

THE LANGUAGES OF AUSTRALIA.

WHEN the first imperfect vocabularies of Australian dialects were collected, the great differences observed between those spoken by tribes in close vicinity to one another led to the impression that a multitude of totally dissimilar idioms were spoken in this country. Further investigations have shown that this belief was not well founded; and at present, the opinion of those who have given attention to the subject is, that the tribes of Australia are of one stock, and speak languages which, though differing in many respects, yet preserve sufficient evidence of a common origin. This opinion, however, is founded rather upon the resemblance of a few of the most common words, and a general similarity of pronunciation, than upon any careful comparison of the various languages, more especially with reference to their grammatical characteristics, on which alone any positive conclusion can be founded.

Our own field of inquiry did not extend beyond the limits of the colony of New South Wales: but that, within this region, the dialects of all the native tribes are nearly akin, cannot be doubted. The following comparative vocabulary, though brief, and compiled under circumstances unfavorable to entire accuracy, yet shows sufficient evidence of a general connexion. Moreton Bay, Lake Maquarie, Sydney, Liverpool, and Muruya, are the names of places on or near the coast, from lat. 27° to lat. 36° south. Peel River, Mudgee, Wellington, and Bathurst, are from one to two hundred miles inland, separated from the coast line by the rugged chain of the Blue Mountains. Of the vocabularies, that of the tribe at Lake Maquarie is principally from Mr. Threlkeld; that of the Mudgee dialect was furnished by Mr. Watson; the few words from Moreton Bay are from an anonymous vocabulary which Mr. Threlkeld discovered among his papers. The remainder were obtained directly from the natives, in most cases from a single individual, without the opportunity of a revision, which might have enabled us to detect some errors, and supply deficiencies. The Australians have commonly two or three names for an object, expressing the same general idea with slight modifications. This will be observed in the words under the head of Lake Maquarie. To form a complete vocabulary, for the purpose of comparison, it would be essential to obtain all these partially synonymous terms, as otherwise many points of resemblance would be missed.

	HEAD.	HAIR.	EYE.	NOSE.	MOUTH.
Moreton Bay		<i>cubboa eu</i>	<i>mill</i>	<i>moral</i>	
Lake Maquarie	<i>walvŋ</i>	<i>kitvŋ, wū- rŋn</i>	<i>ŋaikvŋ, po- rowvŋ</i>	<i>nókoro</i>	<i>kórvka</i>