

arms, including spears, shields, boomerangs, clubs, &c. The natives are seldom seen without arms, for they have not only to fear attacks from other tribes, but assaults from their own. This not unfrequently happens; and it is not long since the brother of King Ben was speared while asleep, for some private grudge, by Dismal; and it is said that Big-headed Blackboy, who has already been introduced to the reader, has committed several murders, and not long since burnt his mother nearly to death, in revenge for the loss of his brother, who died whilst under her care. This was not because he had any suspicions of unfair conduct, but simply from one of the unaccountable customs or superstitions of these people, which holds the nearest relative of a person accountable for his death, if it takes place under his care.

From the destructive influence of their own vices, and those of the community, these blacks are rapidly dying off. As an instance of this, Mr. Threlkeld mentioned that a tribe which occasionally visited the lake, and consisted at the time of his arrival of sixty, is now reduced, after a lapse of fifteen years, to twenty, only five of whom are females.

During our travellers' stay, two natives of some note arrived: King Ben and King Shingleman. The natives had no distinctions of rank among themselves, but when a native had performed any great service for one of the settlers, he was rewarded by giving him a large oval brass plate, with his royal title inscribed thereon. At first the natives were greatly pleased and proud of this mark of distinction, but as is the case every where, when the novelty was over, and these honorary medals became common, they began to hold them in disrepute, and now prefer the hard silver.

Sheep-shearing is performed in the neighbourhood of Lake Macquarie by men who make it their business. This operation was witnessed by some of our party, and was thought to be performed in a slovenly manner. It generally takes place in November and December.

Some others of our gentlemen paid a visit to Peuen Beuen, the seat of Mr. Stevens, near the head waters of the Hunter river. The route was by steamboat to Newcastle and thence to Maitland. The river at Newcastle is about one-third of a mile across, and the distance to Maitland, by water, about thirty miles, although it is only about twenty miles by land. The tide reaches Maitland, where the water is found to be brackish.

The banks of the river are extended flats. This is one of the principal agricultural districts of the colony, the soil enjoying the advantages of being naturally irrigated; but on the other hand, the crops are liable to destruction from heavy floods. These floods fre-