

CAPTAIN WALLIS' RULE OF CONVICTS AND NATIVES.

According to the official records, the labour of the prisoners before Commandant Wallis' advent in Newcastle was slight and the discipline relaxed. We are told that Captain Wallis' regulations were effectual in reforming both, and that he had recourse in the first instance to considerable severity of punishment to restore and maintain them. Despite the Governor's regulations, we are also informed that during his command the overseers were allowed to strike the convicts with sticks rather than prosecute them for misconduct. By the tenor of the captain's Newcastle orders we are informed that that officer tried the experiment of intimidation on those inclined to run away by pointing out the certainty of recapture, or death at the hands of the blacks. By these means the number of absconders were few, and those who escaped were generally brought back by the blacks in a miserable and emaciated condition. Captain Wallis made friends with the black tribes of the Hunter and Port Stephens, always treated them kindly, and encouraged them to strip the runaways of their clothes, and spear them if the absconders would not return to the settlement. The following is Commissioner Bigge's historical account of the blacks and the runaway convicts:—"The native blacks that inhabit the neighbourhood of Port Hunter and Port Stephens have become very active in retaking the fugitive convicts. They accompany the soldiers who are sent in pursuit, and by the extraordinary sense of sight that they possess, improved by their daily exercise of it in pursuit of kangaroo and opossums, they can trace to a great distance with wonderful accuracy the impressions of the

hunts most. Nor are they afraid of meeting the fugitive convicts in the woods when sent in their pursuit without the soldiers. By their skill in throwing their long and pointed wooden darts they wound and disable them, strip them of their clothes, and bring them back as prisoners by unknown roads and paths to the Coal River. They are rewarded for these enterprises by presents of maize and blankets, and notwithstanding the apprehension of revenge from the convicts whom they bring back, they continue to live in Newcastle and its neighbourhood, but are observed to prefer the society of soldiers to that of the convicts." Between 1804 and 1815 the king of the Newcastle natives, Bungaree, frequently visited Newcastle, but in 1815 Governor Macquarie settled him on George's Head, where he held high court with his wife, Queen Gooseberry, and a retinue of blacks. In Captain Wallis' time he visited Newcastle several times. Every Queen's Birthday Macquarie would decorate the sable king with his cast off cocked-hat, uniform, and red coat with epaulettes. Clothed in this vice-regal suit, without trousers or boots, which he could not be induced to wear, he would visit the barracks and streets of Sydney and Newcastle, when on a visit imitating the voice and gait of the Governor and several principal officers, with a request, "len um dump," which meant the centre part of a Spanish dollar of the value of 1s.