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NATIVE CORROBOREES

Gentlemen—If the following is worth appearing before the public, and if it comes within the province of newspapers to publish such articles, I shall feel obliged by your giving it insertion.

THE KURE CORROBBERY

Of the many corroborees played in the vicinity of Adelaide, when the annual meeting of the different tribes takes place, none, in point of dramatic effect and uniqueness, equals the Kure, of which, as it is not to be seen every day, a short description will not be, perhaps, without interest to the lovers of novelty.

But here, as with every thing else connected with the aborigines, there seems to be a great deficiency of order and system; for the play of the Kure with all its movements can be lengthened, or shortened, or diversified just according to the caprice of the players themselves; so that no general rules can be given, either respecting its duration or its movements; for out of four or five limes that the kure was performed, each differed from the other in many respects; therefore, the description of one must suffice as an example for the whole.

But first, the Dramatis Persona: must be introduced and particularly described. — The performers were divided into five distinct classes; the greater body comprises about twenty-five young men, including five or six boys, painted and decorated as follows:— In nudity, except the yoodna, which was made of leaves expressly for the occasion, with bunches of gum leaves tied round the legs just above the knee, which, as they stamped about, made a loud switching noise. In their hands they held a cuttah, or wirri, and some a few gum leaves. The former were held at arm's length, and struck alternately with their legs as they stamped. They were painted from each shoulder down to the hips, with five or six white stripes, rising from the breast; their faces also with white perpendicular lines, making the most hideous appearance: these were the dancers.

Next came two groups of women, of about five or six in number, standing on the right and left of the dancers, merely taking the part of supernumeraries; these were not painted, but had leaves in their hands, which they shook, and kept beating time with their feet during the whole performance, but never moved off the spot they stood on. Next followed two remarkable characters — they were painted and decorated like the dancers, but with the addition of the "Palyertatta" a singular thing made of two pieces of sticks put cross way, and bound together by the "manyna," in a spreading manner; at the extremities, feathers were opened so as to set the thing off to the best advantage. One had it stuck sideways upon his head, while the other, in the most wizard-like manner, kept waving it to and fro before him, corresponding with the action of his head and legs. Then followed a performer, distinguished by a long spear, on the top of which a bunch of feathers hung suspended, and all down the spear the mangua was wound, he held the koonteroo (spear and feathers), with both hands behind his back, but occasionally altered the position, and waved it to the right and left over the dancers. And last came the singers — two elderly men in their usual habiliments; their musical instruments were the cuttah and wirri, on which they managed to beat a double note, mid their song was one unvaried gabbling tone.

The night was mild — the new moon shone with a faint light, casting a depth of shade over the earth, which gave a sombre appearance to the surrounding scene that highly conduced to heighten the approaching play. In the distance, a black mass could be discerned under the gum trees, from whence occasionally a shout and a burst of flame arose. These were the performers dressing for the dance, and no one approached them while thus occupied.

Two men, closely wrapped with their opossum skins, noiselessly approached one of the wurlies, where the kure was to be performed, and commenced clearing a space for the singers; this done, they went back to the singers, but soon after returned, sat down, and begun a peculiar, harsh, and monotonous tune; keeping time with a cutte, and a wirrie, by rattling them together. Upon this, all the natives of the different wurlies flocked round the singers, and sat down in the; form of a horse-shoe, two or three rows deep. By this time the dancers had moved in a compact body within a short distance of the spectators; after standing for a few minutes in perfect silence, they answered the singers by a singular deep hove shout, simultaneously; twice this was, done, and then the man with the koonteroo stepped, his body leaning, and commenced with a regular stamp; the two men with the palyertattas followed, stumping with great regularity, the rest joining in, and the regular and alternate stamp, the waving of the palyertatta to and fro, with the loud switching noise of the gum leaves, formed a scene highly characteristic of the Australian Natives, and one which pen and ink will ever fail to do justice to. In this style they approached the singers, the spectators shouting forth every now and then their applause. For some time they kept stamping in a body before the singers, which had an admirable effect, and did great credit to their dancing attainments; then one by one they turned round and danced their way back to the place they first started from and sat dow ; the palyertatta, and koonteroo men, were the last who left; and as these three singular beings stamped their way to the other dancers, they made an appearance, the oddest to be conceived; the singing continued for a short time after and then pipes were lighted, shouts of applause, and boisterous conversation followed. After resting about ten minutes, the singers commenced again, and soon after the dancers huddled together and responded to the call by the peculiar shout already mentioned, and then performed the same part over again with this variation, that the palyertatta men brought up the rear, instead of leading the way.

Four separate times these parts of the play were performed with the usual effect; others followed the concluding one as follows: after tramping up to the singers, the man with the koonteroo commenced a part which called forth unbounded applause; with his head and body inclined on one side, his spear and feathers behind his back, standing on the left leg he beat time with the right foot, twitching his body and eye, and stamping with the greatest precision; he remained a few minutes in this position, and then suddenly turned round, stood on his right leg, and did the same over with his left foot. In the meanwhile, the two men with the mystic palyertatta kept waving them to and fro, corresponding with the motion of their heads and legs, and the silent trampers performed their part equally well.

The koonteroo man now suddenly stopped, and planting his spear in the ground, stood in a stooping position behind it; upon this, two dancers stepped up, went through the same manoeuvre as the preceding party with wonderful regularity, and then also gave a final stamp, turned round and grasped the spear in a stooping position, and so on with all the rest until every dancer was brought to the spear and so forming a circular body. The palyertatta men now performed the same movement on each side of this body, accompanied with the perpetual motion of head, leg, and arm, and then went round and round and finally gave .the arrival stamp — thrust in their arm and grasped the spear, at the same time all sank on their knees and began to move away in a mass from the singers, with a sort of grunting noise, while their bodies heaved and tossed to and fro; when they had got about ten or twelve yards they ceased, and giving one long semi grunt or groan, (after the fashion of the red kangaroo, as they say,) dispersed. During the whole performance, the singing kept on in one continued strain, and the women, or supernumeraries, with their little tramps; and, after the last act of the performers, the rattling accompaniment of the singing ceased, and the strain died gradually away, and shouts and acclamations rent the air.