

## No. 188.—THE HUNTER RIVER.

## THE WONNARUA TRIBE AND LANGUAGE.

By ROBERT MILLER, Esq.

THE Wonnarua language is more nearly related to that of the Hawkesbury than to any other; at the same time it has many words found in Wiiratheri, and some which were used by the Sydney tribe. Mr. Miller, from whom I received my information concerning the Wonnarua tribe, tells me that when he first knew them they occupied the Hunter and all its tributaries from within ten miles of Maitland to the apex of the Liverpool Ranges, an area which he sets down at two thousand square miles. My informant also points out that he lived in the Hunter River district for several years, having settled there in 1841. At that time, he says the tribe numbered about 500 individuals, but it is now almost extinct, the result of increased infanticide, debauchery, diseases introduced by the Whites, exposure to rain (which the aborigines avoided in great measure before we interfered with their modes of life), bronchitis, and rheumatic fever. Their clothing used to be an opossum-skin cloak, and a girdle of spun opossum hair next the skin, and their principal ornament a nautilus shell cut into an oval shape and suspended from the neck by a string. They also anointed the person on gala occasions with a mixture of red ochre and fat, and lived in bark *mia-miams* like those in use in all the southern portions of the continent. Their effects were the ordinary spears, wommera, shields, and war-boomerangs, and also the boomerang which returns when thrown, which was used partly as a toy and was also thrown into flights of ducks and other birds with very good results. The boomerang used in fights does not return. They had also

bags made of platted swamp-grass; *koolaman* or wooden bowls, two or three feet long, for holding water at the camp; tomahawks of hard dark-colored stone, which were first chipped and then ground to an edge; knives made of flint for cutting up meat, and also chips of flint with which they skinned animals. For food they got the kangaroo and emu, which they killed with spears and captured with nets, besides the other animals and reptiles found in their country; as also a variety of roots, one of which was that of the water-lily. These they roasted in the usual way, or baked in the heaps of cinders and stone (or cinders and lumps of clay) usually called ovens. The young of both sexes were prohibited from eating certain sorts of meat. They had also at about sixteen years of age to undergo the ceremonies of having a tooth knocked out, the septum of the nose pierced, and the painful operation of being scarred on the back, shoulders, stomach, and occasionally on the legs. At the same age the males were *made young men* with many secret ceremonies. Until the advent of the Whites, cannibalism also prevailed to the extent of eating portions of a slain enemy by way of triumph.

In their marriages they were strictly exogamous; men obtained their wives in exchange for female relatives; females becoming wives at twelve and mothers at sixteen years of age. Polygamy prevailed, and a large number of the men were unable to obtain wives owing partly to the paucity of female children reared. Infanticide was practised, and is ascribed by Mr. Miller to the impossibility of a woman carrying more than one young child in her wanderings. Men renowned as warriors frequently attacked their inferiors in strength and took their wives from them. Widows got another husband in the tribe, and children belonged to the tribe of the father.

The Wonnarua had some idea of a Great Spirit, but what the idea was my informant does not know. They had, too, a custom of daubing their hands and feet with a compound of fat and red ochre, and then impressing them on

the sides of caves. The canoes were sheets of bark, cut from suitable trees in such a manner as to give a little elevation to the sides and ends. Fish they caught with nets and three-pronged spears. The average height of the men Mr. Miller estimates at five feet six inches, though some of them were upwards of six feet, and the women at five feet. As a rule, their hair was long and lank, one or two being curly and one woolly. The dead were interred in a sitting posture, the grave being covered with logs to prevent wild dogs getting at the corpse. Their wars were the results of trespasses on their lands by neighbouring tribes (generally by the Kamilaroi tribes) and the abduction of females. They had a salutation on meeting which was "*anigunya*," the meaning of which is not stated.

The old men, as usual, used to talk over the affairs of the tribe, and generally persuaded its members to adopt their views, which Mr. Miller looks on as a sort of government; but no authority existed.\* In cases of sickness, certain impostors in the tribe used to pretend to extract bits of stick or stone from the seat of pain with their mouths; for rheumatism the skin was scarified; the gums bled for toothache, and hot stones applied to relieve various sorts of pains. Wounds were plastered with wet clay, and bleeding staunched by the application of a sort of spongy bark.

Besides his translation of my Common Vocabulary, Mr. Miller supplies the following words, amongst which will be found the names of the four cardinal points:—

## ADDITIONAL WORDS.

Arm - - - wadtra.	Calf of the leg - woolaoma.
Forearm - - - murumae.	Ankle - - - waingoor.
Upper arm - - - kinian.	Toe - - - eulo.
Fingers - - - mutera.	Toes - - - beriel.
Knee - - - waroo.	Forehead - - - milero.

\* Englishmen generally seem with difficulty to realize the idea of a people living entirely without government as our Blacks do, and not unfrequently dub some intelligent man of a tribe King Billy or King Tommy.

ADDITIONAL WORDS—*continued.*

Eyebrows - - - yenderra.	South wind - - - kurrenan.
Man's breast - - - yokoll,	Hot wind - - - burrumi.
- - - mooralong.	Cold wind - - - tukkera.
Chin - - - mundoo.	Whirlwind - - - bolee.
Hips - - - karbalong.	Koolaman or - - - koka.
Dry bark - - - terrakee.	wooden water
Dead tree - - - kookyal.	bowl
Burnt stump - - - wallangan.	Honey - - - kerega.
Leaf - - - eele.	A shadow - - - gungool.
Green wattle - - - pattigi.	A bag - - - buacul.
Kangaroo-rat - - - turumbi.	Raised scars on weerong,
Bandicoot - - - koitoun.	skin - - - mooberra.
Flying squirrel - - - petuong.	Net - - - turrila.
Black snake - - - mutoo-cungoan.	A hole - - - dingung.
Brown snake - - - tunibadong.	Rainbow - - - turumbol,
Tortoise - - - kutamong.	wooralegan.
Eel - - - kannung.	An animal's tail - - - batan.
Pigeon - - - murramaa.	Feathers - - - ering.
Wallaby - - - barinbellow.	Wings - - - kilkin.
Soldier ant - - - turkol, kerral.	Bill of bird - - - karka.
Red ant - - - teemong-	Red - - - kapera.
watawan.	Black - - - tuckdan.
Iguana - - - guerawa, gerua.	White - - - barral-
Magpie - - - goorabul, woing.	weerobarral.
Platypus - - - becan.	Green - - - karowara.
Butcher bird - - - merratta.	A good many - - - kowal-kowal.
Curllew - - - booyuong.	Sick - - - gerrein-manya.
Red parrot - - - wackelara.	Angry - - - merral.
Green parrot - - - peba.	Ironbark-tree - - - terakii.
Swallow - - - billimulmul.	Oak-tree - - - goonei.
Jew lizard - - - wirramin.	Red gum - - - tarin.
Woodpecker - - - bing-gol-gol.	Towards the north kyaubali.
Green ant - - - goonan.	Towards the south bulgargoba.
Wallaroo - - - wallambang,	Towards the east baranbali.
wyanna.	Towards the west wackalaugbali.
Lightning - - - mullo.	Bring water - - - kukundia
	murra.*

\* See translation of *water* in Common Vocabulary.

## No. 188.—THE HUNTER RIVER.

Kangaroo - - womboin, bandar.	Hand - - - mater.
Opossum - - willi.	2 Blacks - - -
Tame dog - - merrie.	3 Blacks - - -
Wild dog - - ukæe.	One - - - munnaan.
Emu - - - murrin.	Two - - - buluarra.
Black duck - -	Three - - - wakkool, nulraw.
Wood duck - -	Four - - - tarri, carrowel.
Pelican - - -	Father - - - beeung.
Laughing jackass kookaburra.	Mother - - - naae.
Native companion	Sister-Elder - marranc.
White cockatoo - wangolong, gar- ribee.	„ Younger -
Crow - - - wagan.	Brother-Elder - binghi.
Swan - - -	„ Younger
Egg - - - kobaan.	A young man -
Track of a foot -	An old man -
Fish - - - makroo.	An old woman -
Lobster - - -	A baby - - wanni, warray.
Crayfish - - -	A White man -
Mosquito - - -	Children - - -
Fly - - - boorolong.	Head - - - gaberong, gaber- undea, geren- bandina.
Snake - - - currewa.	Eye - - - mekong.
The Blacks - - -	Ear - - - pinna.
A Blackfellow - kurri.	
A Black woman - coolberri, apul.	
Nose - - - nockro.	

## No. 188.—THE HUNTER RIVER—continued.

Mouth - - - karka.	Boomerang - - barragan, tootoo- kera.
Teeth - - - undéra.	Hill - - - kooaran.
Hair of the head - woorann.	Wood - - - terackii.
Beard - - -	Stone - - - kumbunding, tunong.
Thunder - - - murrongali.	Camp - - - wattaka, watta- kabung.
Grass - - - tooka, woio, woolo.	Yes - - - wattalong, nawa day, merri.
Tongue - - - myong.	No - - - yallawebung, kae-one.
Stomach - - - warra.	I - - - indua, nuttua.
Breasts - - - abuk.	You - - - natrua, nindrua, aninua.
Thigh - - - balingora.	Bark - - - bekeree, koogera.
Foot - - - tinna.	Good - - - murrong.
Bone - - - taball.	Bad - - - yaracke.
Blood - - - gooara.	Sweet - - -
Skin - - -	Food - - -
Fat - - - wommo.	Hungry - - - kuberigo.
Bowels - - -	Thirsty - - -
Excrement - - -	Eat - - - takiligo.
War-spear - - durrane.	Sleep - - - kungougo.
Reed-spear - -	Drink - - - begenman.
Wommera or werrewy. throwing-stick	Walk - - - wannin.
Shield - - - murrubi, kooreil.	See - - - natan.
Tomahawk - - mundabang.	Sit - - - woorilla, talla- walla.
Canoe - - - buba.	Yesterday - - -
Sun - - - pannal.	To-day - - -
Moon - - - goonduong.	To-morrow - - -
Star - - - meeka, merri.	Where are the Blacks?
Light - - - lauræ.	I don't know - nain giando.
Dark - - -	Plenty - - - kawall.
Cold - - - karring, dookra.	Big - - -
Heat - - - werroo, ewereba.	Little - - - warrae.
Day - - - barraing, burra- galia.	Dead - - - tateba.
Night - - - tookoi or dookoi.	By-and-by - - -
Fire - - - watta.	Come on - - - danaan.
Water - - - kalle, kukun.	Milk - - -
Smoke - - - butta.	Eaglehawk - - kawul.
Ground - - - parri, murrayan.	Wild turkey - -
Wind - - - booromi, burra- maronga.	Wife - - -
Rain - - - mergo, banna, wakaden.	
God - - -	
Ghosts - - - borang.	