

each other, and a short time after may be again seen acting together. Their conflicts, for they do not deserve the name of wars, are conducted after the following manner. The quarrel or misunderstanding generally arises from some trivial affair; when the aggrieved party assembles his neighbours to consult them relative to the course to be pursued. The general opinion having been declared, a messenger is sent to announce their intention to commence hostilities to the opposite party, and to fix a day for the combat. The latter immediately assemble their friends, and make preparations for the approaching contest. The two parties on the day assigned meet, accompanied by the women and children. The first onset is made by the oldest women (hags they might be termed) vituperating the opposite side. Then a warrior advances, and several throws of spears take place. These are parried with much dexterity, for all the natives possess great art and skill in avoiding missiles with their shields. This exchange of missiles continues for some time, and not unfrequently ends without any fatal result. When one of either party is killed, a separation takes place, succeeded by another course of recrimination, after which explanations are made, the affair terminates, and hostility is at an end; the two parties meet amicably, bury the dead, and join in the corroboratory dance.

These dances are not only the usual close of their combats, but are frequent in time of peace. They appear almost necessary to stir up their blood; and under the excitement they produce, the whole nature of the people seems to be changed. To a spectator, the effect of one of these exhibitions almost equals that of a tragic melodrame.

A suitable place for the performance is selected in the neighbourhood of their huts. Here a fire is built by the women and boys, while such of the men as are to take a share in the exhibition, usually about twenty in number, disappear to arrange their persons. When these preparations are completed, and the fire burns brightly, the performers are seen advancing in the guise of as many skeletons. This effect is produced by means of pipe-clay, with which they paint broad white lines on their arms and legs, and on the head, while others of less breadth are drawn across the body, to correspond to the ribs. The music consists in beating time on their shields, and singing, and to it the movements of the dancers conform. It must not be supposed that this exhibition is a dance in our sense of the word, nor is it like any thing that we saw in the South Sea islands. It consists of violent and odd movements of the arms, legs, and body, contortions and violent muscular actions, amounting almost to frenzy. The performers appear more like a child's pasteboard supple-Jack than any thing human in their movements.