

AUSTRALIAN MESSAGE STICKS.

Mr. R. H. Mathews, who has exceptional opportunities of studying the customs of the aborigines of Australia, describes, says the "Leisure Hour," a number of message-sticks or stick-letters, used as a means of conveying information from one tribe to another. These sticks are shown in reproductions of his drawing in the "American Anthropologist." The two sides of the stick represented in Nos. 1 and 2 contain a message from Nanee, a head-man of one tribe, to Belay, one of the head-men of an-

other tribe, appointing a meeting for the purpose of holding a corroboree. Nanee (a) sent the message from the river (b) by the messenger (c), via the rivers (d), (e), and (f), to Belay (g); the stick was despatched at new moon (h), and Belay and his tribe are expected to be at the river (f) at full moon (i). The ground where the two tribes are to hold a big corroboree is indicated by (j). The messenger is shown standing by Belay, the receiver of the message, to indicate that he will remain with the latter and his tribe until they are ready to start for the place of meeting. Nos. 5 and 6 represent a stick used to convey a similar message from two brothers (represented by the two heads in the middle of

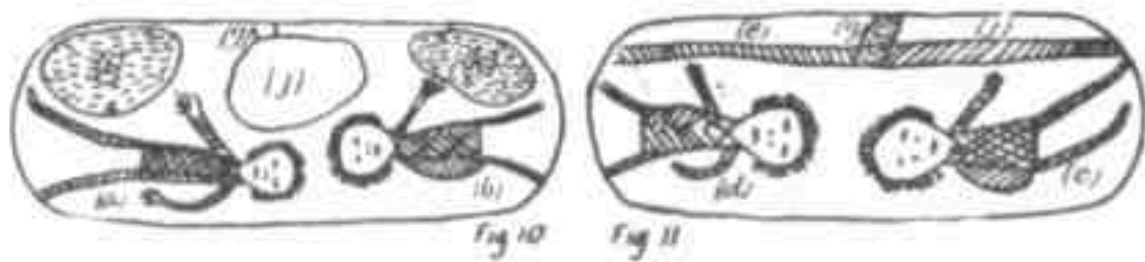
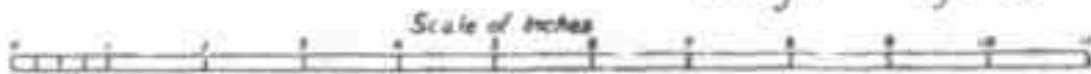
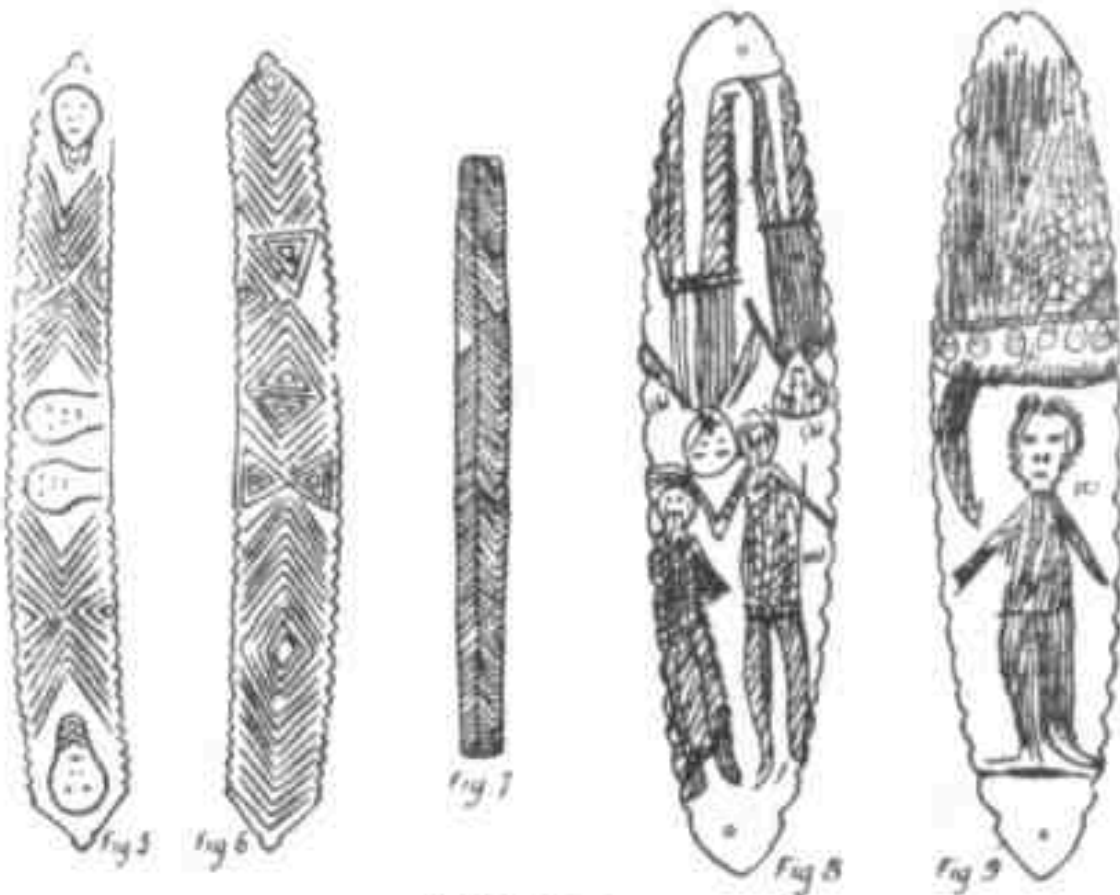
sented by the two heads in the middle of the stick) of one tribe, to two brothers of another tribe. Nos. 8 and 9 signify that a head-man (a) with his wife (represented by the figure alongside) and two other blacks (b) (b) wish to meet the recipient (c) of the message, and desire that he will bring the blacks of his own tribe with him. Nos. 10 and 11 request that the recipient of the message stick will muster his tribe for a big corroboree, and show the tracks to be followed to the ground where the meeting will take place.

Mr. Mathews is of opinion that, generally speaking, stick-letters are only



supplementary to verbal messages, the

supplementary to verbal messages, the pictures and marks upon them serving to assist the memory of the messenger, and also to confirm the genuineness of the messages. The bearer of a message stick is never molested, even when he has to pass through the districts of tribes unfriendly to his own.



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