

Some of their personal or private quarrels are settled by a sort of duel, or rather a trial of whose head is hardest. The accused or challenged party extends his head, with the crown uppermost, towards his adversary, who strikes a blow with his utmost force with a waddy, which is the weapon they usually carry about them, and with which they punish their wives, who exhibit generally many marks from the use of it. The challenger then presents his head in return, and blows are thus continued alternately, until one or the other is disabled, or both declare themselves satisfied. Those who have witnessed these encounters are quite astonished that every blow does not stun or kill, for each of them would be fatal to a white man; but the great thickness of their skulls enables them to sustain this violence with but little injury.

Their weapons are the spear, club, or nulla-nulla, boomereng, dundumel, and the bundi, of which drawings are given in the tail-piece at the end of the last chapter. Their spears are about ten feet long, and very slender, made of cane or wood tapering to a point, which is barbed. They are light, and one would scarcely be inclined to believe that they could be darted with any force; nor could they without the aid of the wammera, a straight flat stick, three feet in length, terminating in a socket of bone or hide, into which the end of the spear is fixed. The wammera is grasped in the right hand by three fingers, the spear lying between the fore-finger and thumb. Previous to throwing it, a tremulous or vibratory motion is given to it, which is supposed to add to the accuracy of the aim; in projecting the spear, the wammera is retained in the hand, and the use of this simple contrivance adds greatly to the projectile force given to the spear. They are well practised in the use of these weapons.

The nulla-nulla, or uta, is from thirty to thirty-six inches in length, the handle being of a size to be conveniently grasped.

The dundumel is a weapon used by the natives of the interior; it has a curved flat handle thirty inches in length, and terminates in a projection not unlike a hatchet; it is thrown from the hand before coming to close quarters, and usually at a very short distance.

But the most extraordinary weapon is the boomereng. This is a flat stick, three feet long and two inches wide by three quarters of an inch thick, curved or crooked in the centre, forming an obtuse angle. At first sight one would conclude it was a wooden sword, very rudely and clumsily made; indeed one of the early navigators took it for such. It is an implement used both for war and in the chase. In the hands of a native it is a missile efficient for both, and is made to describe some most extraordinary curves and movements.