

his fire with his neighbors. The Bandicoot replied that the fire was his alone, by right, and therefore it was his intention to maintain his claim, and to keep it to himself. The two continued to wrangle, when suddenly the Pigeon, seizing, as he thought, an unguarded moment, made a dash to obtain the prize. The Bandicoot quickly saw that affairs had come to a crisis, and, in desperation, determined to set matters at rest effectually; he therefore threw the fire towards the water, there to quench it for ever. But fortunately for the Black man, the sharp eyed Hawk was hovering near the river, carefully watching the whole transaction, and seeing the fire falling into the water, he made a dart towards it, and with a stroke of his wing, knocked the brand far over the stream into the long dry grass of the opposite bank, which immediately ignited and the flames spread over the face of the country. The Black man then felt the fire and said it was good.

I shall conclude this sketch by mentioning a species of trial by ordeal,—a singular and by no means impartial method of testing suspected guilt. Occasions for its exercise are not rare.

One of the tribe, for instance, is found dead; having fallen by the hands of violence, suspicion falls upon some member of the tribe and he is called upon to prove his innocence; he proceeds therefore to kill a kangaroo. Having cooked a portion of this, he gives it to the nearest relative, or adopted brother of the murdered man to eat. If this meat goes down the individual's throat smoothly and without obstruction, and no ill effects follow, it is proof that the suspicion is unfounded, and the accused is accordingly looked upon as guiltless. But if on the contrary the meat stick in the throat of the judge, or afterward cause pain or any disagreeable sensations in the stomach, it is proof positive of the guilt of the party suspected, and he has to answer for the deed. It may be seen at a glance that this is a one-sided proceeding, as the result will, in many cases, to a considerable extent, depend upon the feelings and good will of the party most interested, the accuser: who, in giving his decision, can of course please himself whether or not he allow the meat to stick in his throat on its way down, or can as easily exhibit subsequent symptoms of pain or convulsions, should such be necessary.

I have thus endeavoured to give some idea of the Australian savage in his wild state. Had I been of a more mature age when thrown amongst the natives of Western Australia there is little doubt but that much interesting information could have been added in illustration of the subject I have attempted to elucidate. Before concluding, however, I may be permitted to answer the question frequently put