

The formation of their skulls is sometimes low, but in many instances large and equal to the average of Europeans. The theory of their inferiority is not strictly supported; few persons who have had opportunity of judging will admit this inferiority of intelligence; it needs only cultivation.

They possess all the tender feelings of our common humanity, weeping over each other's afflictions, as fellow mortals mourning with those who mourn. Exposed to danger and treachery, they are watchful; the rustling of a leaf will make them start to their feet. Acknowledging the law of retaliation, blood for blood, they seldom feel secure.

It would appear that the aborigines of the sea-coast had never ventured far inland, and had never passed the Blue Mountains, as they held to the belief that the interior was inhabited by white people, and that there were large lakes and inland seas.

They are a very law-abiding people; the tribes are under government of the chief elders, who are chosen or elective; they are the leaders in war, and in fact rulers of the tribe.

One of their laws is that none but native weapons shall be used in their battles; another, that an unfair wound shall be punished. Capt. Jack Harvey had bitten a man's lips; the tribe assembled and sentenced him to four blows of a waddy on his head, the justice of which punishment he acknowledged.

While the great change from their natural habits, diet, and mode of living, when brought under the restriction of civilization, and their natural love of freedom—the influence of the elder people on them when they reach the age of twelve, that they must undergo the ceremonies of piercing the nose and knocking out the tooth, &c., &c.—while these failures (not however destitute of civilizing and Christian evidences) are nevertheless disappointing, yet they have proved that these people are not so degraded as represented, that they are not, as has been openly declared, scarce human, and may therefore be destroyed—indeed, that this is the decree of God. The fact is now incontrovertible that they possess much capacity, considerable intelligence, and are capable of instruction; have the same affections, the same domestic and social relationships as ourselves; are subject to special laws, and defend their country with patriotism. That they have not risen to something higher is well expressed by Mr. Marsden, "They have no wants." They live in a fine climate, with no ferocious animals to guard against, no mighty lakes and rivers to navigate; they are therefore in a position needing no exertion to quicken their energies, while by their seclusion from mankind for ages, it is only astonishing that they have not descended still lower in the scale of humanity.

They have much natural nobility of character, and much groundwork to work upon. Their case is far from hopeless: Faith removes mountains. Miracles, says Mr. Simeon, have ceased, but wonders have not. Let any man go forth with faith and prayer and perseverance, and he will accomplish wonders. Therefore, in great undertakings, give me the man who loves to trample on apparent impossibilities.

An aboriginal youth is not allowed any of the privileges of manhood, which include not only permission to take a wife (when he can catch one from some neighbouring tribe), but also the right to eat certain kinds of food, before he has undergone certain ceremonies, which, as they are extremely painful and revolting, are supposed to test his courage and power of endurance. These differ in various tribes. Knocking out the front teeth and tattooing the back are amongst the mildest operations. The most painful which is in vogue amongst the South Australian blacks is depilation. The unfortunate victim is laid on his back, his body daubed with clay and ochre, and then the old medicine man of the tribe deliberately plucks every hair from the body of the suffering wretch, accompanying the business with a low monotonous chant. It is a point of honor to endure these brutalities without a murmur, and, after their completion, the young man is hailed as a warrior by his new comrades, and from that time is treated as a man.

The boys are not allowed to either cut or comb their hair until they undergo the ceremony of manhood. They are also prohibited from eating certain game. When I have travelled with the tribes, I have observed when we obtained honey the young men dared not partake. When of age, the tribes assemble at night, the youth or youths are seized; the women trying to protect them, their beards are torn out, and their hair combed by spears; they are then smeared with grease and red ochre. For three days and three nights they are not allowed to sleep or eat, and only to drink water through a reed; for six months they are obliged to walk naked, with a slight covering round their loins; they have to undergo three times the plucking out of the beard, and must refrain from any food eaten by women. Everything is sacred from the touch of women. They are not allowed to marry until the time of trial has expired, but they are allowed promiscuous intercourse with the young girls.