

Received From March 1846

Port Lincoln, May 28th, 1845

Honored and beloved brethren!

Since my last letter from Adelaide on December 11th, an unusually eventful life has taken place among the local Aborigines, both in a good and a bad sense of the word. Soon after my return from Adelaide on December 23rd, a number of men came to the settlement, some of whom were still unknown to me. No sooner had they settled in than a fight broke out, triggered solely by the sight of a wounded friend who had been stabbed in the knee by a "Tying alta", a spear. Upon further investigation, however, it turned out that the shouting, jumping, and raging were merely an expression of anger over the aforementioned injustice and an incitement to revenge. Once the Aborigines' blood is aroused, however, a fight and bloodshed are rarely avoided, and often the most insignificant circumstance can trigger it. Thus, this quarrel ended in a brutal brawl between two old friends, Ytalta and Jyukalta, the latter of whom had a disagreement with the former's wife over food and therefore wanted to attack her. As long as the wife could fend him off, her husband seemed to watch the matter with indifference, but as soon as the first throwing club (Wirri) hit her and she let out a howl, the two men attacked each other, and within a few moments, they were hitting each other on the heads so fiercely that their bodies were covered in blood. In such circumstances, trying to mediate between the parties would be a futile effort.

After this incident, some coats or furs were exchanged between our old friends and the newcomers, a custom that seems to be an expression of mutual friendship among the indigenous people and is practiced with great ceremony. Several furs are tightly rolled up and given to a man, who is closely surrounded by 5 or 6 men, and then they approach the newly formed group from the other side. Now, the two bearers of the furs are made to step forward and, with much persuasion, exchange them, after which both parties share in the exchange with great childlike joy. --

The rest of the evening was spent dancing, a description of which they would probably enjoy, so I'll include it here. For this, people dress up in the following way.

From each shoulder to the belt, two stripes are painted with white chalk, which converge closely at the bottom, taking on the shape of a swallow's tail; a ring around both eyes, a stripe along the nose, and several, two at a time, across the arms; the beard is also painted by the elderly. Around the upper face, from one ear to the other, a wreath of white down feathers from an eagle or perhaps a crane (the names of both birds are almost identical) is attached, giving the face

the appearance of a woman in a nightcap. (As glue for sticking, blood from the genital parts is used, for which one wounds himself internally.) Above the knee, a bundle of green leaves is tied, and a headband, about 3 feet long, spun from deer or opossum hair, is taken into the hands. Thus equipped, one begins the dance (Kuri), to which some sing and beat an extremely precise rhythm with their throwing sticks. The singing consists of the repetition of two verses, the meaning of which is difficult to determine and is often unknown even to the indigenous people themselves, as such songs are received from distant tribes in a foreign dialect. The women are unadorned and only participate in the dance in small numbers, two or three, but in the men's opinion, the value of the entertainment is greatly enhanced by their participation.

The dances last barely longer than 5 minutes, but are much more graceful than those of the indigenous people of Adelaide. The most popular and best of them consists of jumping from one side to the other, along with swinging the arms up and down, so that when the right arm rises, the left one descends, and vice versa; to maintain balance and regularity in this back-and-forth swaying, the headband held between the hands serves its purpose. Incidentally, the entire body is in a pleasant and strenuous swing during this dance.

On **January 23, 1845**, all the indigenous inhabitants of the settlement left and went to a favorite place called Kunta, about 30 English miles from here, where they were to meet the Parnkalla, who live in the north, and introduce several young people. Mr. Driver and I followed them, as we both wanted to observe their customs. The next morning, we met about 150 indigenous people gathered together; however, that day was just about making acquaintances, making some preparations, and settling an old dispute that involved nothing less than a murder, which seemed to be getting very serious, but in the end, the avenger, the brother of the murdered man, threw a spear at the murderer and, since the latter did not retaliate, declared himself satisfied.

However, a fierce quarrel broke out among our old acquaintances, which first started among the children, resulting in many bloody heads. It's something terrible to see the men's raging and noise, and the women and children's howling at all times; the impression is doubled and more when, as this time, the darkness of the night envelops the raging ones and the sudden flare-up of a fire occasionally reveals their grim figures. A quarrelsome boy, who was the cause of all the disputes and who had narrowly dodged a spear aimed at him, came running to me for protection and help. I knew there was nothing to fear except for a random thrown club, so I approached the disputants. Sometimes, when the natives themselves are tired of the dispute and are only prevented from giving in by pride, they welcome a foreign intervention and are easily persuaded to make peace; there's also never a lack of requests for mediation, especially from the women; but, as already mentioned, when the dispute is heated, they listen to nothing but the voices of passion.

On the following morning, **January 4th**, the intended consecration took place, which I have fully recorded here in my notebook.

Inauguration of a Yarneri for Wilyalkinge.

The young men, aged around 18, after having gone through several stages, are consecrated to young men (Wilyalkingis) with great ceremony and secrecy. Indeed, women and children are forbidden, under penalty of death, to attend the ceremony or even to glance at it. They usually sit at such a distance and in such a position that they cannot see the men. However, if they are forced to do so by some circumstance, such as fetching water and the like, which would allow them to see the ceremony, they cover themselves and walk in a bent posture. I remember that once, when the ceremonies had already begun, the women, who had been hiding behind a sand dune until then, were ordered to go about their business, which required them to cross an open plain. The entire procession, covered and bent over, presented a comical sight until they disappeared from view. As preparation for the consecration, one can observe the appointment of the Indanyana, i.e., the man who performs the customs at the Wilakinyi, which usually takes place a few days before the ceremony, but sometimes immediately before it. This preparation simply consists of someone taking the Indanyana on his back and in his arms, and informing him of his task, which he reluctantly agrees to undertake. On one occasion, when two tribes, namely the distant Nanos and our natives, had come together in the city, they made a greater fuss. When it had become completely dark, both tribes, richly painted with chalk, set off from their camps, each describing a long semi-circle and marking the entire line with fires. As they approached each other, they circled around each other several times, clattering with their throwing clubs and uttering short, broken sounds, until one signaled the place where everyone should settle by lighting a fire. Now, the Indanyanas take a headband and put it around each other's necks in turn, after which the preparation ends with the aforementioned persuasion and refusal.

At the consecration of a Wilyalkingya, if not several tribes, then most of the tribe members are present, so a significant number of people always gather. It begins with each Indanyana retrieving their Wilyalkingya from the stored pile (where the women pretend to be sad and sometimes even lament), blindfolding it, and leading it away. Here, all Indanyanas with their protégés gather in a circle for about an hour, emitting a drawn-out lamenting sound every five to five minutes, which can be described as: Yééh. Soon, the young people, still blindfolded, are led further away, laid on the ground, and covered with furs. After a long chat, two men break branches from the bushes, upright the young people, and the men form a semi-circle around them, each armed with two throwing sticks. Now, those two face the semi-circle and stamp and throw the

branches over the young people in an angry manner, while the others clatter their sticks and emit unpleasant sounds, which always become drawn-out when a branch falls, in this way: Yé, Yé, Yé, Yé, Yééh. Now, the young people are laid on the branches and covered again, and during the subsequent rest, the quartz stones are sharpened with which the tattooing is done, and the names are devised by which they will be called for their future life. This last point always poses great and long-lasting difficulties, as one tries to avoid repeating names that have already been heard by the deceased or the living. Usually, the names are simple roots of verbs, with the suffixes -alta, -ilti or -ultu, depending on how those roots end. Whether these endings somehow change the meaning of the words, I cannot determine, as they do not seem to occur in the language except for proper nouns. In some cases, where it was impossible to come up with new names, they asked me for advice, and it was not difficult for me to provide several names with the intended endings from my dictionary, but some were rejected as unsuitable, others as already existing, and only a few were retained.

When everything is prepared, several men open a vein on the forearm with quartz splinters, they position the Wilyalkinyes and let the first drops run into their mouths and be swallowed. After this, they have to lie on their hands and knees, and their heads and backs are completely covered in blood. As soon as this blood has coagulated sufficiently, someone scratches the places where the incisions are to be made with their thumb, namely one right in the middle of the neck, and a row from each shoulder to the middle, so close that there are about four incisions per inch. These are called Manka and are considered so sacred that they are never mentioned in the presence of women. Each wound requires two or more incisions with the blunt quartz and is then carefully and as far as possible spread apart. The boys do not show any expression during this process, but it sometimes happens that their relatives, overcome by compassion, try to prevent the torture from continuing, which of course is not allowed. During the cutting, which happens quite quickly, people crowd around the young men, quietly and quickly murmuring the following formula to them:

Kaúwaka kánya márra márra
Kámdo Kánya márra márra
Pílbirri káya márra márra

The meaning of the above word is unknown to me. It is derived from the ancestors and attributed to them the magical effect of alleviating pain. When the incisions are made, the Wilyalkinya are erected and their eyes are reopened, while two men from among them skillfully handle the Witarna, an oval piece of wood that hums when swung, and the others clatter and make noise around them in the aforementioned manner, so fiercely that the tamed dingoes often start howling. Those two who, with all the gestures of rage, attack the young people, put the cord of the hummer around their necks in turn, without causing

any further harm. Now, each Wilyalkinya receives a finger-thick belt (Kakkalle) woven from their own hair around their body, a bundle of young leaves (Ngulta) over their pubis, a tightly wrapped band (Mannurinya) around each upper arm, supposedly to strengthen it, and a similar one (Kayiti) loosely around their neck, the end of which runs down their back and is fastened to the belt and regarded as a sign of silence. Then their faces, arms, and chests are blackened with grease and charcoal. Finally, everyone once again surrounds the long-suffering ones to give them a bit of good advice for their future behavior, the main content of which seems to be that they should avoid all disputes, refrain from speaking loudly, and flee the presence of women. The last two points are anxiously observed until the men release them from them, which happens after three or four months. During this time, they live and sleep alone, and their speech is a quiet whisper. When they have been disciplined in this way long enough, the men gather again, tear off the sign of silence from the young people's necks, let them all bleed, and cover each other's upper bodies with thin lines of blood, crosswise and lengthwise, so that it appears covered with small squares. During both this and the earlier ceremony, the hummer (the Wilarna) is constantly active.

On **January 6th**, almost all the natives who had gathered at the ceremony just described came to the settlement, from where they immediately sent some messengers to the Nanos, inviting them to settle a year-old dispute whose initial cause was the death of a woman bitten by a snake. The following evening, the 8th, about 40 men in warlike attire appeared in the town. Armed with spears, slings (Midla) and throwing clubs, their bodies painted with chalk, and their hair adorned with scraped sticks resembling feather bushes, they marched in a long line of two to three men, entering at a measured pace, circling widely and then returning to their camp. Our old acquaintances had not expected their guests so soon and were completely unprepared, largely scattered. However, the news spread quickly, and they quickly assembled and painted themselves, and within a quarter of an hour, they were able to respond to the greeting of those people. They marched in a long, simple line and a short but measured pace to that camp, circled it and then gathered in a dense crowd, emitting a deep, hoarse sound. After repeating this several times, they returned in the same order as they had come. Throughout the process, there was singing and dancing, first by our natives, and later by the strangers, with the idle part of each time being the spectators. The next morning, at dawn, the battle took place. From both sides, about 8 or 10 men, with all the gestures of combat fury and eagerness, ran onto the open battlefield and positioned themselves man to man at a distance of 20 to 30 steps from each other. No more words were spoken, but everyone took aim at his opponent. Several spears were exchanged by both sides, but all were parried. The skill of the natives in this regard is astonishing. Without a shield, they defend themselves with spears and digging sticks, with which they dig out the roots, which they hold in their left hand, and fire the precisely aimed spears so safely that only negligence could bring them danger. Although one of our natives, the man of the woman killed by the snake, tried to provoke the dispute, it did not last long; defectors

appeared from both sides, signaling that they were satisfied with the satisfaction.

On **January 12th**, there was another inauguration of Wilywalkingas, which, however, offered nothing new, except that my inventiveness in finding new names, which was already well-known, was successfully confirmed.

The local settlers this summer have employed more natives as reapers and threshers than ever before, to the benefit of both parties. In general, a greater recognition of the indigenous people by the colonists is noticeable, which, however, has been largely contributed to by the former's closer acquaintance with our customs and their increasing skill in work. They harvested their own wheat in two days, but the yield was very low, not more than 15 sacks. I distribute it among them on Sundays, without regard to all who want the grain. As a result, I have had a fairly large and regular audience, which pleases me, insofar as it gives me the opportunity to correct and reinforce their simplest acquired religious concepts. Preaching the Gospel to them is still very difficult for me; the holiness and justice of God; the recognition of sin, reconciliation through Christ's death, forgiveness of sin, and justification by faith - these are too lofty things, at least for now.

The omnipotence and omniscience of God, the creation of all things, the commandments, eternal punishment, and eternal life - these concepts sometimes capture their attention with visible interest, especially when I compare their former beliefs with their current changes. Nevertheless, they don't believe in any of this, because they still steal, lie, argue, etc. as badly as before. Therefore, I will keep returning to one point: one can never expect a conversion of the indigenous people without continuous instruction through words and actions; this, however, is only possible in their unification in their own settlement. Food concerns are a great temptation even for a practiced Christian, so how could hunger not stifle all scruples of conscience in a primitive person? --

The fence of the natives' farmland was once again consumed by a wildfire after the harvest, without the particular fault of any individual, but one can certainly blame the indifference of all, as despite all my warnings, they could not prevent fires from being set near the city. The unrestricted freedom of the indigenous people is their boundless misfortune, and the lack of any authority among them prevents any collaboration. --

It seemed pointless to me to spend time and effort on a fence that would not be more secure from the flames next summer than it was this year, so I gave up on the plan to cooperate with the natives. Instead, I helped two friends plow their field for fourteen days, in exchange for which they gave me a third of it, about 3 acres, which have already been sown and will hopefully yield a rich harvest, just like the native's field, as the land is good. When they harvest and thresh the grain, the yield will be shared with them in the same way as last year's.

A few weeks ago, I was surprised by the visit of Brother Klosen and Mr. Moorhouse, who were followed two days later by the governor. Unfortunately, he only stayed here for one day, which he used for a trip to the interior, so I didn't have the opportunity to renew my request for the establishment of a school on the spot. Mr. Moorhouse advised me to do so himself, although he had little hope of success; nevertheless, he was not averse to raising the matter again when the opportunity arose.

The two natives from Port Lincoln who had been held in custody until now were released on this occasion. One of them has remained here since then and seems inclined to stay; he has grasped some spiritual truths that a fellow prisoner shared with him, and he is spreading them with commendable zeal among his companions, thus becoming my collaborator in a way by confirming my statements. The other has gone into the bush, as a journey into the interior is called here, to visit his two wives and then return, as he promised.

The young artist Angas, the eldest son of Mr. Angas in London, also came with the governor and stayed here for a short time, during which he made some portraits of indigenous people, which I assisted with and also helped him with some observations on their customs and beliefs; both are intended for his great work on Australia. He promised to leave a copy of a native depicted in a carrying position, which I consider his most successful work, with Brother Klose, from whom I will send it to you. I have long been planning to write a description of the customs and beliefs of the local indigenous people, and I have also collected notes for this purpose, but I have held them back so far because I considered them too incomplete for publication.

Some things, like their traditions, can be misunderstood, and others they withheld out of fear that the women might find out. On the morning before yesterday, a dispute arose among the natives over food, during which a young man was fatally wounded in the abdomen. He has since been in my house, cared for by me and his companion. It remains to be seen whether he will survive.

I had admonished them just a few days earlier, namely on the first Sunday after the Feast of the Holy Trinity, to practice love towards others and especially to maintain peace, to which the Epistle provided guidance. However, this misfortune occurred the following morning, almost as if in mockery of my exhortations. Another admonition, however, which the Gospel provided, namely to show mercy to the sick, they heeded better. I must say that, based on past experiences, I did not expect as much attention from them as they showed to the poor wounded man. However, I would not claim that this is attributable to anything other than the fact that the sick man was very young and, due to his kindness and cheerfulness, was a favorite of everyone.

I, along with my fellow brethren, am obliged to thank you for the attention you have shown to our physical needs. May God grant that the success will one day justify the sacrifices that the South Australian mission demands.

I've made a start on taxidermying birds and mammals for your intended museum, but I find that the current season is too wet, as the skins rot before they can be dried without artificial heat. --

May the Lord, who alone can lead us to our goal, from whom all prosperity comes, remain with you and your least fellow brother.

C. W. Schürmann