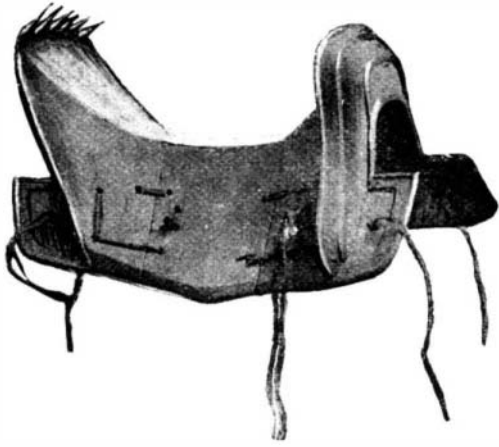


stopped by the Jong Pen of Taklakot, who refused to give them passage through his district. This was a very serious affair, for it meant that the worn-out prisoners would have to take a circuitous route to India, which probably would have caused their death from exposure. The Rev. Mr. Wilson and one of the native authorities of a contiguous section of India compelled the official to remove his prohibition and give his sanction to the prisoners being conveyed to Taklakot. The prisoners were hospitably received by the Rev. Mr. Wilson, who is also a medical man, and he examined their dreadful injuries and attended to them. The Tibetan guards made over some of Mr. Landor's property, but of course a great deal of it was irreparably damaged, while his dry plates, which would have presented simply invaluable memoranda of the trip, were destroyed.

The account of Mr. Landor's adventures is so extraordinary that the government made an investigation into the affair under the care of Mr. J. Larkin, a magistrate, who corroborated Mr. Landor in every particular. Mr. Landor held Chinese passports, and his conduct during his stay in that country did not warrant the officials in treating him in that cruel way.



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SPIKED SADDLE.

The Appendix to "In the Forbidden Land" contains various documents and depositions which fully corroborate the statements made in the book. The volumes are filled with information regarding the Tibetans, their customs and habits, though space forbids us to do more than refer to a few of them.

The Tibetan woman is superior to the Tibetan man, but is not prepossessing. Mr. Landor covers the matter in saying that he "saw women who were less ugly than others." With filth that is undisturbed by bathing and with never changed clothes, it is not likely that they would appeal to an Englishman. The women wear trousers and boots like the men, and have, in addition, a long gown reaching to their feet. The hair is carefully parted in the middle and plastered with melted butter over the scalp as far down as the ears. There is no standard of morality among unmarried women of the middle class, and the marriage customs are peculiar. If an eldest son marries an eldest sister, all the sisters of the bride become his wives. Should he, however, begin by marrying the second sister, all the sisters of the bride, from the second down, become his property, and so on. The bridegroom's brothers are all regarded as their brother's wife's husbands, and they one and all cohabit with her, as well as with her sisters, if she has any. But enough of this disgusting subject, which is only excelled in horror by the Tibetans' disposal of their dead.

In the case of the rich, the body is sometimes cremated or again sewu up in skins and thrown into running streams. The commonest method is to take the corpse to the top of a hill and expose it to dogs and ravens to devour the body; then the Lamas circu-



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COAT TORN BY SADDLE.

late around it, using their prayer wheels, and, finally, all sit or squat down near the body. The Lamas with their daggers cut to pieces what remains of the flesh. The higher Lama eats the first morsel, then the other Lamas and the relations proceed with this ghastly ceremony until all the bones are clear and dry.

In case a man dies of a pestilence, the birds and dogs and relations will not go near the corpse, but the Lamas will devour all the rotten human flesh. It is natural and hardly to be regretted that such ceremonies should result in many deaths from cadaver poisons.

The chapters devoted to Mr. Landor's visit to a Lamaery and Temple are very interesting. He was able to get much information from the Lamas relative to their religion. Each monastery has a number of Lamas of high position and as its head a grand Lama, which should not be confounded with the Dalai Lama of Lhasa, who is believed to have an immortal soul transmigrating successively from one body to another. All the larger Lamaeries support one or more sculptors, who travel all over the district and go to the most in-

accessible spots to carve on rocks, or stones, the everlasting inscription "Omnia mani padme hun." Sometimes these inscriptions are of colossal size. These words refer to the reincarnation of Buddha from a lotus flower. The prayers of the Lamas are of a singularly conventional type. They use the mechanical prayer wheel revolved by hand, wind power, or water power. They seem entirely ignorant of the nature of spiritual prayer. In Tibet, as in other Buddhist countries, there are nunneries besides the Lamaeries, but the less said of them the better. The Lamas themselves are the worst specimens of a thoroughly beastly people. They particularly relish human blood, which they drink out of a cup made from a human skull.

MESSAGE STICKS.

By R. H. MATHEWS, Esq., L.S.

MESSAGE sticks, or, as they are sometimes called, "talking sticks" or "blackfellows' letters," have occasionally been referred to by writers on the customs of the Australian aborigines, but comparatively little information has been recorded on this subject. From inquiries I have made personally, and through numerous correspondents in different parts of Australia, I am forced to the conclusion that the value of "stick letters" as a means of conveying information from one tribe to another at a distance has been considerably overrated and misunderstood. To the student of ethnology, however, they are highly interesting, as showing an attempt by a primitive and uncultivated people to develop some method of communicating their thoughts to others by means of symbols.

Speaking in general terms, the stick is given to the messenger to assist him in remembering the heads of the message by connecting them with certain pictures, marks, or notches cut upon it, which are explained to him before he sets out on his journey. The stick also serves as his credentials, being a confirmation or guarantee of the genuineness of the message.

These "stick letters" are pieces of wood of different sizes, varying in length from about an inch and a half to eighteen inches or more. They are in some cases flat pieces of wood, ornamented more or less by carving, and are often painted a bright color; in other instances they are merely a rounded piece of wood, or a rod cut from the branch of a tree or sapling; while a still more primitive kind are made of a piece of bark. Instances have been observed where marked pieces of bone were used in a similar manner. They are marked in various ways, consisting of notches, dots, strokes, curves; and also with triangular, quadrilateral, and zigzag devices. In some of the more elaborately carved there are rude representations of human beings, while in some tribes they are not marked at all, but consist of a plain piece of wood. "Stick letters" summoning festive gatherings are sometimes decorated with the down of birds, with or without other marks. In some tribes the wood used for making the stick must be of the same totemic division as the sender of the message; and the man who carries it must also belong to that division. Many of the devices on these sticks are apparently for ornamentation only, and would depend upon the artistic skill of the maker. The marks are cut upon them with a piece of sharp stone, bone, or broken shell.

These "talking sticks" appear to have been made according to some conventional design known among the tribes using them. One kind of stick is used for a corroboree where a large number of people assemble; another is used to convey messages or reminders between friends residing at some distance from each other; a certain sort of stick would be used for festive gatherings, another in cases of sickness or death, and so on. These sticks, differing perhaps but little in general appearance, would, nevertheless, be recognized by the people inhabiting the tract of country in which they are used, and would thus, to a certain extent, have a more or less fixed significance, which would, however, be very much restricted and of little use, unless accompanied by a verbal explanation by the bearer.

Message sticks are used in summoning an assembly for hostile purposes, meetings for corroborees, and the other gatherings and greetings referred to in the last paragraph. The messenger who carries the stick and message is generally a young man, strong and active, and a good traveler, who is, therefore, well qualified to discharge his duties. He is generally more or less known among, or is related to, the tribes he visits, and is, to some extent, acquainted with their dialect. On his arrival at the men's camp, he hands the message stick to the person to whom he has been directed to deliver it, giving the name of the sender, and explaining the meaning. The party who receives the "stick letter" carries it with him when he goes to the place to which he has been invited. Sticks, conveying friendly messages or greetings, could be carried by the women and youths, as well as by the men. There being no urgency for the speedy delivery of these friendly messages, they are not generally sent direct, but may be a considerable time in reaching their destination. A messenger sent to a tribe to report the death of a relative or person with whom the sender of the information was acquainted would have his face painted with pipeclay.

The bearer of a message is never molested by any of the tribes through whose country he may have occasion to travel while engaged on this duty, even although the people through whom he may pass are not on friendly terms with his tribe. As far as I can learn, this rule is of universal prevalence among native tribes throughout the continent, and a breach of it would lead to retaliation.

The practice of using marked pieces of wood to accompany messages sent from one tribe to another may have been copied from some of the invading races who came to Australia in the remote past, and has been handed down in a rude form to the present day. The custom has been observed among the aborigines in different parts of Australia, but was much more highly developed in some districts than in others; and was, so far as I can learn, altogether unknown among some tribes. The latter statement should, however, be tested by further investigation.

Meetings for the performance of the initiation ceremonies are summoned by a messenger carrying a bull-roarer, the several articles comprising a man's dress,

some native weapons, and occasionally a quartz crystal. Having already given complete details of how these important messages are delivered in my articles describing the initiation ceremonies of several native tribes, it is unnecessary to refer to them any farther at present.

Although the Australian "stick letters" were not of themselves sufficient to convey any intelligible meaning beyond the crudest kind, there appears to be some evidence that they were a rude kind of picture writing, which would perhaps have developed into a more connected and useful form in process of time. It is well known that gesture language was more or less extensively recognized and understood among all Australian tribes. Gesture language may be called "idea speaking," and pictographs "idea writing." It has been said that written syllabaries and alphabets have been developed from pictographs, and it is suggested that in the picture writing of different races the beginning of our modern manuscripts and principal books are to be found.

From a number of message sticks in my possession I have selected three, shown in the annexed illustration, which are drawn to a scale of three inches to one inch lineal of the sticks from which they are copied.

Figs. 1 and 2. These drawings represent the two sides of a message stick made by Belay and Kunganooy, two brothers of the Kubbi section and iguana totem, both of whom are chief men of the Tinanburra tribe, and was dispatched to Nanee, Kumbo Kangaroo, one of the head men of the Culgoa tribe, residing near Goodooga. The makers of the stick gave it, together with a verbal message, to a blackfellow whose name I did not learn, who brought it from Tinanburra to Toulby, a distance of about sixty miles, where he handed it over to a Kubbi iguana, a man of the Culgoa tribe. This man brought it to Tatalla, on the Culgoa River, about ten miles from Toulby, where he met "George," a half caste, a Kubbi padamelon, who is a "tracker" attached to the Goodooga Police Station, and who was then at Tatalla on official duty. George then brought the stick on to Goodooga, and handed it to Nanee, the man to whom it was originally sent, together with the verbal message he had received from the man who gave it to him at Tatalla. This message was to the effect that Belay and Kunganooy requested Nanee and his two brothers, Bindi and Bunjalah, to come to Tinanburra for the purpose of joining them in a big corroboree which was shortly to be held there. Tinanburra is on the Cuttaborra River in Queensland, and Goodooga is on the Bokhara River in New South Wales, the distance between the two places being upward of a hundred miles.

The two heads alongside each other in the middle of



the stick (No. 1) are the two brothers sending the message, and the single head at each end are the two brothers of Nanee, to whom the message was sent. There are seventy-six notches, or nicks, altogether, forty-two of them being on one edge of the stick. On the other edge there are eighteen notches, and then a smooth space of about an inch and a quarter, after which there are sixteen more notches. These notches are added merely for ornamentation. The remaining marks on the flat surface, and also all the marks on the other side of the stick (No. 2), consisting of V-shaped lines, triangles, and quadrilaterals of the yamun-yamun pattern, are for ornamental purposes only. Bunches of the white down of birds were fastened on the ends of the stick, being tied to it by means of strings attached to the notched projections at each end. These decorations are not shown in my drawing. This stick is eight inches and one-tenth in length, an inch and one-tenth across at the widest part, and a quarter of an inch thick.

Fig. 3. This is a message stick, or token, sent by a man of the Clarke River tribe to one of the blacks at the Basalt River, Queensland. The messenger who brought it said it was a reminder to the Bluff Downs natives to bring plenty of handkerchiefs and other fancy things when they next visited the first mentioned tribe. The length of the stick is five inches and three-eighths and its diameter half an inch. It is simply a round piece of wood, one-third of the circumference of which is shown in the drawing, the remainder being marked in the same way. The markings consist of V-shaped or zigzag lines, cut with tolerable regularity and sameness throughout the whole length of the stick.

Fig. 4. The message stick here represented is a round piece of wood, a little over half an inch in diameter and six inches long, and is painted red. It was sent by one of the blacks on the Clarke River to a blackfellow known as "Billy," residing at Bluff Downs station, on the Basalt River, asking him and his people to come to the Ana Branch, as a big corroboree was coming off. The localities mentioned are in the North Kennedy district, Queensland. The stick is marked all over in a somewhat similar manner to Fig. 3.

The foregoing article is abridged and revised from a paper contributed by me to The American Anthropologist, Washington; Vol. X., pp. 288-297; plate vii.