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BULLETIN No. 17.

POSTURES AND ABNORMALITIES.

(Pls. xviii.-xxiv.; figs. 43-51.)

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- 1. Sleep.—Judging from my own experience I cannot say that any position assumed during sleep is customary, but from that of others whose opinions are worth considering, it would seem that the habitual posture of sleep is a coiled condition of the body resting upon its side (Pl. xviii., fig. 1), without the head being raised, at Cape Bedford and Cape Grafton, but with the head resting on a hand or arm at the Tully River and Princess Charlotte Bay. On the other hand, I have noticed that in the coiled position, it is the stomach and not the back which is invariably turned towards the fire. The natives are said to habitually sleep on the back with the head low on the Pennefather River, but with one or both hands supporting the head on the Bloomfield River. The Princess Charlotte Bay Blacks are also said to often lie on the stomach, or back, with the head supported by the hands. There is reported to be a very marked habit amongst the Cape Grafton children of swinging their heads and bodies from side to side, while in the sitting position, when lulling themselves to sleep.
- 2. Standing.—Amongst the males there is everywhere a common position assumed in standing at ease, viz., the placing of one foot just above the opposite knee (Pl. xviii., fig. 2), the balance

of the body being maintained by resting it against a tree, the arm upon a spear, the hand or thigh upon a wommera.

- 3. Walking.—In walking there would appear to be great variations in the degrees to which the feet are turned outwards. The palms are usually held to the side; amongst the Cape Bedford Tribe only two individuals were noticed to hold them to the front. The faster the gait, the greater the swing of the arms, unless of course one hand happens to be carrying the spears. They can all walk their twenty-five to thirty miles a day easily, if required.
- 4. Sitting.—In the neighbourhood of the Pennefather and Batavia Rivers, and elsewhere in the Peninsula, and often observable in the North West, the native, before sitting down, clears a circular space in which to squat. If on sandy soil, he will stand on one foot and brush aside with the other, in a more or less circular movement, any leaves or sticks that may be lying there; if on grass, he will bend down to pluck out the main tussocks. In the bush, in the Pennefather River area certainly, it is the business of the woman to clear this circular space (of grass, leaves, etc.), on which she and her husband will be camping for the night.

Men usually squat with more or less open thighs, and the shins doubled underneath (Pl. xix., figs. 1 and 3); but, as I have noticed both in the extreme west and east of the State, while one shin may be tucked under one thigh, the other may be lying upon the opposite one (Pl. xix., fig. 1). The illustrations shew the more common of the postures assumed by the males in the sitting position. With the women, the thighs are closed, and turned more or less laterally, with the shins tucked underneath, and feet projecting from one side. But ordinarily, so it seems to me, a female will sit with the legs closely apposed, and stretched straight out in front of her. When, however, a woman is in any strange camp, or in her own camp, with strangers present, she often sits with the thighs open, but with the one heel drawn well up into her fork as a screen.

5. Swimming.—The Lower Tully River Natives swim in a far more vertical position than do Europeans; furthermore, instead of breasting the water, the right shoulder appears to occupy the most advanced position. The right arm, starting with bent elbow, makes a clean sweep downwards, outwards and backwards until, at the end of the stroke, the elbow is fully extended. The left arm remains sharply bent throughout the

stroke and limits a far smaller circle, the elbow appearing above the water-surface at each stroke. The legs, not much separated. would seem to work "dog-fashion." If I could liken this manner of swimming to anything of ours, it would be something after the style of the ordinary side-stroke. When swimming any long distances, the Bloomfield River Blacks will go hand-over-hand fashion like a dog; otherwise, the body is tilted laterally, one arm doing the usual side-stroke, the other working pretty close to the body, and moving the fore-arm somewhat vertically. In diving any long distance, and to ensure rapidity of speed, the one arm, instead of doing the ordinary side-stroke will be strongly circumrotated vertically from behind forwards over the head. In all cases, the lower extremities are markedly brought into requisition. On the Pennefather River and at Cape Bedford, either the breast-or side-stroke, according to pace required is brought into requisition. The fact of a whole group of natives, though occupying the lands bordering a river, not being able to swim has already been drawn attention to1.

6. Tree-Climbing.—The various methods adopted in climbing depend in very great measure upon the size, height and slope of the tree. Where the butt is comparatively small and vertical, the native will clutch it with the two feet on the same horizontal level, the knees being kept well out (Pl. xx., fig. 1); thus firmly planted, he drags his body up hand-over-hand fashion, and by a repetition of the movement rapidly advances. This sort of climbing is the chati-balgin of the Mallanpara occupying the Lower Tully River District, the second half of the word signifying the jumping-motion of a wallaby.

In the case of a long dependent vine, the black climbs it handover-hand (Pl. xxi., fig. 1), getting a purchase by grasping it between the first and second toes—MAL parpan.

Where the size and slope of the butt admits, e.g., a cocoa-nut or other palm, the native will just walk up the tree (Pl. xx., fig. 2), throwing the weight of his body backwards, overbalancing being prevented by his clutching the tree firmly with his hands. MAL balngai-chanin, where balngai signifies "to cross" in the sense of a log laid horizontally, and chanin means "to stand."

7. When the butt is too large, and the first limb not within reach, a very common practice is to place a forked stick at an angle up against the tree (Pl. xxi., fig. 4) and walk up it. At Cape Bedford such a forked sapling is called a walmbar, the same

¹ See Navigation—Ante, p. 2.

term as is applied to a log thrown across a stream for walking over On Mornington Island an interesting development of this

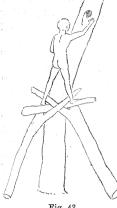


Fig. 43,

method consisted of two such forks placed upon the butt in such a way as not only to interlock but also to support a horizontal piece (fig. 43); this forms a kind of platform upon which the islander can stand securely while cutting out a bees' nest, etc.

8. To ascend a tree with the Calamus "lawyer-cane" climber2, the following procedures are adopted :- they were all demonstrated to me by a Tully (lefthanded) native, an expert in the art, in that he had the moon-shaped cicatrix cut on either buttock, indicative of his special skill in the craft³. This pliable caneclimber (MAL. kambai) is specially prepared by greasing with fat, and when not

in use is always kept in the shade, and at one extremity is tied into a knot4.

(a) A more or less straight tree. The right hand holds the cane just in advance of the knot, the cane being then passed

round the tree, tightened up with the left hand, and passed in a half-turn from under the wrist to over the elbow-groove and so to under the arm-pit (fig. 45). Slanting himself backwards (Pl. xviii., fig. 3), the native, with elbows a little out, gives a jerk as he raises the cane, simultaneously taking a step up; by repeating the movement, he thus gradually makes pro-The advance is always on the outer curve of the bend of the tree. Thus, supposing



Fig. 45.

the tree is spirally curved, the course of the ascent is in a

²The local Mallanpara word bumaren is the verb indicating the ascent of a tree by this means.



A specimen in Dr. Roth's collection from Miriam Vale, where it is known as yu-rol, measures twenty-four feet in length; to the Tarumbal of Rockhampton it was known as a bá-rin or ku-ti.

3 Here on the Tully River, there is a half-moon cicatrix cut on the buttocks of men who are considered to be expert tree climbers (fig. 44). Such a half-moon scar (MAL. kauren), which may be supplemented with small horizontal cuts, is said to teach the owner how to climb properly.

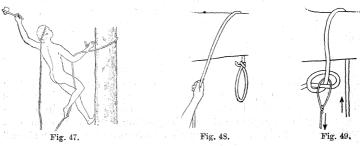
spiral, and some boys can thus only climb such a more or less straight tree.

- (b) The trunk branches into an acute fork. Should the treetrunk after attaining a certain height, branch into an acute fork, the native will slack out more and more of the cane over the further limb while he advances correspondingly up the nearer one, until such time as he can step into the intervening wedge whence he can make a fresh start on either of the limbs more convenient.
- (c) To free the hand holding the distal extremity of the cane, he accomplishes his purpose by passing the extremity of the cane behind his knee (Pl. xxi., fig. 2), which is very acutely bent, along the shin into the grasp of his first and second toes (fig. 46).
- (d) To free the hand holding the proximal (knotted) extremity (Pl. xxi., fig. 3). Having completed the previous movement he passes his now free hand under the cane and reaches gradually along until he seizes the knotted extremity; as soon as he has a firm grip, the original one can be released.



Fig. 46.

(e) To manœuvre an outstanding branch at a considerable height is only what a few expert climbers can do. It is mastered thus:—The hunter will carry up with him, by means of a loop around his fore-head or neck (fig. 47) a sort of "guide-rope," i.e., another length of much lighter cane (but about twice as long as the height of the outstanding branch from the ground) and advance as high up as the limb in question will admit. He then frees one hand, and passes the "guide-rope" over the branch to his friends below (fig. 48); as soon as it reaches them,



he lets go of it. His mates underneath now attach a much heavier cane to this guide-rope, and pull it up again (fig. 49). As soon as this latter one reaches him from over the branch, he

detaches it (the guide thus falling to the ground), makes a slip-

noose (fig. 50) in it with his free hand and teeth, and tightens it with a pull (fig. 51). He next takes a rest for a few minutes, comes down the tree, and when refreshed, reclimbs the hanging cane hand-over-hand fashion with the help of his toes; he is thus enabled to climb on to and over the branch, and then start afresh, if necessary, up the continuation of the trunk.

This method of climbing a tree with a Fig. 50. Fig. 51. prepared cane I have seen used along the coast-line from Cape Grafton in the north to as far south as Miriam Vale, i.e., below Gladstone in the south. I have never come across anything like it however in the North-Western Districts.

- 9. On the Bloomfield River and in the Peninsula, there are modifications of it as follows. Thus, in the former district, when the tree is of comparatively large size and somewhat bent, the black will take some handfuls of a species of "flag-grass," so common here, put tips to roots, make a few twists, and thus form a short rope—he puts this round the butt, catches hold of each extremity, and climbs upon the upper side with successive upward jerks of the arms which are kept in, and the elbows well Any such method is nevertheless apparently unknown to the Cape Bedford Natives. In the Peninsula, e.g., at the Coen River and on the Pennefather River trees may be climbed with a bark strip of the "mess-mate" (Eucalyptus tetradonta), "match-box bean" (Entada scandens), etc., held at either extremity without any knot in it, and pressing on the tree-butt with the elbow-tips (Pl. xxii., fig. 1), and so jerking a wav up; in the neighbourhood of Mapoon, this procedure is only resorted to in extreme cases, most of the timber being small enough to climb with hands and feet.
- 10. Tree-climbing by cutting steps alternately right and left is fairly common, met with even out on the Wellesley Islands. It has apparently been introduced on the Tully River of late years⁵ although practised at Cardwell only about thirty miles distant; the Tully Natives speak of it as chinda-balgin, chinda signifying any mark or cut, and balgin the jumping motion of a wallaby (Pl. xxii., fig. 2). Though I have used the word "steps"

⁴ From Mr. R. Hislop.

⁵ On the authority of Mr. E. Brooke.

these are but knicks, cut usually with one horizontal and one vertical blow by means of a metal tomahawk, just deep enough to afford adequate support for the big toe; where, as on Mornington Island, a celt of some sort has been used, the knicks must evidently have been hacked with many a blow. Though I have seen this method used on the Pennefather River it is somewhat rare there, but of course, as in all cases of tree-climbing, it is only when the butt does not lend itself to the body obtaining a firm foot-hold, that the tomahawk, the cane-climber, and the forked sapling are brought into requisition.

11. Micturition and Defecation.—From observations made at Capes Grafton and Bedford, on the Bloomfield and Lower Tully Rivers, at the McDonnell and Moreton Overland Telegraph Stations, and in the North-Western Districts, as to the position assumed by the sexes in micturition, I find that it is customary for the male to squat, except on the Bloomfield River, at the McDonnell and Moreton Stations, and for the female to stand with legs apart except at Cape Bedford and in the North West. On the Bloomfield River, the women may occasionally relieve the bladder in the squatting position. The privates are never In the neighbourhood of Glenormiston⁶, outside the hut there has often been noticed a small mound of earth the top of which is scooped out and subsequently beaten down, with the resulting appearance of a volcano in miniature; this receptacle, which is capable of holding quite a quart of fluid, is intended for the women to micturate into. All over the State it is a common practice to wash the hands by urinating over them. A Tully River native to keep himself warm on a cold night, will often urinate over his own legs purposely.

In the Tully River District it is an invariable custom among both sexes, during defecation, to squat with legs apart on a broken bough, stick, or fallen log, always off the ground, on to which they let the droppings fall; both here and on the Bloomfield River a child's excrement is put away in the fork of a tree⁷. Stones, sticks, grass, sand, anything handy in fact, sometimes nothing at all, is used to cleanse the person with after defecation. On the Pennefather River, in the North West, and elsewhere, but certainly not everywhere, a few handfuls of earth are scratched up, and in the excavation so formed, the emunctories after being discharged are covered over with soil.

⁶ According to Mr. J. Coghlan, the late manager there, who is not sure whether this mound is used by the men. Possibly, the receptacle is employed with a view to the preservation of the urine, etc., for subsequent, use—see Roth—Bull. 5—Sect. 158.

⁷ Roth-Bull, 5-Sect. 80.

- 12. Menstruation⁸.—In the Boulia and Cloncurry Districts, a woman during the menstrual period (PPT. kimba-maro=bloodpossessor) keeps strictly to herself out of camp, and will not even walk along the same tracks as the men. On the Tully River she ties a bark blanket round her waist but takes no measures to prevent the discharge soiling her thighs; anything however that is soiled with what comes away from her is planted up in the fork of a tree9. She occupies the hut which the husband now vacates for another, though as often as not he will now camp in the open, on the further side of the fire. The males here are said to be frightened at touching women in this condition not only on account of the smell but also for fear of some of the discharge getting on to their persons. On the Bloomfield River she lives in camp under the same roof as her husband, but both here and in other localities where it is not customary for her to betake herself away, a fire separates husband and wife. On the Pennefather River, though remaining in camp, both she and her male partner take every precaution that he neither touches nor steps over anything that passes from her. Everywhere a woman in this condition is unclean and tabu, and may be even more carefully avoided than the motherin-law; she generally cooks for herself at a separate fire whether living in the camp or out of it.
- 13. Pregnancy and Labour.—During the latter months of pregnancy, a North-West District woman will often rub over her breasts and body some warm powdered ashes with the idea of making the child healthy and strong. All through the period, no restrictions are imposed upon her, but in other districts, her eating certain dietaries will produce various deformities in the child 0. In the neighbourhood of Cape Bedford the vomiting of pregnancy is certainly known. When the confinement is about to take place, the expectant mother invariably betakes herself to a secluded spot at some distance from the camp, and is attended on by her mother or mother's sister (Princess Charlotte Bay, Musgrove and Morehead Rivers), by her mother-in-law (Pennefather River), by an old woman friend, sometimes by no one at all. Alone, in one district (the Upper Georgina), the husband though not in attendance, may be present at the confinement; very old men are similarly privileged in the Leichhardt-Selwyn area, but never young men or boys.

⁸ Roth—Bull. 5—Sects. 89, 90.

⁹ Compare the disposal of a child's excrement (Roth—Bull. 5—Sect. **30.**)

¹⁰ Roth—Bull. 5—Sect. 95.

- 15. The position assumed during labour is far from constant. In the hinterland of Princess Charlotte Bay, the woman will either lie on her back with her head raised, or more generally, bend forwards and support herself on her hands and knees; only if very strong will she take up a sitting position, squatting more or less on her heels. A Bloomfield River Native will assume a kneeling position, her hands and arms supported on a friend's shoulders sitting in front. On the Tully and on the Pennefather Rivers, areas extremely remote, confinement takes place in the squatting position, with thighs well apart, the body resting on the extended arms behind; in the former district, the sufferer may be assisted by a woman-friend either bending over her from behind and pressing, with her hands at the sides, downwards, forwards, and inwards, or at the front with her arms around the patient's loins pressing them towards herself. In the case of the Pennefather woman, she will stay away from camp with her mother-in-law, for three or four weeks. Among the Yaro-inga of the Upper Georgina River, the woman lies on the ground upon her back, with open thighs and drawn-up knees, while the old gin appointed to attend holds her down by the neck and head to prevent her raising herself. The husband, if he be so minded, can take up a position on his wife's left and front whence, a few paces off, he can witness the whole of the proceedings. Amongst the Kalkadun (at Quamby) the patient does not return until about eight or ten days after baby is born. A very old man or two may be present during delivery. Having made a fairly shallow excavation in the sandy soil, she sits over this on her shins and knees, with the thighs well apart; as labour progresses, she either throws her body strongly backwards, as on the Tully and Pennefather Rivers, or forwards so as to rest her hands on the ground, or, if conveniently situated, may grasp some overhanging branch of a tree. In the intervals between the pains a thick cord may be tied pretty firmly round her waist to assist in "pushing the child out," while another old woman will take up mouthfuls of water from a vessel and spit them over the distended abdomen, upon which a sort of massage may also be performed. The genital passages are never touched by anyone, and the baby, without any guidance, is allowed to fall into the shallow depression below.
- 14. The navel-string, before the mother shifts her position, is next held, close to its attachment to the child, between the flats of both hands of one of the old gins, and briskly rolled backwards and forwards until a very marked twist is visible, when it is cut to a length of about five or six inches. Similarly the after-birth is allowed to fall into the cavity where it is either

buried, or more generally destroyed by fire. In other districts, the cord is both tied and cut—tied with Opossum-twine (in the North-West), cane-strip (Lower Tully River), and hacked asunder with stone or shell. Its ultimate fate is either to be buried with the after-birth (Tully River), to be destroyed by fire (Bloomfield River), to decorate the infant, to be presented to certain relatives, or to tabu certain articles in the neighbourhood of which it may be placed. Around Princess Charlotte Bay the only area where I find it customary to tie the cord (KRA. bo-ra) in two places, it is forcibly pulled away from the afterbirth (KRA. nai-úrra) and fixed around the infant's waist. On the Bloomfield River it is similarly dragged off so as to obtain the greatest continuous length possible, and left for quite twelve days or a fortnight hanging round the baby's neck, or coiled around its neck and arm-pit; if at the end of this time it has not rotted away from off the infant, it is removed and burnt close At Cape Bedford, the cord 11 is tied up in a coil and hung on a string round the child's neck, where it is worn for some time, it being finally presented to the father's father if a boy, to the mother's father, if a girl; should either of these old men place it upon a heap of yams, etc., this would be rendered tabu from everybody else except the other grandfathers. In the Upper Georgina area, the navel-string is wound into a ball or roll and forwarded by messenger, at the instance of the father, to his relatives and friends in the neighbouring camps whence presents will now come pouring in. At Cape Grafton the navelstring may be sent round with similar objects in view by tving pieces of it in a waist-circlet. On the Pennefather River the placenta, which is buried at birth, is credited with being connected with the vital principle 12. Here, when the portion of cord finally falls off baby, it is covered with beeswax, wrapped around with bark, and carried in the mother's dilly-bag; she does not bury it until such time as the little one begins to toddle, because were she to make away with it previously, the infant would surely die.

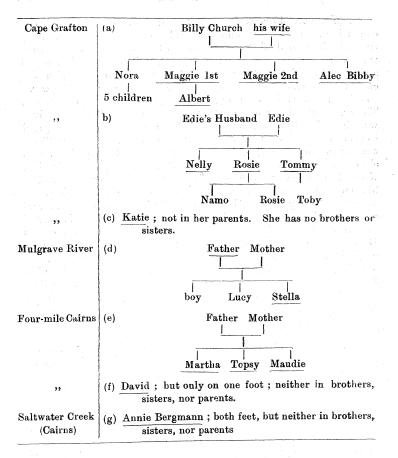
Confinements are easily got over; I remember in particular the case of a woman who walking from Cooktown to Cape Bedford, a distance of twenty-five miles, was confined the same day, and then started the following morning for Cape Flattery¹³.

¹¹ The local name for the placenta is bonor, i.e, a slug.

¹² Roth-Bull. 5 -Sect. 68.

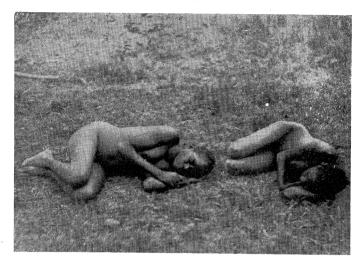
¹³ Amongst the Brisbane natives, immediately the placenta had come away, the mother would go into the water, provided the confinement took place in the day-time; if at night, she would wait until the following morning (*T. Petrie*).

15. Notes on Abnormalities.—Baldness in old people is the exception; out of four hundred and ten natives met with in the neighbourhood of Princess Charlotte Bay, only two old men were thus characterised. Curliness of hair is particularly marked amongst the Tully River Scrub-Blacks as compared with the coastal ones who have it more waved. A more or less wavy condition is prevalent throughout the North Western Districts. The only case of erythrism known to me on the Bloomfield River was that of a little boy; indeed, only three other instances, and these amongst the Tully Natives, were come across during all my travels in Northern Queensland. They were Narro, a lad about eight or nine years, in the local camp on Brooke's Selection. Kachula now (Aug. 1900) on the Johnstone River, as well as his two full-blooded children, a boy and a girl. Red-hair is looked upon by these Mallanpara Blacks as a disgrace, and ridiculed when noticed in Europeans; the local belief is that a person so adorned has a hot temper. In the far North Western Districts, I have noticed a fine growth of hair, over the entire body, including the buttocks, especially amongst the women. peculiarity of want of pigmentation in the hands and feet (Pl. xxiii., fig. 1) has been seen in two cases from Princess Charlotte Bay. One example of simple hare-lip, was observed in a male on the Embley River, and one single example of goitre (? malignant) in a Kalkadun woman at Cloncurry (Pl. xxiii., fig. 2). Left-handedness is fairly common. In one case at Cape Bedford, where not existent in the parents, the four sons are all left handed. Congenital clubfoot is not rare; amongst four hundred and ten natives around Princess Charlotte Bay, there were three cases noticed; one of these was of the left, another of the right, and one of both feet. An allied deformity was seen in two old men in the neighbourhood of Barrow Point, and in Palmer the old chief of the Wakka people at Gladstone. In all three cases the soles could rest perfectly flat as on the gun-case in Pl. xxiv., fig. 1, the malformation evidently residing only in the metatarsus and phalanges. two old Barrow Point folk were brothers, the younger being deformed only in the left foot, similarly to what both parents are stated to have been. A kind of hammer-toe is very prevalent, more in the females than males, around Cape Grafton and the Mulgrave River District generally. At Cape Grafton the fourth toes of both feet are affected (Pl. xxiv., fig. 2), on the Tully River the third (Pl. xxiv., fig. 3) and fourth (Pl. xxiv., fig. 4), in both areas the peculiarity appearing to run in families. The names of the individuals underlined in the following genealogical trees, indicate those who bear (1902) the deformity:-



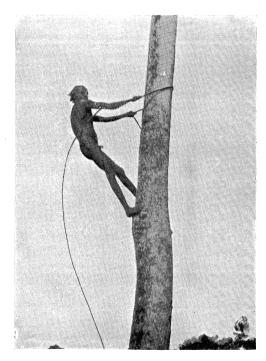
EXPLANATION OF PLATE XVIII.

- Fig. 1. Position assumed in sleep at Capes Bedford and Grafton.
 - ,, 2. Common position assumed in standing at ease.
 - ,, 3. Man climbing a straight tree with the aid of the climbing-cane, and the free end of the cane passed over the elbow.



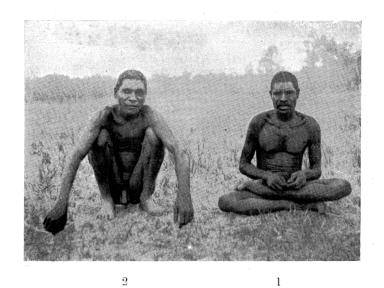
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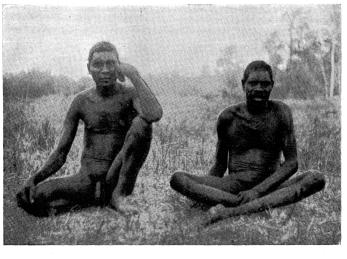




EXPLANATION OF PLATE XIX.

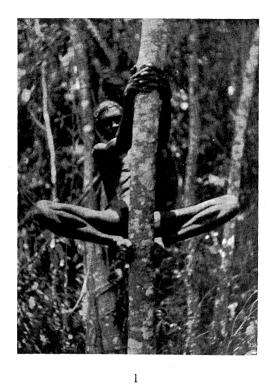
- Fig. 1. Man squatting with the shins doubled underneath, the right one tucked under the left thigh, the left shin lying on the right thigh.
 - ,, 2. Man squatting on the buttocks.
 - ,, 3. Man squatting; a modification of Fig. 1.
 - ,, 4. Man sitting, the right leg prone and doubled, the left upright and bent.





EXPLANATION OF PLATE XX.

- Fig. 1. Butt of tree clutched with the two feet on the same horizontal level, the knees being kept well out.—Lower Tully River District.
 - ,, 2. Man "walking up," the weight of the body thrown backwards.

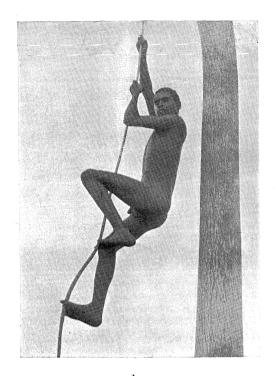


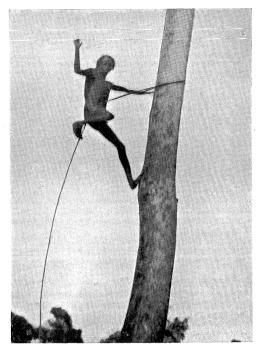


EXPLANATION OF PLATE XXI.

- Fig. 1. Man climbing a vine hand over-hand.
 - ,, 2. Man climbing a tree by means of the climbing-cane, the extremity of the cane passed behind his right knee, which is acutely bent.
 - , 3. Another example of climbing by means of the climbing-cane.
 - , 4. Forked sapling placed against a tree to be climbed, to aid ascent.

 —Cape Bedford.





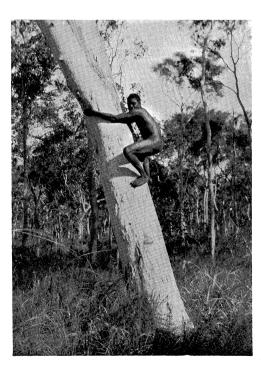




EXPLANATION OF PLATE XXII.

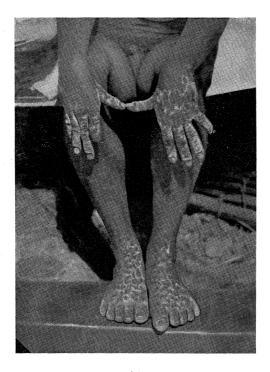
- Fig. 1. Man climbing tree with the aid of a bark strip held at either extremity.—Coen and Pennefather Rivers.
 - ,, 2. Tree climbing by cutting steps right and left alternately.





EXPLANATION OF PLATE XXIII.

- Fig. 1. Partial absence of pigmentation in the hands and feet.—Princess Charlotte Bay.
 - , 2. Goitre in a Kalkadun woman.—Cloncurry.





DESCRIPTION OF PLATE XXIV.

- Fig. 1. Deformity allied to congenital club-foot, seen in two old men, brothers, near Barrow Point. In both cases the soles could rest perfectly flat on the gun case below.
 - ,, 2. A kind of hammer-toe seen in a woman at Cape Grafton, the fourth toes of both feet being affected.
 - ,, 3. A similar case at the Tully River in which the third toes are affected.
 - ,, 4. Another instance from the Tully River in which the fourth toes are affected.

