

are the spear, the boomerang, and the waddy; and their skill in using these has been greatly exaggerated. Some of them are dexterous in spearing fish; but I have frequently put up a mark at five and twenty paces and set four or five natives to work at it with their spears, but I have no recollection of them ever having hit it. When fighting takes place too, it is not an uncommon thing to hear of a battle lasting several hours, and ending without any body being much the worse. They dislike coming to close quarters, so that the waddy, as a weapon of war, is very harmless when compared with the tomahawk of the Indian. It is used especially for killing small animals, and it is also a legitimate instrument for keeping the women in order. That a people of so primitive a character as the Australian should be familiar with such an instrument as the boomerang is a point which to my thinking demands careful investigation at the hands of the anthropologist. But this instrument is not in such general use as is frequently supposed. I have more than once met with tribes who could not muster a boomerang among them. It may therefore readily be supposed that skill in the use of that weapon varies much. To throw it accurately towards a mark and to make it return to within a few feet of the thrower, requires considerable practice. I have met with natives who could do this with unerring certainty, but they are not the majority. I have seen a parrot brought down from the top of a high tree, and in a second or two afterwards the boomerang lying at the feet of the thrower; but it must not be supposed that this sort of thing is done every day, or by all the natives. The man who did it had no rival within my experience among his countrymen, and perhaps if I had never met him and witnessed his skill on many occasions I should never have credited the boomerang with so much value as, in good hands, I know it to possess.

It is right I should mention that these remarks, so far as they refer to the incapacity of the Australians, are more applicable to the tribes of the south than to those of the north. Independently of any physical differences, the latter are more warlike than the southerners. Although living in a warmer climate, they are more active and energetic, yet, with this exception, I am not aware that we ought justly to credit them with any higher or more civilized endowments.

My old friend Burke, who, with his companions, Wells and King, was the first white man to cross the Australian continent, and who perished on his return to Cooper Creek through the culpable blundering of one of his own party, found the natives exceedingly troublesome