

NOTES ON SOME OF THE MORE RECENT ADDITIONS TO
THE ETHNOLOGICAL COLLECTION, AUSTRALIAN
MUSEUM: No. 1.

By R. ETHERIDGE, Junr., Curator.

(Plates xlviij, xlix.)

1.—KNUCKLE DUSTERS.

THE use of "Knuckle-dusters" (Plate xlviij, figs. 2, 3) on some of the Pacific Islands is noteworthy. They are made of thick plaited and knotted sinnet cord, roughly shaped to the outline of the backs of the hands clenched, stiff and rigid, and answer more to the Roman *cestus* than to the modern boxing-glove. The positions corresponding to thumbs and index finger knuckles are raised into hard and formidable protuberances. Each "duster" is held in position on the hand by a thumb loop, and loops for the first and second fingers, placed along the front edge, through which the fingers are passed before the hand is clenched, and a long wrist cord, which wraps round the wrist several times. The weight is five and a half ounces. These were purchased as coming from Santa Cruz, but later information induces me to believe that they are from the Ellice Group. Cook described¹ boxing matches as indulged in by both sexes on the island of Hapalee in the Tongan or Friendly Group. It appears the boxers held a piece of cord in one hand, which they wrapped firmly about it when they proceeded to box. Mariner, in his "Account of the Natives of the Tongan Islands,"² beyond quoting Cook, makes no remark on the subject. Ellis says³ that amongst the Tahitians, *moto-raa*, or boxing, was conducted with the open fist. On the Ellice and Tongan Groups, a much more formidable hand-cover was used, but on the palm. Mariner describes it⁴ as a glove set with shark's teeth, the latter "being fixed in three rows on the palm and fingers of a species of glove made of the plaited bark of the *heabo*; and both hands being armed in this manner, every man endeavours to come to a close scuffle with his antagonist, and to tear open his bowels, with these horrid weapons."

¹ Cook—Voy. to Pacific Ocean, 1776-80, 2nd edit., i., 1785, pp. 246 and 302, pl. xv.

² Mariner—Natives Tongan Isds., ii., 1817, pp. 306 and 326.

³ Ellis—Polynesian Researches, i., 1832, p. 208.

⁴ Mariner—*Loc. cit.*, i., p. 320.