

CHAPTER IV.

Efforts made to civilize the Aborigines—Rev. L. E. Threlkeld—Results of Missions—Government support of Missions—Society for propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts—Population in the Port Phillip District—Examination before the Legislative Council on the Aboriginal Question—Lieut. Sadleir's evidence—Rev. L. E. Threlkeld's evidence—Captain Grey's opinion.

THE following may be considered as a brief summary of the several attempts to christianize and civilize the aborigines. Several portions of the Bible have been translated, but as the natives are fast acquiring English, this need not be continued.

The Rev. Mr. Threlkeld was a translator into the aboriginal language, as appears from the following, but the tribes in question are now extinct:—

" AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE.

" *To the Editor of the Herald.*

" Sir,—In your issue of the 2nd instant appears a short review (from the *Sydney Mail*) on the recently published work, entitled 'Kamilaroi and other Australian Languages,' by the Rev. W. Ridley, lately issued by the New South Wales Government Printing Office. In your remarks on the work I notice the following:—

' If we mistake not, the Rev. L. E. Threlkeld was the *first* to produce any publication on the subject of the aboriginal language, his little work, containing 'Specimens of the Dialect of the Aborigines of New South Wales,' having been given to the world in 1827. In the same year he issued another essay, in which he endeavoured to throw the language into grammatical shape; and in 1856 appeared his 'Key to the Structure of the Aboriginal Language.'

" As the above gives but a very brief outline of the work rendered by my father (carried on for sixteen years under great privation and through many trying circumstances) in the interests of the aborigines of this Colony during his mission, commencing in January, 1825, and terminating December, 1841, I trust you will not consider that I am needlessly trespassing upon your columns in placing before you a few of the more prominent results emanating from those labours, especially as it would appear, from the recent publication, that our Government is more alive to the importance of preserving reliable works on the dialect of the aboriginal language than it was at the time of their publication.

" The Rev. L. E. Threlkeld's first production was 'Specimens of the Aboriginal Language,' printed and issued for publication (as mentioned by you) in 1827.

" In 1829, under the auspices of the Venerable Archdeacon Broughton (subsequently Bishop of Australia), he completed the translation of the Gospel of St. Luke, which was revised in 1831, and the MSS. forwarded to the Archdeacon.

" In 1832 a selection of prayers from the Ritual of the Church of England was translated.

" In 1835 his 'Australian Grammar, being a Dialect of the Languages of the Aborigines,' was completed, a copy of which was presented to His late Majesty King William IV, and placed in the Royal Library.

" In 1836 the 'Australian Spelling Book' was completed and printed for the use of the aborigines. Two of the youths then attending the Mission School could read and write in their native tongue. In the same year 'Selections from the Old Testament' were also translated to form reading lessons for the native youth.