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NOTE ON AUSTRALIAN MARRIAGE SYSTEMS.

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BY

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By FRANCIS GALTON, M.A., F.R.S.

A very simple way of understanding the peculiarly complicated system of Australian marriages has lately occurred to me, and I should be glad to bring it before the notice of the meeting. The well-known Kamilaroi system is as follows: I add the letters A., B., C., D., to the names of the sub-phratries for the purposes of the explanation to be offered:—

TABLE I.

A Male	marries a	and the children are
A. Muri	D. Kumbo	C. Ipai.
B. Kubi	C. Ipai	D. Kumbo.
C. Ipai	B. Kubi	A. Muri.
D. Kumbo	A. Muri	B. Kubi

I had often tried, in vain, to find an easy clue to this strange custom, feeling assured that no aboriginal Australian brain could acquire the accurate and almost instinctive knowledge they all have of it without one. At last, I think, or rather hope, that I have succeeded. We now know that the Muri and the Kubi are sub-phratries of the phratrie called Dilbi, let us designate this phratrie by the letter P.; also that the Ipai and the Kumbo are sub-phratries of the phratrie called Kupathin, and this phratrie we will designate by Q. More briefly, A. and B. are sub-phratries of P.; C. and D. are sub-phratries of Q.

Now if we suppose a cross division, such that A. and C. are both alike in some respect, which we will indicate by appending to them the numeral 1, and that B. and D. are also alike in some contrasted respect, which we will designate by appending to them the numeral 2, we shall convert Table I into Table II.

f. 2v

TABLE II.

Phratries.	A male	marries a female	their children are
P.	A. = P. 1	Q. 2	Q. 1
	B. = P. 2	Q. 1	Q. 2
Q.	C. = Q. 1	P. 2	P. 1
	D. = Q. 2	P. 1	P. 2

The last three columns are to read thus :—A male P. 1 marries a female Q. 2; their children are Q. 1. A male P. 2 marries a female Q. 1; their children are Q. 2; and so on. We see at once from this that a man may not marry a woman who has the same letter or the same numeral as himself, and that the children take after the letter of their mother and after the numeral of their father. Amongst the Kiabara the marriage rule is exactly the same, except that the children take after the numeral of their mother and after the letter of their father.

It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to find good analogies in civilised life to these phratries and sub-phratries. I will, therefore, take an illustration that does not profess to be applicable, otherwise than by giving an adequate idea of the sort of function that is intended to be described by these numerals and letters. Suppose persons of both sexes to be educated, some at Oxford, and some at Cambridge. Again, suppose persons of both sexes to be members of one or other of two clubs to which members of either university are equally admissible, such as are the Oxford and Cambridge Club and the University Club. Then the Australian marriage rule is analogous to saying that a man may not marry a woman who is a member either of the same university or of the same club as himself. Also, that, if he be one of the Kamilaroi, the children will be entered at their mother's university and at his club; but if he be one of the Kiabara, the children will be entered at his university, and at their mother's club. A rule so simple as this could be understood by any savage, whose totem and other customs are quite as distinct, and affect a far larger part of their lives than the consequences of being an Oxford or a Cambridge man, and of belonging to this club or that, affect ours. Now comes the testing question, does such a cross division as that which I have supposed, really exist? I communicated with Mr. Frazer on this subject, whose recent volume on Totemism is very favour-

f. 3

ably known. He pointed out to me that Mr. Ridley called the Muri the highest grade and the Kubi the lowest, and that, he adds, "so every family passes in two or three or four generations, through the highest and lowest grades—a curious combination of the ideas of aristocracy and levelling—but the difference in rank is slight." Mr. Frazer also informs me that Prof. Müller, of Vienna, has quoted apparently from an early work of Mr. Ridley, whether by mistake or not, I do not know, in a different sense, making the Ipai and Kumbo patricians, and the Muri and Kubi plebians. It is reasonable to believe that the zealous inquirers into Australian totems and other distinctions have not yet got wholly to the bottom of them, and that an as-yet-undiscovered cross division, such as I have supposed, may be found on further inquiry to exist. Mr. Frazer has written on this subject to his Australian correspondents, and I await the result with much curiosity. If my expectations are falsified, I can at all events recommend my theory as a *memoria technica*, by which the complexities of the Australian marriage customs may easily be kept in mind.

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