

NORTH QUEENSLAND ETHNOGRAPHY.

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On Certain Initiation Ceremonies.

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(Plates I.-lvi.; Figs. 9-11.)

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1. I have been present at initiation ceremonies on the East Coast (Princess Charlotte Bay, McIvor River, etc.), and several¹ in the North-Western Districts; I cannot say that I have been initiated into the latter, for the very good reason that I was not prepared to submit myself to the necessary sexual mutilation, an ordeal to which I am not aware that any European, however keen on Anthropological Science, has hitherto allowed himself to be subjected.

Though various customs, *e.g.*, marriage, scarring, nose-piercing, certain food restrictions, a new name, social rank, etc., may here and there depend upon initiation, very little of a definite nature appears to be known of the why and wherefore of the ceremonies at all, beyond the fact that the prevailing European idea of their having a beneficently moral and educational value is erroneous. At Cape Bedford, some of the old men told the Rev. Schwarz² and myself that initiation is a matter of custom, and still pre-

¹For descriptions see Ethnol. Studies, etc., 1897—Sects. 299 to 315.

²A gentleman who has lived upwards of 20 years among these people.