

NORTH QUEENSLAND ETHNOGRAPHY.

BULLETIN No. 11.

Miscellaneous Papers.

1. Tabu and other forms of Restriction.
2. Counting and Enumeration.
3. Signals on the Road ; Gesture Language.
4. Progressive Koko-yimider Exercises.

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PART I.

TABU, AND OTHER FORMS OF RESTRICTION.

(to accompany Bulletin 8).

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1. Certain prohibitions, varieties of "Tabu," are in force throughout the whole of North Queensland, and their disregard is either met by punishment at the instigation of the Council of Elders¹, if discovered, or else by some form of disease, accident

¹ Roth—Bull. 8—Sect. I.

or death, when not². These restrictions, which deal with such varied subjects as dietaries, personal relations and property, localities, names, etc., are known under different terms:—*ji-anna* on the Pennefather River, *tá-mi* on the Middle Palmer, *tamanda* by the Kundara Blacks of the Lower Gulf Coast, *aln-ta* to the Koko-warra Natives of the hinterland of Princess Charlotte Bay, *chamolo* and *kamma* on the Lower Tully River, *tcha-bul* on the Bloomfield River, and strange to say as *ta-bul* at Cape Bedford and on the Lower Endeavour River.

2. Some forms of the tabu are constant in that it can never be removed, in others it may be released by the elders, occasionally by one individual only (not necessarily an elder), but never by women, who sometimes have the power of declaring it. During her menstrual periods a female can never be freed from the tabu imposed upon her consequent upon her condition; so also in connection with the final place of burial, etc., the prohibitions are inexorable. The tabu on certain dietaries is often relaxed by some of the very old men in favour of the young males when food happens to be extra scarce on the Bloomfield (*R. Hislop*). Amongst the Tully River Blacks, who account for their food restrictions as having been in existence as long as they can remember, the only individual who can remove the tabu, and then only from the *kamma* variety (see further), is the one whose business it is to wash the corpse's skin and rub its hair off during the course of the burial celebrations (*E. Brooke*). At Cape Bedford the word indicative of the release from tabu is *dai-tchen*.

3. Where the restriction is only temporary, it may be declared by reason of animosity and pure wantonness, for the protection of property, and sometimes as a recognised punishment. There may be differences in the family circle; the wife may have gone to all the trouble and labour of collecting and preparing the day's food for herself and family, when the husband will declare it tabu in favour of the children, which accordingly precludes her having even so much as a taste. A man will be going out of camp and leaving some weapons, food, etc., behind, if he urinates upon the former or in close proximity to the latter, they become "*tami*," and he will find everything intact upon his return (Middle Palmer River). On the Bloomfield, the Palmer, and elsewhere, a form of "*roarer*" hung up by a string (Pls. xx., xxi.) will make everything near or underneath it tabu; it is usually decorated with white stripes on a red background, and sometimes has a nick at its free

² Roth—Bull. 5—Sect. 150.