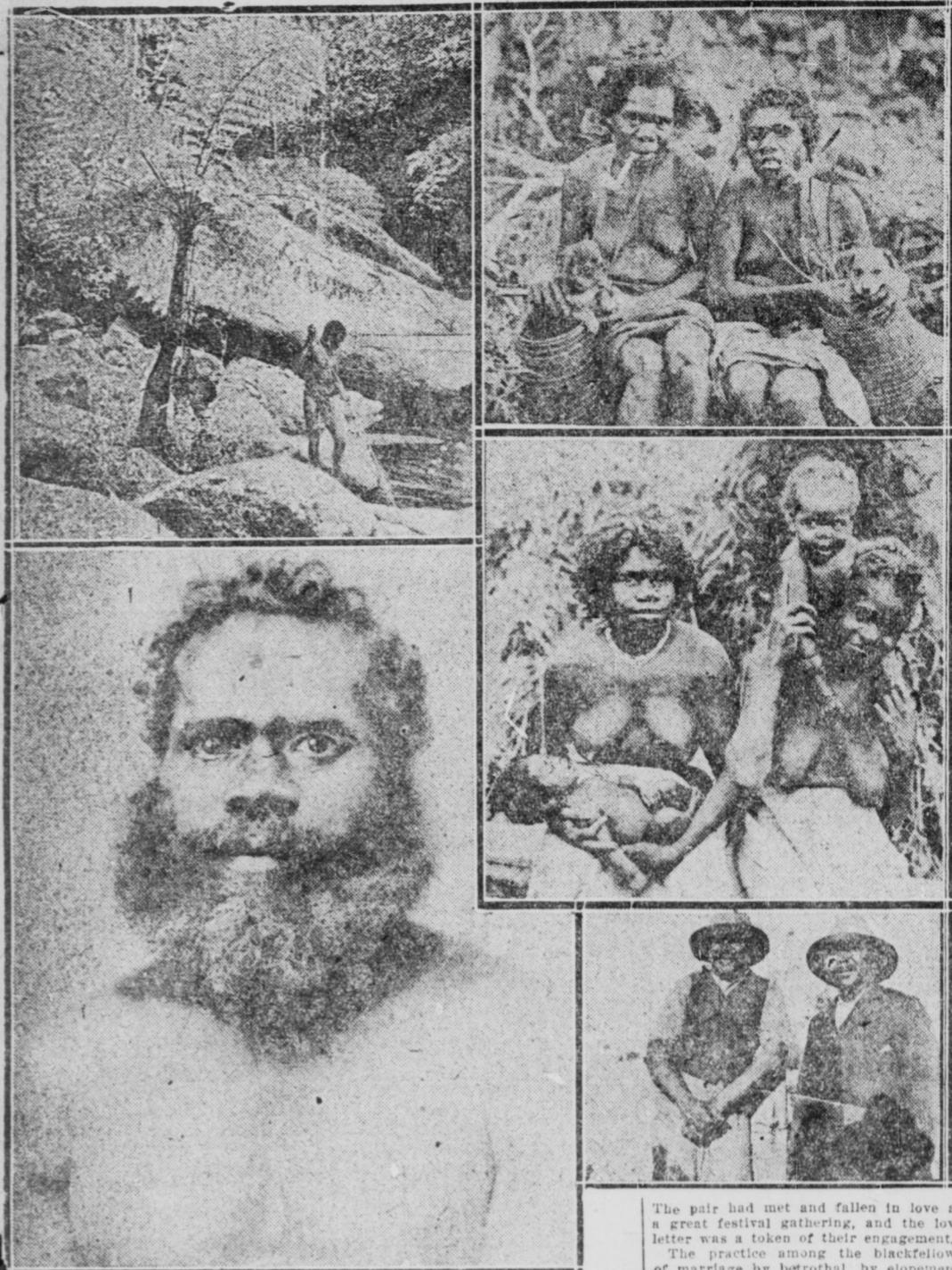


The First Australians



Top left to right)—An Australian blackfellow spearing fish. Aboriginal woman only consent to sit for picture. Bottom left to right)—An aboriginal of New South Wales. Educated aborigines of South Australia. The one on the right, David Unipon, is the inventor of an improved sheep-shearing machine and is an accomplished musician. He speaks English fluently and recently gave an address in Adelaide and Melbourne on the subject of evolution that attracted much attention.

By W. D. BOYCE.

SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES, Australia.—It takes the steamer four days to come from Wellington, New Zealand, to Sydney, only 1,250 miles—and they call it a ferry!

Australia and New Zealand can hardly be termed close neighbors, and they are unlike in many respects, as we shall see. This great island-continent, whose area is larger than that of the United States, has many features all its own. Long isolated from the rest of the world, its trees, plants, animals, birds and native people are of a bygone age. Most interesting of these are the aborigines who for unknown centuries were the only human beings on the continent, roaming in tribes, living by hunting and fishing, and using only the skins of animals other than grubs, bats. When discovered by the white men, they had not risen to the use of metals. They are considered the lowest in intelligence of all humans and many scientists believe them to be the most primitive of the world's inhabitants. Although they are called blackfellows, they are more brown than black, and are unlike the negro in that their hair is not wavy, their noses not so flat and their lips do not turn out.

Only in late years have accurate and scientific knowledge been obtained concerning the life of these strange people and their curious tribal customs.

FATAL CONTACT WITH WHITES.

It was a sad day for the Australian blackfellow when they followed the example of the white men and fell into ways for which all save Nature had never fitted them; for it marked the first process in their gradual extinction as a race.

They started to imitate the whites with whom they came in contact by wearing clothes, which were wholly foreign to them. With the same ease they fell into the vice of the white man; and before long they were victims of the same old ill to which the white heir to. Rheumatism and dead pulmonary disease, if they were not wholly new complaints among these wild children of the bush, were greatly aggravated by their contact with whites and the changed habits to which that contact gave rise. Even worse conditions came upon them.

Today the Australian aborigines as a race are dying out; the epitaph before many years will be written.

Since the days when sturdy Britshers first set their foot toward this land of promise, the blackfellows have found themselves gradually swept back by the insistent demands of civilization, and old hostilities and feuds between blacks and whites show that it was not always a peaceful penetration. There are black aborigines, however, out on the fringes of the great continent, who even today have not seen a white man, a good thing, perhaps, for the love of letters is one of the most humane treatments of the aborigine by farmers and ranchers and their employees, certain types of other whites, getting in among the blacks, have been a baneful influence in their lives. From the "far out-back," or wild districts of Australia, there occasionally comes the story of a tragedy in which a black fellow in one of the central districts, out of fear that not a woman is in the case, a white man, has thrust his attentions upon a woman of a tribe and retaliation has followed. These tragedies, however, are becoming fewer, with the establishment of close reservation and with government boards and missions to watch over and care for the blacks.

CARRIED LOVE LETTER.

The story of the love letter has been seen these "letters" in course of transmission to the most recent of which is the case of a woman of Australia, whose gallantries were expressed in the form of a bit of twine, about an inch and a half long, and marked with three small notches—one representing the "dromans" or postman, and the other two the lovers.

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