

NOTES ON THE NORMAN VOCABULARY.

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The Norman Manuscript, containing a vocabulary and notes on customs in use among Tasmanian Aborigines, was recently discovered among the archives deposited in the Tasmanian Museum, Hobart, and is now published in full in the Transactions of the Royal Society of Tasmania.

It is of great value, as containing what is probably the only vocabulary now extant in the original manuscript, and also a number of incidental notes written by the same hand.

The authenticity of the document is clearly established by the quality and appearance of the paper and ink, by the peculiar style of handwriting and spelling displayed, and by the nature of the discrepancies between the vocabulary given there from that professedly published from a copy taken from the original manuscript.

The evidence concerning the first and second points becomes convincing on inspection, and on inspection alone. The discrepancies alluded to may, however, properly be touched upon here.

On the first page of the MS. we read an inscription written in pencil by a different hand:—"By the Rev. J. Norman, Sorell, 332 words and 72 names of men and women."

This was probably done by J. E. Calder, to whom the first publication of this vocabulary seems to be due. We read in E. M. Curr's "The Australian Race" (1887), p. 611:—"Norman's Vocabulary.—The following vocabulary, which has never been in print, was forwarded to me by the late J. E. Calder. It was collected by the late Rev. James Norman at Port (?) Sorell, Tasmania, at which place he resided for many years as minister. In what tribes the words recorded were in use is not known."

It may be remarked that "Port Sorell" is an evident error for "Sorell." There was no church at Port Sorell, on the North Coast, in the Rev. J. Norman's time, but there was one at Sorell, where he actually lived as minister from 1832 to 1867.

The author of the MS. came to Tasmania in 1827, not long before the tribal divisions of the Aborigines were obliterated—in 1853 there were practically no Aborigines left in Tasmania—and all that can be said of the origin of the words in the Vocabulary is that they do not belong to the Western or North-Western dialects. The dialects have been already discussed by me in a paper which is among the Transactions in 1909 of the Royal Society.

In transcribing the MS. for the printer, the pages have been numbered for facility of reference, and the marks of length or shortness and the accents found in the MS. and in Curr's publication of Calder's list have been omitted, for several urgent reasons. Lower case initials have been mostly substituted for capitals in the Vocabulary, for the sake of simplicity. The English equivalent is preceded in each case by a hyphen, and followed by a full stop.

It will be observed that the alphabetical order and the placing of the English before the Tasmanian words in the Vocabulary, as given in the Calder-Curr list, are not in the MS. There, the words seem to have been put down at random, and the list is occasionally interrupted by notes suggested by the last words listed.

These notes are very interesting in themselves, and specially so because they do not seem to have been incorporated in any of the published accounts of the customs of the Aborigines of Tasmania. It is probable that Calder sent them to Curr, and the latter ignored them, as unsuitable for his purpose.

In rearranging the words Calder or Curr evidently overlooked the following:—Marlerpootenar, norner-goodenar (p. 5), arrocure (p. 15), ninghenne, coorroo (p. 16), chellar (p. 18), work (p. 19), pootherennar (p. 20), perrethener, tarrarnarrar (p. 22), deanner, deererwith-brar (p. 26), laggur, moledderner, talarprennar (p. 27).

A curious discrepancy occurs in the list of names at the end of the MS. Calder-Curr's list gives only three names of the Big River Mob; the MS. gives twenty-three. The missing twenty are found in Calder-Curr's names of the Ben Lomond Mob, but not together, as one might expect when a whole page goes astray, but four in one place, six in another, five in a third place, and five more at the end of that Mob.

Calder-Curr's note, "Sexes of the Big River tribe not distinguished" is not in the Norman MS.; it is above the heading "Big River Mob" instead of below it, and is too vague to be of any value. As a matter of fact, the names used by the Aborigines were really descriptions of the individuals denoted. Some of these descriptions would, of course, apply to women only, but others were quite general. For instance, "swift foot" might evidently be equally applicable to a man or a woman.

The Norman MS. has several words marked as "adopted," but while in some cases the resemblance to English equivalents is striking, in others it is doubtful, and it would be very difficult for anyone to speak with certainty unless he happened to be present when the word was first adapted to the Tasmanian habits of speech. The words for soldier (*tooyer*) and tobacco (*pyagurner*, i.e., *bacca-na*) seem to be the only instances of nearly certain adaptation; and even of these the latter looks suspiciously like *pugana*, i.e., tail, suggesting the twisted tobacco used by sailors.

In conclusion, it may be pointed out that Calder's transcription or the work of the printer, or the united labours of both, in many instances make the Calder-Curr words different from the corresponding word in the MS. It will therefore be advisable to base any philological arguments on the latter rather than on the former, especially as they agree with other Vocabularies in a far greater measure.

H. Ling Roth's edition of the Norman Vocabulary in "The Aborigines of Australia" is evidently taken from Curr, as it contains the same peculiar discrepancies, and is, of course, later in date.