

were living in an artificial state, and, although retaining many of their physical characteristics—not all—a part of their language, and all the recollection of their recent history, their distinctive character had become very materially modified. For many years, the history of the Tasmanian has been a dark blot upon British civilization. In 1815, their number was estimated at 5,000, which was probably far below the truth. Five years later there were only 340. This enormous loss was not due to disease, nor to military outrages—such as have recently disgraced American arms among the Indians of the West—but solely to the murderous propensities of the early settlers. The natives were always harmless, and have not unjustly been regarded as among the lowest or least advanced members of the human family. But their weakness was no protection against the barbarities of the white population, who were in the habit of poisoning them as vermin, or shooting them as legitimate game. The daughter of an army officer—one of those who went to the colonies with a grant of land, after the close of the war with Napoleon—has described to me her recollections of the time when the neighbouring settlers, meeting in the morning at her father's house and taking an early luncheon on the lawn, would go forth into the bush to shoot blackfellows. This lady was a well-read and accomplished woman, but she never regarded this kind of recreation as any thing more than a perfectly legitimate sport, and she could tell even with enthusiasm of the interest with which the female portion of such parties used to sit over their evening meal and listen to the sportsmen's narrative of a successful excursion.

Under such circumstances it is no wonder that the tribes rapidly diminished, or that, in 1831, when the local government, ashamed of the conduct of the settlers, undertook to protect the aborigines, they were reduced to 196. Being removed to Flinder's Island, they remained there till 1847, but—and I think this important—their number was then reduced to 47, of whom 13 were men. They were then assigned to an old convict station at a beautiful spot on the shores of D'Entrecarteaux's Channel; but here again they died away so rapidly that, as I have said, in 1855 there were only 16 left.

When the late Sir John Franklin was Governor of Van Dieman's Land, he and Lady Franklin took a particular interest in the aborigines, and, on Lady Franklin's nomination, a gentleman named Milligan was appointed "Protector," with special instructions to devote himself to the preparation of a complete history, philological and general, of the