

# HOW THE AUSTRALIAN NATIVE IS BECOMING MODERNIZED

By PERCY B. PRIOR

Despite his scanty wardrobe, the Australian native and his lubra (wife) have adopted many modern fashions and whims while on the other hand, many of our present styles were used by them centuries past.

Shingling, and the buster cut have been in vogue among the Australian natives for ages, for, to them, hair as an adornment has no charm. It has purposes of utility.

The belt which the women of the northwest wear, is made entirely from human hair, while string, used for carrying articles, is also made from hair.

Jazz, a product of modern civilization, is akin to the music produced by natives, for rhythm is the main essential. A native would be little disturbed by hearing the effect produced from a saxophone, for it is allied with their own "harmonious" renderings.

The dark-skinned native wriggles his feet in time to music, just as his western brother does to a jazz band, while the native who beats a hollow log derives as much pleasure as the modern trap drummer.

It is novel to see natives who have had practically no contact with civilization, beating to the latest New York hit on the phonograph, and when their first fears have been allayed, they tap with their feet as the record grinds out. "When the Red Red Robin Comes Bob, Bob, Bobbin' Along."

The violin proved somewhat alarming on its first appearance among the

aboriginals, for, like the sounds produced from tribal sources, they imagined that the violin strings were some human agency, and that the soul of an unfortunate was crying out in anguish.

So it was with the recorded voice upon the phonograph. At the first sound of Galli Curci, they stood up in alarm, and would have dived overboard if the machine had not stopped.

They were plainly under the impression that a woman was secreted in the little box, and looked everywhere for the owner of the vocal effect.

They could not understand that it was the record and sound box that produced the sound.

Other artists met with similar fates, and even the high register of Caruso failed to please them. But their fears were dispelled when the Broadway Blues thundered from the phonograph, and they beamed with pleasure at the rhythm of "Red Hot Mama."

They made a strange scene, the primitive men and women, with their shingled bobs and "busted hair" listening with joy to the latest jazz numbers, and tapping as though they were dancing the steps of the fox trot, or the well-known black bottom.

Their own vocal efforts would do injustice to a howling dog, for they start at a high pitch, and end only when the "vocalist" has run out of breath. They keep time by tapping two boomerangs together, while the men occasionally burst in and give the soloist a little support, by chanting a few bars.

Aboriginal music, although not pleasant to western ears, is very colorful, being descriptive of the hunting of kangaroos, the beauty of the setting sun, or the prowess of some dead chief. It is chiefly a succession

of chromatics, and the verses are but repetition.

Wild natives who have had no previous association with civilized men will often mimic their actions. The fingering of a moustache will be copied by the aboriginal, while even a cough will be imitated. He smiles when you smile, and frowns when you frown.

When given a large piece of brightly-colored cloth, the women will immediately tear it into dozens of small pieces, and reappear with their hair adorned with it, just as a western woman will bargain for a new hat. They are very susceptible to color, and invariably quarrel over trifles—such as stray pieces of cloth.

If one woman is given a comb, and told how to use it, some weeks later her hair, although short, would put a beauty specialist to shame because of its improved appearance. She had undoubtedly combed her hair every available minute since receiving the comb.

The quarrels among the men and women over the distribution of presents often ends disastrously, for one man along the northwest coast had both arms fractured, the result of a combat over the distribution of tobacco. One man had a frightful fracture of the right arm, which had unfortunately, the arm being grotesquely twisted. It was another case of "cherchez la femme," and was caused by the attack of an irate husband.

It would take great pluck on the part of our womenfolk to adorn their bodies with the great cicatrices, or raised weals, which cover their brown-skinned sisters' bodies, in Australia. Despite the fact that they live a life where club rule is the dominant factor, the natives seem to derive more pleasure from their type of existence than the 1929 sophisticate derives from the ultra-modern age.

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By R. J. HUBBARD

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MRS. CORA HORTON

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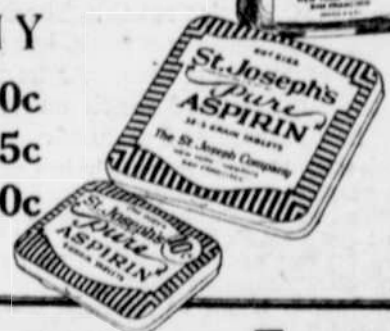
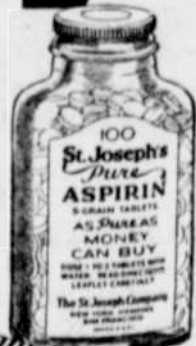
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