his blacks were not afraid of them, and had come down and were ready to have the accusers' spears thrown at them". While speaking, another advances, and brings charges against the Barrabool blacks, and bids them to come forward. This rouses the ire of the opposite tribe, when two step forward and rebut or acknowledge the assertions, remarking that they also are ready, in the presence of the other tribes assembled, to stand foremost and receive the spears of their opponents, &c. A general bustle may be seen now in both parties; the parties more particularly accused prepare themselves, if of murder undisputed, perfectly naked, and in mourning from head to foot, squatted on the ground, without spear or any other weapon; save a shield to ward off the spears. In this case it is more a judicial proceeding, or the law being carried into effect, and though the tribes are all under arms it is more to check any disturbance or interruption to the execution of what they consider the sentence. But if it be a disputed case, the parties accused on each side, generally two, three, or four, may be seen stepping forward, capering round and round, with small bunches of leaves round their ankles, as sometimes in a corroboree; both parties are now on the general move, shaking their weapons at each other, which raises their anger, giving three yells, stamping, and making the most frightful grimaces, and with distorted gestures gathering up dust and throwing towards their opponents, which excites both parties the more. A fire is made; then kicking the fire about they form themselves again into lines, and their chief leads them; they generally branch out and form a crescent, or extend into a long straight line. They may be seen now on both sides capering in the strangest attitudes the body can be placed in, some running to and fro with long spears in their hands, with their noses almost touching the ground; others vociferating, lifting up their heels to their bottoms; some advancing even among their opponents, and as actively backing themselves, pointing and gritting their teeth, while others are dancing round and round like Jim Crow. Those with leaves around their legs are stationary. All the aforesaid moves and grimaces are merely flashes in the pan; the chiefs and other important characters keep on wrangling, pointing with their spears towards one party and another till the word of command. Then each black is at his post, and wonguims, spears, &c., all beside each fighting man, and the real warm work commences with wonguims, which are hurled apparently indiscriminately, but not so. You would be apt to doubt, seeing them five minutes after they commenced, to which side some belonged there appears such confusion; but among them it is otherwise each knows his work. The missiles are, in the first instance, hurled without intermission, directed to those who have the boughs on their legs. Some soon hit others, who plant themselves (purposely) near their friends, which causes a general fight. When the Avonguims are all exhausted, then spears are used; and should, after all, the parties who should have received punishment escape (those with boughs around the ankles), they are pounced upon with bludgeons, and at close combat seldom escape unhurt. If things get too serious, the chiefs of other tribes will interfere (for the blacks never fight but in the presence of two or three other tribes, aware of their own weakness or passions), and with leonile rushing between the contending parties, bring the matter to a close, which is, like its commencement, ended in war, war, war, as they call it, or high words. The fighting over, one after another may be seen moving off grumbling as he goes, and in half an hour all is the greatest harmony, and generally there is a corroboree at night.

They seldom do much execution in their fights a few wonguim and spear wounds in some not dangerous parts of the body. They are too adroit in warding off from the breast and other mortal parts.

Arrangement in Encampment when Different Tribes meet.

I have often been struck with the exact position each tribe takes in the general encampment, precisely in the position from each other their country lies according to the compass (of which they have a perfect notion). I have found this invariably the case, and latterly could form an idea on the arrival of blacks what part they came from. A particular instance of this I noticed when the greatest number of blacks (up to that time) that had ever visited the Settlement was encamped N.E. by E. from Melbourne about two miles, to witness the judicial proceedings against Poleorong and Warrador for killing the Warralim youth at Tooradin, Western Port (Mr. Manton's). There were upwards of 800 blacks by the Settlement no small portion of seven tribes viz., the Loddon, Campaspe, Goulburn, Mount Macedon, Barrabool, Yarra, and Western Port. The two undergoing punishment were two of the leading men and greatest warriors in the Western Port tribe. A bird's-eye view would look down upon the encampment thus:

1. Loddon Blacks.

2. Campaspe Blacks.

3. Mount Macedon Blacks.

6. Barrabool Blacks.

7. Western Port Blacks.

4. Goulburn Blacks.

5. Yarra Blacks.

Generally speaking, there is not a more peaceable community than the blacks when but one tribe is present. I have often been out with them for months with scarce an altercation, years back, when they were less corrupted, and fewer settlers in the district. I should have stated, on the meeting of tribes there is generally, in a short time, howling among the women. As the women are married from other tribes, they are permitted to go and sit down with the females. When they hear of one and another of their friends having died, they will anxiously inquire if their murder has been avenged, and if there is no flesh to assuage their grief they mourn and mar themselves, as described by me in my burial of the dead which I presume you have, though that was never finished.

Ceremony of Tanderrum, or Freedom of the Bush.

There is not, perhaps, a more pleasing sight in a native encampment than when strange blacks arrive who have never been in the country before. Each comes with -fire in hand (always bark), which is supposed to purify the air the women and children in one direction, and the men and youths in another. They are ushered in generally by some of an intermediate tribe, who are friends of both parties, and have been engaged in forming an alliance or friendship between the tribes; the aged are brought forward and introduced. The ceremony of Tanderrum is commenced; the tribe visited may be seen lopping boughs from one tree and another, as varied as possible of each tree with leaves; each family has a separate seat, raised about 8 or 10 inches from the ground, on which in the centre sits the male and around him his male children, and the female and her sex of children have another seat.

Two fires are made, one for the males and the other for the females. The visitors are attended on the first day by those whose country they are come to visit, and not allowed to do anything for themselves; water is brought them which is carefully stirred by the attendant with a reed, and then given them to drink (males attend males and females females); victuals are then brought and laid before them, consisting of as great a variety as the bush in the new country affords, if come-at-able; during this ceremony the greatest silence prevails, both by attendants and attended. You may sometimes perceive an aged man seated, the tear of gratitude stealing down his murky, wrinkled face. At night their mia-mias are made for them; conversation, &c., ensue. The meaning of this is a hearty welcome. As the boughs on which they sit are from various trees, so they are welcome to every tree in the forest.

The water stirred with a reed means that no weapon shall ever be raised against them. On Saturday, the 22nd March 1845, at an encampment east of Melbourne, near 200 strangers arrived. The sight was imposing and affecting, especially their attendance upon that old chief Kuller Kullup, the oldest man I have ever seen among the blacks; he must have been near 80 years.

Female coming of Age Ceremony of Murrnm Turrukerook.

Murrum Turrukerook is the name of the ceremony when a female comes to years of maturity, which is generally about thirteen or fourteen years of age, though age is no criterion, but the blood in the womb; when the first discharge of blood ceases, which they say is about three moons, they are of age. There were (at the one I am describing) two large fires of bark made (no wood of any kind save the bark) at about 100 yards from the encampment, at which was one aged lubra sitting down pensive. Bungerrook, the young woman (daughter of the Chief Billibellary) was brought forth in the encampment covered all over from head to foot with kunnundure (charcoal powder), except white spots all over her face and body, which gave her a singular appearance. She was attended by her mother, and another who led her. Her mother aided her up on a log, where the young woman stood silent and sad as though doing penance. She held a small branch in her hand, every leaf taken off, and on each twig was a piece of bread. About twenty young men went up to her slowly; each threw a little stick at her merely a twig; the young men then drew near, and each bit off a bit of bread from the twig of the young damsel, and then spat it into the fire, and turned back and approached the second time, stamping and making the earth shake under them as they do in corroboree, and raving and stamping out the fire. The same two lubras, who were her attendants, gathered the twigs thrown at her by the young men, and buried them deep in the earth. (This was to prevent her kidneys from wasting and falling into others' hands.) The twig held by the damsel was then demanded by the one who had charge of the fires, who gathers up the ashes and covers up the little twig when it is buried. "She is then handed down from the log by her mother, who, with the other attendant, takes her to her father's mia-mia. A corroboree, if it is a chief's daughter, as was this case, takes place at night, at which the father leads the dance. The young men before alluded to alone corroboree. She is after this of age to have a kooliu, not before.

The purport of this ceremony is, on the part of the young men, that they will not defile her person without her consent, or suffer others to do so, but will protect her to their utmost till she is lawfully married.

Ceremony of Tib-but, or Males coming of Age.

This is altogether a beastly concern. The young men have all the hair cut close from their heads, save a narrow streak from the front of the neck to the forehead, which gives them a raw-headed appearance. This is performed by a married man, and one of influence. The hair is first cut with scissors; the head then scraped with glass. The head is then daubed over with mud, closely put on like plaster, the streak of hair being raised up, which gives the youth a still more beastly appearance; there are strips of old rags, string, slips of opossum skin, and old rope, and all the variety of stripes with which a fringed apron girdles his body all round, flapping

round his bottom, his face and body daubed over with motley daubs of clay, mud, charcoal powder in fact, every mess. To add to his beastly appearance, he is not allowed to have a blanket to cover him or anything night or day, and it is generally the winter season selected for this purpose. He goes through the encampment calling out "Tib-bo-bo-but". He has a basket under his arm, which contains all the filth he can pick up, not even omitting soil. In this plight, night and day, he is occasionally going through the encampment. He is not molested by any one. He frightens and bedaubs all he meets with some of the beastly commodities contained in his basket, but must not touch any Avho are in their mia-mias, or lubras on the way getting water, but in every other case he is at liberty to annoy and frighten all he meets; the children are awfully frightened at him, and will fly, screaming, to their parents. He must, when he is on the move, continually cry out " Tib-bo-bo-but," which is the only warning the poor creatures have of escaping him. I have been often struck at the fear created by him, though the encampment knows what it is, and think there must be more in the meaning than I am acquainted with. When his days are over, which last some time till appearance of hair begins to show itself, he is washed, and the females stripe his face with certain charcoal streaks mingled with werup (red ochre), and dance before him.

P.S. You have read what I wrote for His Honor Judge Jeffcott. These scraps will give you a better idea of the people. Time will not permit me to give others; and much that I have by me I cannot give you as yet, as I do not understand satisfactorily its purport. You are a married man, or I would not have stated what I have on the female coming of age. It will show you that these people have some respect for laws of nature; in fact, they are more delicate than white people in many respects. There is one black who had a child by his daughter, and he is looked upon as a regular beast.

These accounts are quickly put together, but the purport is correct, though you will find grammatical blunders innumerable.

WM. T.