

ART. XVI.—*On the Astronomy and Mythology of the Aborigines of Victoria.* By WM. EDWARD STANBRIDGE ESQ., of Wombat.

*Philosophical*

[Read before the Institute, 30th September, 1857.]

I beg to lay before your honorable Institute the accompanying paper on the Astronomy and Mythology of the Aborigines, and in doing so I am sensitive of its imperfectness, but as it is now six years since I made any additions to it, and as my occupation does not lead me to that part of the country where I should be able to make further additions, I have presumed to present it to your society, hoping that it may be a means of assisting others to gather further traces of the people that are so fast passing away.

This statement of the Astronomy and Mythology of the Aborigines is, as nearly as language will allow, word for word as they have repeatedly during some years stated it to me. It is in the language of, and has been gleaned from, the Booroung Tribe, who claim and inhabit the Mallee country in the neighbourhood of Lake Tyrill, and who pride themselves upon knowing more of Astronomy than any other tribe.

The Aborigines in the neighbourhood of Mount Franklin have

names and Mythological Associations for a few of the stars, which names and associations are the same as those in use with the Booroung's, who say that the earth is flat and was in darkness before the Sun was made by Pupperrimbul, (the little bird with the red patch above the tail), when it became light. He was one of the race that then inhabited the earth, and who are called Nurrumbunguttias or old spirits. They possessed fire and were of the same characteristics as the present race, but were translated in various forms to the heavens, before the present race came into existence.

The Nurrumbunguttias still possess spiritual influences upon the earth; whether of darkness, of the storm, or of craters, all the evil spirits are of them. They have also spiritual representatives in some creatures, as, for instance, if a pupperrimbul were to be killed, there would be a fearful fall of rain.

All the stars, as well as all appearances in tyrille (space) are supposed to have emanated from the Nurrumbunguttias.

Gnowee (Sun), an Emu's egg prepared and cast into (tyrille) space by Pupperrimbul before which the earth was in darkness. Some say the Emu's egg was prepared by Berm-berm-gle and carried into space (tyrille) by Penmen, (a small bird which they do not willingly destroy).

Chargee Gnowee (Venus), sister of the sun and wife of Ginabongbearp.

Ginabongbearp (Foot of Day), (Jupiter) a chief of the Nurrumbunguttias, and husband of Chargee Gnowee.

Mityan (Moon), who falls in love with one of Unurgunite's wives, and while trying to induce her to run away with him, is discovered by Unurgunite, when a fight takes place; Mityan is beaten, and runs away, and has been wandering ever since.

Marpeankurrk (Arcturus), mother of Djuit and Weetkurrk. The discoverer of the Bittur, and the teacher of the Aborigines when and where to find it. When it is coming into season with them it is going out of season with her. The Bittur is the larvae of the wood ant, which is found in large communities, and of which the Aborigines are very fond. They subsist almost entirely upon it during part of the months of August and September. When she is in the north at evening, the Bittur are coming in season, when she sets with the sun the Bittur are gone and (Cotchi) summer begins.

Djuit (Antares), son of Marpeankurrk. The stars on either side are his two wives.

Neilloan (Lyra), (a Loan flying), the mother of Totyarguil and discoverer of the Loan eggs, which knowledge she imparted

to the Aborigines. When the Loan eggs are coming into season on earth, they are going out of season with her. When she sits with the sun the Loan eggs are in season.

Totyarguil (Aquila), the son of Neilloan, and who, while bathing was killed by the Bunyips, his remains were afterwards rescued by his uncle Collienbitchick. The stars on either side are his two wives.

Karik Karik (the two stars in the end of the tail of Scorpio), a male and a female Falcon.

Berm-berm-gle (two large stars in the fore-legs of Centaurus). Two brothers who were noted for their courage and destructiveness, and who spear and kill Tchingal. The eastern stars of Crux are the points of the spears that have passed through him, the one at the foot through his neck, and that in the arm through his rump.

Tchingal (Emu), (the dark space between the fore-legs of Centaurus and Crux), who pursues Bunya until he takes refuge in a tree, and who is afterwards killed by Berm-berm-gle.

Bunya (Opposum), (star in the head of Crux), who is pursued by Tchingal, and who, in his fright lays his spears at the foot of a tree and runs up it for safety. For such cowardice he became an opossum.

Tourtchinboionggerra (Cornua Berenices), a flock of small birds drinking rain water, which has lodged in a hollow in the fork of a tree. (Each star had a separate name, but, through the intercourse of the aborigines with the white people, the names are forgotten.)

Kourt-chin (Magellan Clouds).—The larger cloud a male, and the lesser cloud a female Native Companion.

Warring (Galaxy).—The smoke of the fires of the Nurrumbunguttias. Another account is, that only a part of the Galaxy is the smoke of the fires of the Nurrumbunguttias, and that the other part is two Mindii, enormous snakes which made the Murray (Millee).

Kulkunbulla (the Stars in the Belt and Scabbard of Orion).—A number of young men dancing. (A coroborree.)

Larnankurk (Pleiades), a group of young women playing to Kulkunbulla.

Gellarlec (Rose, or Eos Cockatoo (Aldebaran), an old man chanting, and beating time to Kulkunbulla and Larnankurk.

Warepil (Male Eagle) (Sirius), a chief of the Nurrumbunguttias, and brother to war.

Collowgullouric Warepil (Female Eagle) (Rigel), wife of Warepil.



Won (Corona), a boomerang thrown by Totyarguil.

Weetkurrk (Star in Bootes, west of Arcturus), daughter of Marpeankurrk.

War (Male Crow) (Canopus), the brother of Warepil, and the first to bring down fire from (tyrille) space, and give it to the aborigines, before which they were without fire.

Collowgullouric War (large red star in Rober Carol, marked 966) (Female Crow), wife of War. All the small stars around her are her children.

Yerrerdetkurrk (Achernar). — Nalwinkurrk, or mother of Totyarguil's wives. The Nalwinkurrk never allows her son-in-law to see her.

Otchocut (Dolphinus), Great Fish.

Collenbitchick (a species of Ant) (Double Star in the head of Capricornus), uncle to Totyarguil, and the rescuer of his remains from the Bunyips. The double star is his fingers feeling for the bank of the river.

Yurree (Castor), Wanjel (Pollux), two young men that pursue Purra and kill him at the commencement of the great heat, and Coonartoorung (Mirage) is the smoke of the fire by which they roast him. When their smoke is gone Weeit (Autumn) begins.

Purra (Kangaroo) (Capella), who is pursued and killed by Yurree and Wanjel.

Unurgunite (a small star marked 5th Mag 22, between two larger ones in the body of Canis Major). He fights Mityan and makes him run away for having tried to induce one of Unurgunite's wives to run away with him. The stars on either side of Unurgunite are his two wives; that farthest from him is the object of Mityan's affections.

Porkelongtoute (Shooting Star), which portends evil to those that have lost a front tooth, to avert which they stir the fire and cast about firebrands.

Tourte (Star).

Weeit (Autumn), the first season of the year.

Myer (Winter), the second season.

Gnallew (Spring), the third season.

Cotchi (Summer), the fourth season.