THE PASSING OF THE NATIVE:

In the course of his interesting article on the South Coast, Mr. E. D. Hoben says:

"The aboriginal myths and legends of this singular district would have been well worth preserving, but so far as I could gather they have not been preserved, and now the race has dwindled to a handful residing at Lake Illawarra, Crooked River, Coolangatta, and Jervis Bay. There were said to have once been 13 different tribes, with as many dialects, between Kiama and Nowra. Mr. John Brown, of Brownsville, who went to the South Coast as far back as 1829, tells me they were usually in bands of 70 or 80. For food they relied on fish, wallaby, paddymelons, opossums, and so forth. The waters still teem with fish and the ranges with paddymelons and wallaby, but the old-time hunters have gone. Last year an ancient Blue Mountain aboriginal, yeclupt Billy Lynch, told me that his people were skilled in the treatment of snake bite, and in the old days he had never known one of them killed by it. When a native was bitten his companion hurried him to water, placed him in it, left the wound alone, but sucked hard over the heart, and in a very short time declared him free of danger. The Illawarra natives evidently did not possess this skill, as, according to Mr. Brown, they were sorely afraid of snakes. When bitten they scarified and sucked the wound. He never knew one die of snake bite, however, though they were said to lose their sight as a result of it.

Perhaps some superstition had to do with their fear, for they were generally fearsome of the unknown—so are most men for that matter. When Mr. Brown's father first went to the district the natives occasionally helped themselves to his maize and pumpkins; but it was only necessary to let loose a small monkey, which they believed to be the incarnation of an evil spirit, to ensure their flight, and even more simple means sufficed, for a pumpkin, in which were holes cut to roughly represent a face, and within which a candle was burning, served to keep them out of the plantations at night.

One of the most interesting aboriginal legends I have heard was, however, told me by Mr. Brown. It is specially interesting from its immediate suggestion of one of the most striking of the Biblical stories. There is a track over the Kangaroo Valley Mountain, south of Albion Park, and along this route a tribe was travelling. A young gin, who was given to loitering, was particularly warned not to do so here, or the particular evil spirit of the locality would seize her. Perhaps she felt that hankering which some of her sex are alleged to feel for "a bit of the devil." Anyway, she did loiter, the local demon seized her, and, having wreaked his will upon her, turned her into stone. Unlike Lot's unhappy spouse, she was petrified as she lay, and she must have been a strapping young woman, for her freestone remains are about 12 ft. long. Like a famous Venus, the effigy had lost its arms, and the head also had been broken off—otherwise a somewhat "impressionist" statue of a woman.

—Illawarra Mercury, 16 December 1897.