

apertures when he came in. The mistry is where he got the spirits. The soldiers went after him. I positively charged them not to shoot him. We suspect there are white men with them. I have allowed Corporal Winnstead the woman he brought with him (from Sydney Cove), and the privates one woman to wash for them. George Flat, one of the soldiers, has applied for two blankets in lieu of those stolen by the natives."

ESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1897

## History of Newcastle

AND THE

### Northern District.

BY H. W. H. HUNTINGTON.

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NUMBER XXXVIII.

#### HOSTILE NATIVES.

KINDNESS and conciliation will effect wonders, even with the poor uncivilised blacks, in proof of which the writer has adduced several instances. But it is singular that wherever European Christians come in collision with their fellowmen in the savage state they immediately exceed them in savage cruelty. The atrocities of the early settlers of the Hunter River on the natives equal anything on record. Military parties were often sent after them, and many settlers armed and joined in the pursuit of them as if they were wild kangaroos. By scouring the woods and shooting them down, the original black race has been entirely destroyed. We are told that Surveyer-General Grimes and Ensign Barrallier in November, 1801, while surveying the upper part of the Hunter River, had found the natives disposed to be hostile, and that a tribe had surrounded them with an intention to destroy them, also that by a free use of firearms the invaders dispersed them and saved their own lives. Unfortunately, the particulars of this conflict with the Maitland blacks are

missing, but it is a record that the survey party were the aggressors, having innocently profaned the Yirri-yirri or sacred place of the natives where they perform their mystic rites. The trees all round this reverend or holy spot are marked with rude representations of serpents, locusts, weapons, fish, &c., on the bark, chopped with the native axe or mogo, while similitudes of the nests of various quadrupeds are formed on the ground near the spot. The place is regarded with awe and never profaned by common use. There are rings in it, one being called Ye Lang, being the locality where the tooth is knocked out with mystic rites, and another is called Per-ro-bung, as the spot where they dance and fall down at certain periods. The dances are kept up for several days every morning and evening, continuing the whole of the night. Women are not allowed to join in these ceremonies, which are conducted by the Yirri-yirri-lang, native priests so to speak, persons who are held sacred or in reverence. The survey party were shooting over the natives' holy places while they were assembling to perform the rites of their tribes. The party were warned by hostile demonstrations to depart, but continuing their depredations, a shower of spears made them beat a hasty retreat. There is no record that any of the whites were speared or natives shot, but Ensign Barrallier and Surveyor Grimes were clearly of opinion they had narrowly escaped being speared to death.

#### A NATIVE DUEL IN 1801 IN NEWCASTLE.

Duels in England and Australia were very numerous during the reign of George the Third, and a striking thing is that as society became more polished duels became more frequent. Among the principals of the fatal duels of George the Third's reign were Charles James Fox, Sheridan, Pitt, Canning, Castlereagh, the Duke of York, the Duke of Richmond, and Lord Ossington. There were more numerous duels in Australia than in England, but of a less deadly character. Here is the account of a duel which attracted the attention of the

first settlers at Newcastle in November 1801. We are told that on points of honour the Australian—and particularly the Newcastle—natives were exceedingly sensitive. On these occasions the hostile messages are sent and delivered by seconds, generally elderly females, who make their verbal communications with all the accustomed vituperation of daring challenge to the offended party. The challenge is accepted, and the weapons named—the cudgel, shield, or spear. The time appointed was such a day when the sun was one quarter high; the place, the top of Prospect, now Obelisk, Hill. Messengers with the sacred message sticks were dispatched to gather in the distant tribes, and for a night or two the various hill tops would display signal fires announcing the approach of the tribes to witness the affair of honour. On the occasion of the duel witnessed by the early Novocoastrians the affair was one of a hostile character. The offending native, a stalwart man, first stooped and offered his head for his antagonist to strike with his nullah nulla or cudgel. As he was not killed by the first blow he rose from his bending posture, shook the streaming blood from his bushy hair, and then his opponent fairly and honourably bent forward his head, presenting it in return to receive his adversary's blow. Thus the duel was reciprocally continued, until the assembled tribes and the combatants themselves shouted out some native words, signifying that everyone was satisfied. Upon inquiry among the chieftains, the officers of the settlement were informed that had one of the combatants struck his opponent on the temple (thus showing a murderous intent), or in any other way than on the fairly offered cranium of his antagonist, a shower of well-directed spears would have ended the earthly career of the cowardly assailant who would dare to be guilty of such a breach of their laws of honour. It was also ascertained that it was the custom among many of the northern tribes that when the first blow killed the combatant and he was a young man in good

condition the assembled chiefs would roast and eat the body of him who so nobly fell in the cause of honour. As a matter of fact, the cannibalistic custom fell into disuse, as it tended to no good purpose, but check the spirit of duelling, which the natives loved to practice. Alarming or picturesque as these savage customs appear, the numerous actors who used to make the Newcastle forests echo with their music, dances, and pastimes have mingled with the dust, and there remain but a few solitary beings, who stalk abroad very much unlike their heroic ancestors, but soon to become "as a tale that is told."

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NUMBER XXXIX.

#### MUTINY OF THE CONVICTS IN 1801.

THE rule of Dr. Mason at Newcastle was short-lived by reason of his harsh and unjust treatment of the convicts, who were in a worse condition than the American or West Indian slaves. It has often been argued that the convicts were better off than the labourers in Great Britain. To make one set of men miserable because others can be found more miserable is flagitious and absurd. But there is no parallel between the cases, for society in Great Britain is like the colours of the rainbow running imperceptibly into each other, and the pauper of to-day may be an employer to-morrow, but in conviction there was no gradation—the dismal lot was immovable. The commandant or superintendent had a hundred ways of indirect revenge which no law could reach, and against which nothing