THE LENGUA INDIANS OF THE PARAGUAYAN CHACO.

By Seymour H. C. Hawtrey.

[Presented December 10th, 1901. With Plates XXXV–XLI.]

Before proceeding to the study of the Indians of the Chaco we must consider the geographical conditions of the land in which they live.

The Grand Chaco extends from latitude 20° S. to latitude 28° S., south of the watershed between the head waters of the Paraguay River and those of the Amazon's tributaries. It extends southwards and south-westwards till it merges into the cultivated plains of the Argentine Republic; it thus embraces parts of three Republics, the Argentine, Paraguayan, and Bolivian. This country is extremely flat, and several rivers flow from the Andes mountains right across the Chaco, and empty themselves into the Paraguay River, the two most worthy of notice being the Vermejo and the Pilcomayo, which last forms the boundary between the Paraguayan and the Argentine Chaco, and is further described on p. 289.

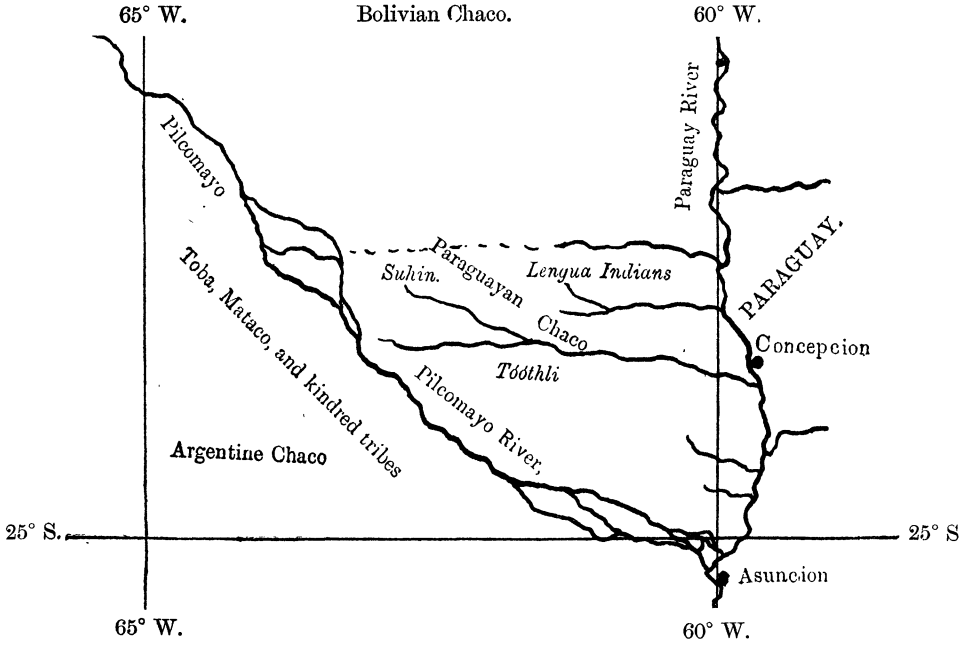
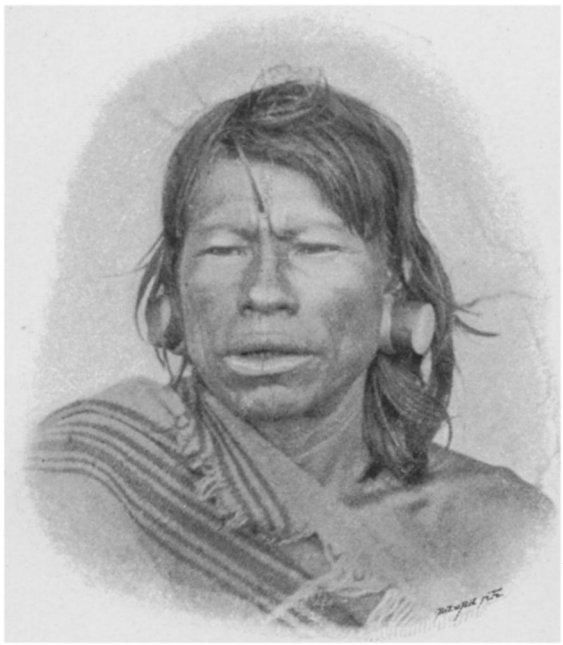
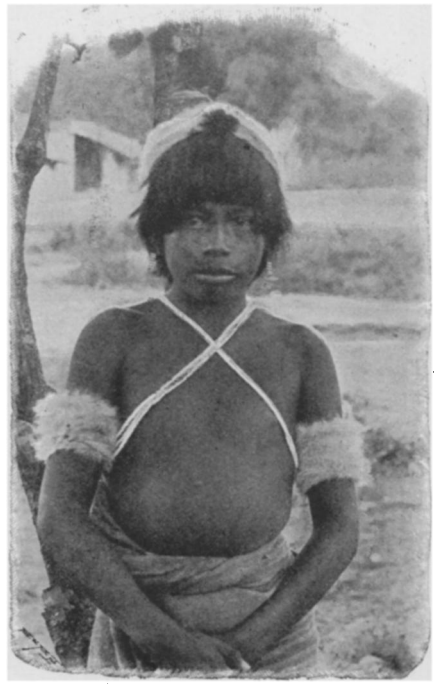


FIG. 1. SKETCH MAP OF THE PARAGUAYAN CHACO.



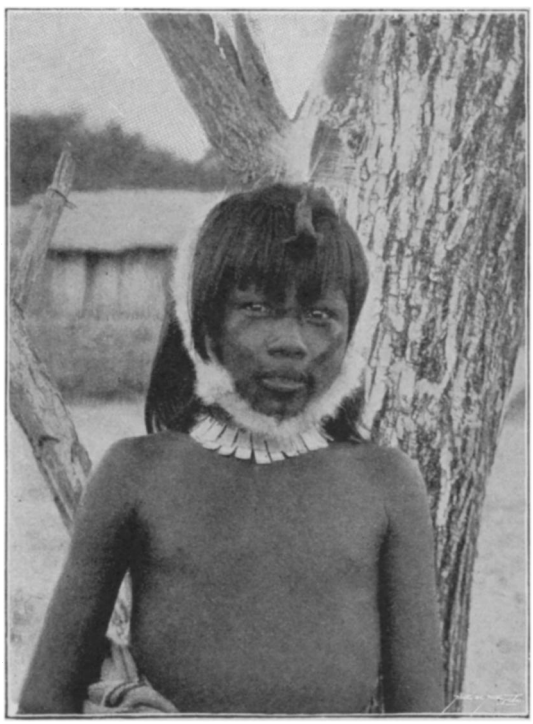
A LENGUA—A COMMON TYPE.

(*Note the enlarged ear-lobes and drum-like ear discs.*)



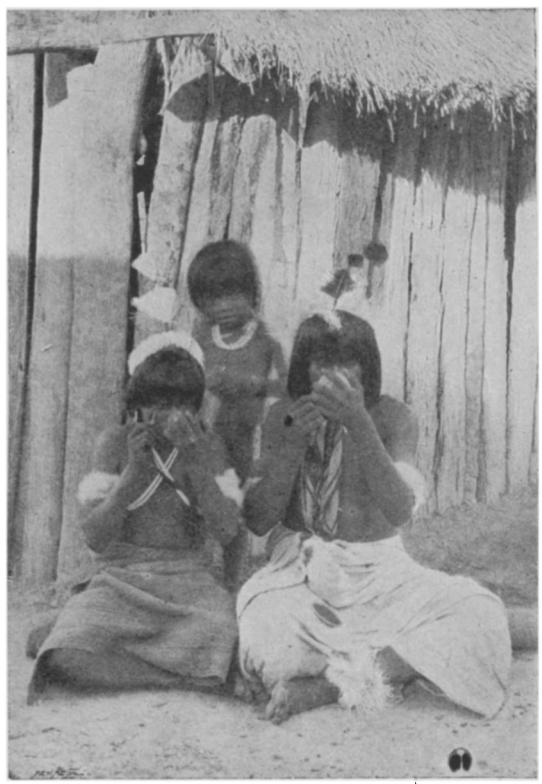
LENGUA BOY. 'METEGYAK (*i.e.*, "BORN WHEN FATHER WAS ON A JOURNEY").

(*Note the* lamb's wool *armlets and head ornament.*)



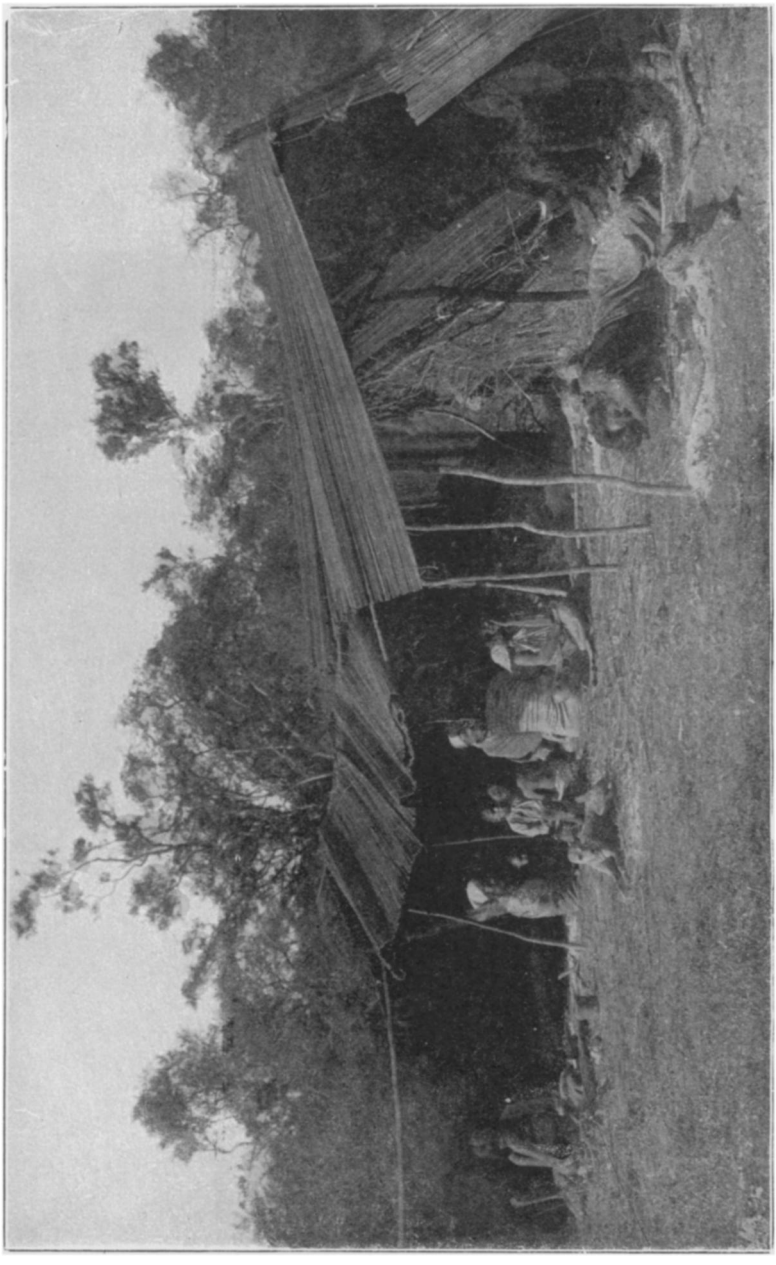
LENGUA BOY: MANGWEAM-AI.

The tree is that which is used for making fire sticks.



LENGUA FACE PAINTING.

With the aid of a small round mirror.



A LENGUA VILLAGE.

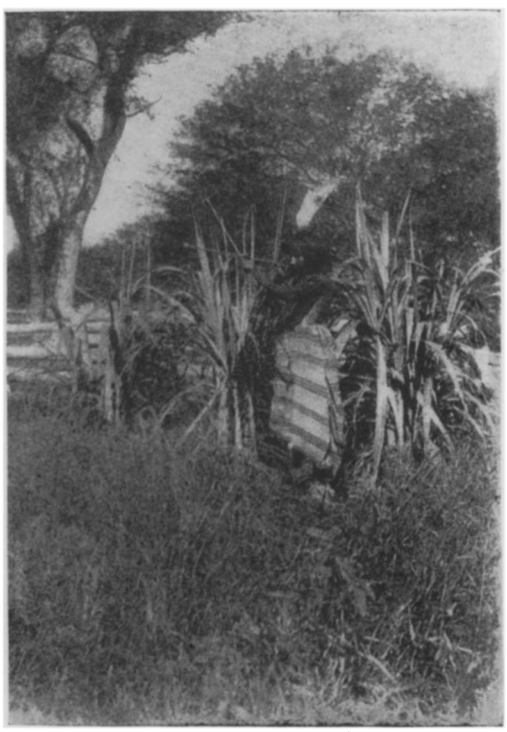
1. LENGUA WOMEN DRESSED FOR A DANCE.

2. POTTERY-MAKING.

1. LENGUAS PLAYING THE GAME "HASTÁWA."

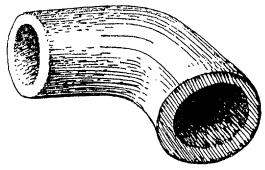
2. WOMEN'S DANCE AT A LENGUA FEAST.

1. LENGUA BOYS WITH PELLET BOWS.

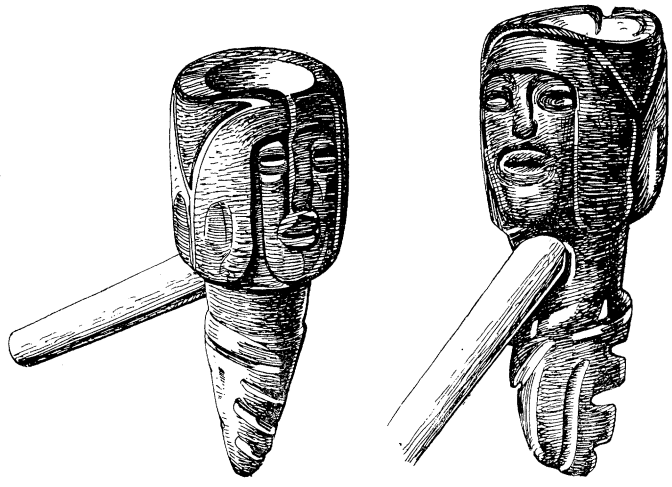


2. LENGUA BOY USING BLUNT-HEADED ARROW.

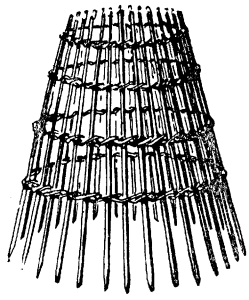
3. LENGUA INDIAN HOEING MANDIOCA.



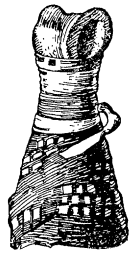
1. Clay Tobacco Pipe of primitive form ($\frac{1}{2}$).



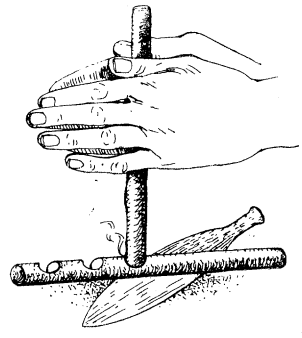
2. Suhin tobacco pipe of carved wood : back and front ($\frac{1}{2}$).



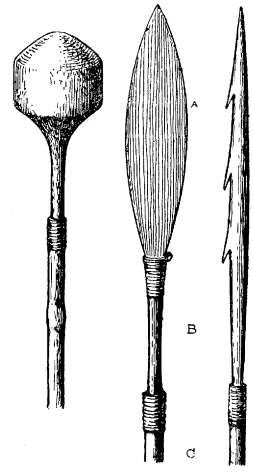
3. Fishing basket ($\frac{1}{10}$).



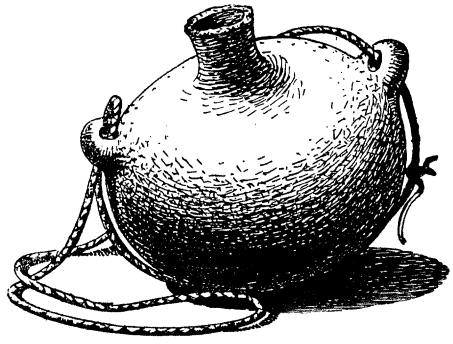
4. Doll of rags and bone ($\frac{1}{2}$).



5. Lengua method of making fire ($\frac{1}{10}$).



6. Blunt-headed arrow ($\frac{1}{5}$). 7. Iron-tipped arrow ($\frac{1}{5}$). 8. Wooden arrow ($\frac{1}{5}$).

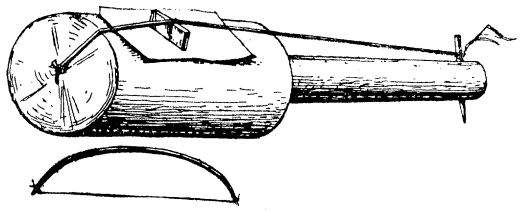


9. Clay Water Jar : no ornament ($\frac{1}{10}$).

10. Clay vessel (Tóóthli), painted ($\frac{1}{10}$).

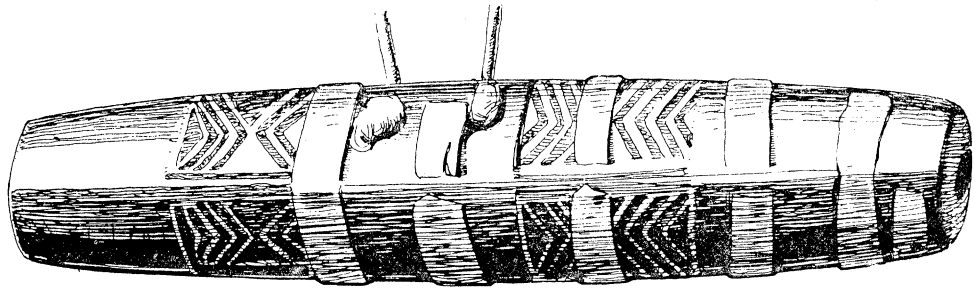
MISCELLANEOUS OBJECTS OF LENGUA MANUFACTURE.

Redrawn by C. Praetorius from water-colour drawings by Miss A. E. Donkin. The originals were collected by the author, and are in the British Museum.



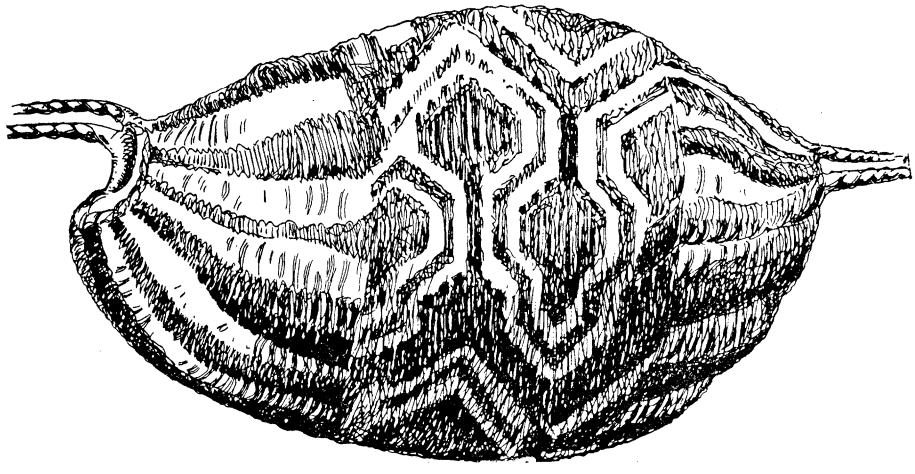
1. One-stringed fiddle : the body is hollow.

2. Wooden whistle.



3. Wooden whistle (another form) ornamented with strips of polished tin. (Tóóthli.)

4. Wind instrument of cow-horn, with reed mouthpiece.



5. String bag.

MISCELLANEOUS OBJECTS OF LENGUA MANUFACTURE.

Redrawn by C. Praetorius from water-colour drawings by Miss A. E. Donkin. The originals were collected by the author, and are in the British Museum.

It is with the district lying on the 23½ parallel of S. latitude, between the Pilcomayo and the Paraguay River, that we have to deal. In studying native life it is often found that the country makes the man, so that it will not be amiss to glance at a few of the principal features regarding the climate and the natural products of the Chaco. The Chaco being flat, as I have stated, there is very little chance for a heavy rainfall to drain quickly away. The rivers are extremely tortuous and sluggish, though, for their volume, some of them are much longer than would have been expected. The consequence is that with a prolonged drought water is extremely scarce, while on the other hand, after a heavy rainfall, which is as common as the drought, the water lies ankle deep on the open plains. During a period of five years (1895–1900) careful notes have been kept of the temperature and rainfall, the average temperature being 75° Fahr. night and day —maximum, 110°; minimum, 27°. The rainfall is extremely variable, the one noticeable point being that August is almost always a dry month; the rain in fact seems rather to go by cycles than by seasons, a period of three years of excessive wet having been followed by four years of moderate drought. More rain usually falls in summer than in winter.

The Indians of that part of the Chaco which is to be described are composed of three different tribes, the *Lengua*, the *Tóóthli*, and the *Suhin*. The name Lengua comes from the Spanish and means "a tongue," the other two are native names given by the Lenguas to neighbouring tribes. These Lenguas lie on the western bank of the Paraguay River, from latitude 22½° S. to latitude 24° S., and extend inland a distance of 150 miles. Beyond them to the west lie the Suhin, whose limits have yet to be determined and between these two in the south-west are the Tóóthli, a small tribe who present slightly different characteristics to those of their neighbours. The Lenguas are essentially a nomadic and a peaceful tribe; the Suhin are more agricultural, and in consequence less nomadic; while the Tóóthli, being somewhat pushed in the struggle for existence by a neighbouring tribe in the south, are more warlike than either, though they still depend upon agriculture and the chase for their food supply. It was amongst the Lenguas that I have lately spent a period of four years, and have had ample opportunity for studying their manners and customs. I have, however, unfortunately, made no definite observations of an anthropographical character; regarding the Indians, as I did, rather as friends and companions than with a scientific interest.

Physical Type (cf. *Anthropological Notes and Queries*, Part I).—The Lenguas do not belong to the Guarani family, who inhabit such an extensive tract of country in South America, nor to the Quichua family of Bolivia. From their language, customs, and disposition, they evidently are of the same stock as the Toba, Mataco, and kindred tribes who occupy the greater part of the Argentine territory still unsettled, and extend northward into the low-lying lands of Bolivia.

As a general rule they are of middle height, well built, with a smooth, healthy, reddish-copper brown skin (between tints 4 and 5, *N.Q.*, Pl. III) and

straight black hair, which is usually cut across the shoulders. Their teeth, of course, are remarkably sound, their hair plentiful, and not turning white till a great age, their eyes strong, their hearing reasonably acute, and their perceptions remarkably so. The facial type presents occasional similarity to the North American or even to the Mongolian type (Plate XXXV, 1).

To a newcomer all Indians appear very much alike, but on closer acquaintance a certain variety of feature will be observed, and even sections of the same tribe may be found to present some differences. Also, though a strange Indian may at first sight seem to have an ugly and forbidding face, yet on nearer acquaintance, and after a certain degree of friendship has been established, his features will often appear to be characterized by pleasantness and openness.

Clothing (*N.Q.* (Part II), Sec. i).—The natives are well clothed. The men wear blankets woven from wool by the women, and dyed by them (*N.Q.* vii, below); a variation of this is the loose sleeveless shirt, likewise made of wool. The women wear skins carefully prepared, cut and sewn by themselves into petticoats, and they are more careful than the men in the matter of keeping themselves covered. The men never wear skin petticoats or kilts, with the exception of a skin belt cut into strips and hanging about a foot deep. The women also use, in the cold weather, a cloak made of deer or goat skins with the hair on. Usually the natives do not wear any head covering, though, as they feel the heat in summer, they are glad to get hold of imported hats, but on special occasions the men wear a net over the head, made of red wool, and trimmed with beads, and they often wear feather head-dresses. A common head ornament is a feather of the "rhea" (*Rhea Americana*) or "South American ostrich," stuck into the scalp lock, which is formed by drawing over the forehead the hair of the centre of the top of the head, and binding it tightly round with red wool till it looks like a shaving brush (Fig. 2). They usually have their feet bare, but on long journeys they often provide themselves with sandals of hide.

Fig. 2. Lengua Indian, showing headdress, scalplock, and whistle suspended round the neck: *from a water-colour drawing by Miss A. E. Donkin.*

Personal Ornaments (*N.Q.* ii).—At their feasts they usually dress in the height of their fashion, and put on all the ornaments they possess. Both men and women wear strings of beads; the men wear red feather head-dresses, which are occasion-

ally borrowed by the younger women. Armlets of lambs' wool are often worn by men, and anklets of twisted rhea feathers (Plate XXXIX), which, besides being ornamental, are supposed to be a safeguard against snakes, for the snake bites at the moving frill and does not touch the foot. Bracelets of woven wool are

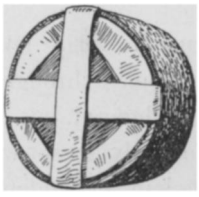


FIG. 3. LENGUA EAR-DISC.

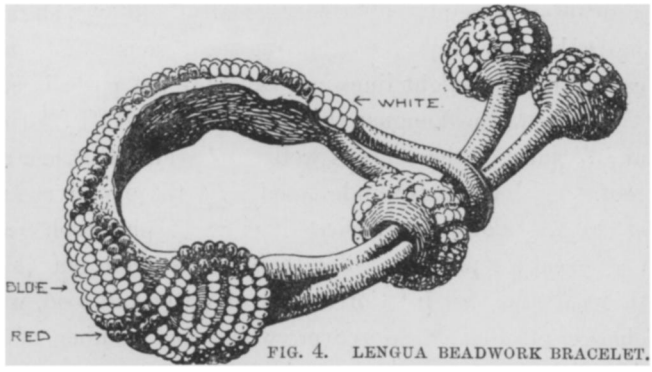


FIG. 4. LENGUA BEADWORK BRACELET.

worn as in Pl. XXXV, and are ornamented with beads (Fig. 4), and hanging beadwork is at times attached to the scalp lock, or hung round the neck. The lobes of the ear are perforated, and distended by thick discs of wood or other material, which in rare cases are as much as 3 inches in diameter. (Fig. 3.)

Woollen girdles are always in use to secure the blanket or petticoat; leather belts cut into hanging strips are also prized by the men, and a common way of fastening the blanket is with the little "aiin," or string bag, which all the men carry. This bag (Plate XLI, 5) contains all the little necessaries of life, such as matches, fire-sticks (Plate XL, 5), tobacco, ear-discs (Fig. 3), bone implements, claws of animals, and so on, and finishes in two long strings, which are tied round the waist, outside the blanket.

Painting (*N.Q.* iii).—On grand occasions red paint is used lavishly. It is made from the pounded seeds of a shrub, and is much valued; sometimes the entire face is covered with the red paint; sometimes the paint is put on in broad angular lines. A dark blue-black paint is also used, but it is much more carefully applied, in narrow lines and patterns, while the same paint carelessly applied in broad lines indicates mourning. On one occasion, however, at a Suhin feast, two or three of the principal chiefs had their faces entirely black with charcoal for days together, and this was not intended to indicate mourning. Except in mourning, painting as a rule seems to be for the purpose of increasing the charms of the individual (cf. Plate XXXV). Black paint marks are often noticed on the chest and arms; these are not permanent, and are made roughly with the fingers. A black chequered paint pattern has been noticed on a woman's cheeks.

Tattooing (*N.Q.* iii) is known among the Tóóthli, and the Suhin; and rarely among the Lenguas; it is confined to the face, and is more noticeable with the women than the men. The actual process has not been observed.

Habitations (*N.Q.* iv).—The Tóóthli and the Suhin, on account of their more agricultural habits, are better house-builders than the Lenguas, and their villages

are composed of a cluster of separate houses. The general principle, however, of all the buildings, is to use branches of trees, stuck in the ground, bent over, and meeting at the top without any ridge-pole, and with grass thatch thrown on. Near the river the natives have built better houses for themselves, on the ridge-pole-and-rafter principle. They are usually built in a slight curve, the two ends facing north by way of protection from the cold south wind and storms. The natives cannot draw straight lines, nor can they put posts in straight.

Among the Lenguas the house (Pl. XXXVI) is open through its entire length, and usually at the sides as well; and seeing that the rain often comes through the roof, it will be easily understood that these natives are not well housed, but they endure their discomfort with the utmost philosophy, and contentedly accept whatever weather prevails. For their needs their houses are sufficient, dependent as they are upon an inferior supply of water and food, which necessitates a constant change of abode. Moreover, when one member of a family dies, the house is demolished and another one is built, often at a distance of some miles, by the survivors. One of these houses will accommodate from forty to sixty souls. No special arrangement is made for comfort, or superiority of position in the houses. Skins are always used to sit upon, with the hairy side invariably underneath, so as not to attract insects. Under the low roof of interlaced twigs are hung rhea-skin bags, or nets containing the women's wool, twine, etc., earthen pots, and other household necessaries. Into the thatch are stuck the man's bows and arrows; and on the floor are the water jars (Plate XL, 9) and cooking pots, both of clay and iron (the latter, of course, imported), and rolled-up skins, rhea-feathers, and half-gourds which are used as cups and balers. Goats and sheep disport themselves around and through the houses; and lean, hungry dogs are in evidence everywhere, eagerly snatching at every bit of food which the natives are unable to eat.

Weaving (*N.Q.* vii).—This is done by all the women, and though their tools are rude, they can turn out a remarkably well-made blanket, with stripes and patterns. Of these blankets when new, the men are very proud, especially if dyed with the dark red dye (*see* below *N.Q.* xii), and it is hard to induce them to sell one of these except in exchange for a horse. The patterns are often of a diamond or triangular shape; and sometimes the triangle is worked in with small spots. The usual class of pattern may be seen in the woven belts which are about 5 feet long by 3 inches wide. In their patterns they are conservative, and not inventive enough to produce new ones. So much is this apparent that it is not unlikely that their knowledge of weaving was derived from the time of the Incas, who spread a certain degree of civilization over a large area.

The loom is formed by two upright forked posts with a pole across the top, and another tied at the bottom. As the woman sits on the ground she can just reach up to drop the ball of wool over the top pole and catch it and pass it underneath the lower one, till the warp is finished. Then by an ingenious contrivance of cotton string, crossing the whole width, and picking up each alternate strand of wool, she is able to separate them, and to pass the hank of wool,

which takes the place of the shuttle, between the warp threads. The woof thread is then pressed down into place by a kind of long wooden stiletto, smartly drawn along between the warp threads two or three times; this is done in sections of about 12 inches at a time. When finished a good blanket is usually about 7 ft. × 6 ft.

In a neighbouring tribe I have seen a woman sitting on the warp threads to keep them tight, the blanket being about 4 inches from the ground, and stretched horizontally; with a stick of wood in use to help to separate the warp threads, and a shuttle for the wool. This was probably a Mataco woman, and the improved method may have been derived from the Argentine Chaco.

Basket-work (*N.Q.* viii). *See* below (*N.Q.* xxv and Plate XL, 3) for a description of the rude baskets used in catching fish.

String (*N.Q.* ix) is extensively made and used both by men and women. The fibre is procured from the "caraguata" (a species of wild pineapple) by scraping a leaf of the plant against a stick placed upright in the ground or through a fixed loop of string, with the two ends of the leaf held at an acute angle. It is worked up into string, from the size of thread to that of a half-inch rope, and is chiefly used in the manufacture of nets and string bags (Plate XLI, 5). A hank of string ready for use is often used as a belt.

With string puzzles, after the fashion of "cat's cradles," they are very clever, and can make representations, with more or less faithfulness, of most common objects, a gourd, a rhea or a star, a pumpkin, a bird, some being very complicated and requiring four hands.

Leather (*N.Q.* x) is not tanned, but is worked soft by creasing or folding the scraped skin in diagonal lines like the "crushed" leather of Western Asia, and accentuating the crease by passing the smooth lip of a large snail shell firmly along it. The skin is then rubbed on the lap with a simultaneous wringing motion. The sewing of the women's petticoats is often very fine.

Pottery (*N.Q.* xi) is not used extensively, and more attention is paid to usefulness than to ornament. Water pots (Pl. XL, 9), and cooking pots deep and rather conical in shape, for standing upright among the ashes, are made by first rolling the clay between the hands in rolls about 9 inches long, and adding on piece by piece in the requisite shape (Pl. XXXVII). When half dry the pots are scraped, and polished with the smooth rim of a shell, and then left in the sun for a day or two till quite dry, when they are baked in open fires made by piling wood around and over the pot. This method of firing is, of course, not good, and the clay is not baked evenly through. The earliest form of tobacco-pipe here was probably a rough bent cylinder of clay (Plate XL, 1). These, however, are but seldom seen now, for since the introduction of iron and steel knives, it is found more economical to make wooden pipes which will not break (Plate XL, 2). For painted pottery see *N.Q.* xxiv, below.

Dyeing (*N.Q.* xii).—The bark of various trees is used for dye, but a small bulbous root with a fast dark-red dye is very much prized, and the cochineal insect is also used.

The substances chiefly dyed are sheep's wool and cotton, which latter, like the former, is sometimes woven into blankets; the wool is dyed, after being twisted, by steeping. String also is frequently dyed with bark to be made up into net bags.

Fire (*N.Q.* xvi) is still obtained by friction; though flint and steel, and even matches, are now becoming common. The method of friction which is employed is represented in Plate XL, 5. The upright stick is twirled between the palms of the hands. To produce the desired effect firm pressure downwards is required, and quick recovery when the hands reach the bottom. Smoke comes quickly, but the spark takes a comparatively long time. When it does come, it ignites on the little heap of brown dust which is produced by the friction of the two woods, and is caught on the arrow head laid athwart beneath the horizontal fire-stick. The Lengua name of the wood for fire-sticks is *hapin*. The tree itself is shown in the background of Plate XXXV, lower, left.

Conservatism (*N.Q.* xx).—I have mentioned that these Indians are conservative; this is shown by their reluctance to adopt any new custom. When they are shown a new and better way of working, a common reply is, "It isn't better, our way is the best," or else, "That way may be good enough for you, you are accustomed to it, but our way suits us best." For instance, after we had endeavoured to teach them to shear their sheep with shears, the women still preferred to cut the wool off with a knife as required, which apparently has always been their custom.

Writing (*N.Q.* xxii).—Though there is no knowledge of writing among the Indians yet they can keep a diary, for as much as three weeks or a month, by means of a stick, about the size of a pencil, closely notched all round. Producing this from his bag, an Indian can retail the events of the past few weeks with accuracy. When on the march they are accustomed to make certain signs which their friends following may understand. Where two paths branch off, a wisp of grass laid across the one means that the party in front has gone on by the other. At an abandoned village a sign may sometimes be seen: a piece of stick or bamboo is planted in the ground and inclined in the direction which the natives have taken. In this case distance is also indicated by a slight hollow scooped out behind the stick, either long or short, and the purpose of their departure is shown by a wisp of rhea-feather, or a small gourd on the top, to show that they have gone hunting or to a feast. In cases such as these an Indian shows remarkably acute perception in reading what his friends wish to say. In hailing a friend from a distance, also, though the sounds to an onlooker may be but a confused noise, yet the Indian will understand.

They appear to have no knowledge of the *quipu* system of keeping a record of historical events by knotted cords.

Drawing, etc. (*N.Q.* xxiii).—*See* above (*N.Q.* ix) for the representation of living objects by means of string puzzles of the type of our "cat's cradles."

Ornament (*N.Q.* xxiv).—All their ingenuity in the decorative arts is brought to bear on their pipes, and it is rare to find two pipes identically the same (cf. Plate XL, 2). A pipe with two bowls is occasionally seen but not much used.

Freaks in the wood are often used to make an original looking pipe. For textile ornament *see* above in section on *Weaving* (*N.Q.* vii). The decorated Tóóthli pottery shown in Pl. XL, 10, is painted with bits of resinous "paolo santo," and ornamented with flat pieces of shell stuck on with wax.

Food (*N.Q.* xxv).—With regard to *food* they are dependent to a great extent upon what they can find in the open country. Deer of several varieties are abundant as also is the *rhea*. Different species of armadillo are also common, and fish, crocodiles, and otters are met with in the streams, along with *nutria* and *carpincho*. Fish are obtained generally by following the water in the swamps, where they often lie so thick in the stagnant pools that they can easily be caught by hand. Indians also make a little conical wicker basket about 2 feet high (Plate XL, 3), open at base and apex, which when placed over the fish easily enables the fisherman to catch it by putting his hand through the hole at the top. In the swamps and shallow streams "Lolăch" or "mud-fish" (*Lepidosiren*) are commonly found. In the deeper streams, bow and arrow is often used, and the Tóóthli Indians, after making weirs in the stream above and below some deep hole, catch the fish by diving after them with a narrow net fixed between two long sticks, stringing the fish on to a cord round the waist when caught. Spears of pointed wire are used for eels and mud-fish.

The leguminous *algaroba* or "caroub" (*Prosopis dulcis*) and similar tree-beans are common; their fruit is pounded in wooden mortars, mixed with water, and handed round in gourds; a handful is taken out, sucked, and put back again; this is continued till all the hard seeds have been divested of their sweet covering, and the refuse is then thrown away. It is not at all a pleasant operation to watch, but it is said that this method of mastication helps the digestion.

Meat is eaten either roasted or boiled, and well cooked.

Milk the native will not touch, nor mushrooms, considering them unfit for food. For other superstitions with regard to food *see* (*N.Q.* xxxvii) below.

Salt is sometimes made from a fleshy plant growing in salt, marshy spots. It is burnt, and the grey ashes pressed into a lump like a stone. A specimen may be seen in the British Museum.

Tobacco (cf. *N.Q.* Part I, Sec. 10) is grown in small quantities in the gardens, which are generally unfenced, and a mile or two away from the village, in order that the flocks of goats and sheep may not trample and destroy them. It is in general use both with men and women, though occasionally an Indian is met with who does not smoke; it is not prepared by being hung up to dry in the usual way, but is picked, pounded in a mortar, spread out to partly dry, and then pressed between the hands into small cakes, which are threaded on a string and hung up in the house. It never turns brown, but remains a dark brownish green, and has a different and softer flavour when compared with properly cured tobacco.

In keeping with his socialistic ideas (*see* below *N.Q.* xxxii) an Indian never smokes his pipe out, but passes it from one to another. It is quite usual for one man to produce a pipe, another to fill it, and a third to light it, and pass it on.

The pipes were formerly of clay (*N.Q.* xi above), but are now more commonly of wood. They are usually decorated elaborately (*N.Q.* xxiv above and Plate XL, 1, 2).

Cannibalism (*N.Q.* xxvi) is not practised. For traditions on the subject, *see* below (*N.Q.* xxvii, *ad fin.*).

Religious Beliefs (*N.Q.* xxvii).—It has been said that no aboriginal race is absolutely devoid of a knowledge or idea of some supernatural being or higher power; but after ten years' residence among the Chaco Indians, and an intimate acquaintance with their language and customs, one is forced to the conclusion that they have no conception of a God. There is, however, a marked fear of what are called *Kilyíkhama* or spirits. These are supposed to be most generally seen at night, and are practically the same as the ghosts of civilized countries. No doubt the Indians sometimes persuade themselves into the belief that they see the shades of dead people, and it is certain that they are strongly influenced by suggestion; but more often, since ghosts are seen at night, they are probably deluded by a chance effect of moonlight, or by a startled animal such as the rhea, which would vanish almost as soon as seen. When a person dies, his spirit is supposed to haunt his old home, and for this reason his relations and friends invariably pull down the house and in a few hours build a fresh one at a respectful distance.

The dances described below, under the heading of "Games" (*N.Q.* lxvii), do not seem to have any religious significance.

Mythology (*N.Q.* xxviii).—There is a tradition of the creation that from a hole in the ground caused by a beetle, a witch doctor commanded that a man and a woman should come forth, and they did so. In this tradition it is difficult to explain the presence of the witch doctor himself; but the story may be incorrectly stated.

I have heard that when the sun sets it is supposed to pass inside the earth, where there is another country somewhat similar to this one, of which the sky or roof is the ground that we tread on, and where the spirits of dead people live. The entrance to this place was described to me as being far in the west, a dark hole leading downwards, the approach to which was very stony and painful to the feet. It is possible that, if this story is true, it may embody some dim recollection of the shafts or galleries of the silver mines at Potosi or elsewhere, which would naturally make a deep impression on an Indian's mind, but they are so reticent with regard to their inner life and thoughts, that it is very seldom they can be persuaded to speak on these matters, and when they do, one has to discriminate between the palpably foolish stories and those in which there may be some truth.

To give another instance of what I mean, there is a story that beyond the Northern Lenguas there is a tribe of Indians who have only three toes and go by the name of "Like-rhea's-feet," and who can run with more than human speed. This I believe to be simply, as one might call it, a "fairy tale." At about the same time I heard a story, that away in the north-west a section of the Lenguas in that part were in the habit of digging, on rising ground, wells so deep that they used a bucket and a rope. This, at the time, I put down to be very possibly a

fabrication, for our Indians almost always dig broad and shallow wells, but afterwards, in travelling to the north-west, I found it to be true in every particular. The wells were on rising ground in a sandy soil, about 15 or 20 feet deep, with a hole at the top only 2 feet by 2 feet 6 inches in diameter, and so made that a man could go down by foot holes on either side (as I myself went down to see how it was made), and a bucket and rope were used.

They also have a story that the Indians who live on the old river beds running east and west, and dry for the greater part of the year, when they get hungry for fish, as they say, are accustomed to send a specially good blanket by a messenger to the far west with the request that the water should be sent down to them. Upon this the people there make a fence or dam in the big river with the trunks of trees and so turn the water into the required channel, and in due time the hungry Indians see their fish. It would be interesting to try and probe the truth of this story. Certainly, on the foothills of the Andes, the practice of damming is well known, and was extensively resorted to even before the Spanish Conquest; so that it would not be altogether surprising if it were used on a larger scale in the way described.

The Pilcomayo River, also, which bounds the Paraguayan Chaco on the west and south, has been an object of tantalizing interest to geographers for many years, on account of the apparent impossibility of following its course, for it is blocked by a water-weed where it spreads out into the Patiño swamp (after the manner of the sudd on the Nile), and also, because there is a greater volume of water in its upper reaches than is found at its mouth where it flows into the Paraguay River. This strange phenomenon has been accounted for in various ways, as being due to evaporation in the great Patiño swamp, or to the water being lost in the great sandy desert of the Chaco, both of which explanations are inadequate. The real reason is, as I believe, that the Pilcomayo (Fig. 1) has a delta which comprises a large proportion of the streams flowing into the Paraguay between latitude 22° S. and latitude 24½° S. Therefore, the flood waters of the Pilcomayo, sent down by the melting snows of the Andes, find their slow and tortuous way through many channels to the Paraguay River. Every year, therefore, the Indians on these old river beds look forward to the flowering time of the grass, because then they expect the water to come down from the unknown west, bringing with it the big fat fish which are only found in the deep, freshwater rivers.

One other interesting story these Indians have, namely, that there is a pigmy tribe living in the forests in the west, shy, and easily frightened, but good little people, and hard workers. They are described as about the size of boys of nine or ten years old, but full grown. I believe this story has been met with in the Argentine territory, and, if so, it is likely that there is some truth in it, for our Indians do not easily communicate with the Argentine people.

There are traditions or rumours, but possibly with slight foundation, of a cannibal race in the west, and the practice of scalping, though not in vogue, is still not unknown to tradition.

Superstitions (*N.Q.* xxix).—There is deep-rooted superstition with regard to *beetles*, over which insects the witch-doctors are supposed to have a peculiar power (cf. *N.Q.* xxviii above, and xxx below).

The night before an Indian goes out hunting he may be sometimes heard chanting alone, with his rattle for an accompaniment, for several hours. This is called *yabinyoa*. After a time of rain and wet, when the sun comes through the clouds for a moment, I have seen an old native pick up a fire brand and point it at the sun with an exclamation; by way of encouragement to the sun, as it was explained.

When weary of a wet day and when it has cleared up slightly, should they see another rain cloud coming up, one Indian will say to another, "Iwatakáp," blow! or puff! and the other will say "Schwa," and motion with the hand as if to push back the rain cloud.

Great faith is placed in dreams. It would seem that the spirit really is believed to be absent from the body, and engaged in acting what is being dreamt. But with regard to all the class of beliefs or superstitions which may fall under the head of mythology, it is almost impossible to determine accurately what is in the native's mind, for they are very reticent in these matters, and their reticence has been heightened by the knowledge that the superstition is regarded with disfavour by the missionaries. Moreover, a noticeable point is that a native after telling about his customs will not bear being questioned or cross-examined. If he tell his story one day, and be asked about it the next, he either will have forgotten it, or else will so skilfully steer clear of the subject that no satisfaction can be got, and one is left to wonder if there was any truth in it in the first instance.

Magic and Witchcraft (*N.Q.* xxx).—Witch-doctors are numerous and powerful. Most Indians believe that they make the potatoes, pumpkins, and other plants to grow in the gardens; yet although while they live these witch-doctors are endowed with supernatural powers, they are believed to die as ordinary men, and are not credited with any exceptional powers after death. There is probably a ceremony of initiation but the secret is jealously guarded. The witch-doctor is supposed to have the power of introducing beetles into a man's stomach for the purpose of killing him, therefore when a man feels his stomach ache, he often imagines that beetles are inside him, and he appeals to the witch-doctor of his particular family to cast them out. The curing is generally done at night. The man is laid on the ground, the witch-doctor sits by his side, and a ring of men sit round. The doctor then begins to spit on and to suck the man's stomach over the painful part, to the accompaniment of an excited though monotonous chant from his assistants. Rattles are also used. After some time the doctor produces, as he is sucking, a beetle, or a palm nut, or a fish bone. If the patient is semi-conscious it is supposed that his spirit has escaped and is wandering round waiting to be recalled. This is done in the manner before described, and the symptoms of returning consciousness are hailed with cheerful relief. A spirit may also be driven out of a patient in the same way. The ear-discs of witch-doctors are generally faced

with bright pieces of glass or bits of polished tin, and these are said to have something to do with the "shadows" or *pis-chische.* As the doctor leans over his patient the glittering glass may catch and reflect some faint light, enough to give him the clue to his statement that the spirit has gone this way or that. Some of the witch-doctors probably really believe in their power to cure, though the more intelligent among them must know that they practise conjuring tricks, and work on the feelings of the people. It must be remembered also that faith helps largely in a cure.

Customs (*N.Q.* xxxv).—Etiquette is strictly observed in the reception of visitors. A string of visitors advancing in Indian file is seen from a distance, winding towards the village along the narrow Indian path. Discussion immediately arises as to who they are, and where they come from; and as they get nearer, they may be identified as friends or comparative strangers; if the former, their particular friends in the village prepare to welcome them; in any case should there be any food in the village, such as potatoes or pumpkins, or mandioca, fires are stirred up and pots put on. As the strangers come near, the dogs rush out and bark, the women chide them or beat them off with sticks; and the visitors halt a few yards from the house. A chief man goes forward and says a few words of welcome or enquiry, such as "Do you wish to rest?" the leading women of the village then approach, and each woman relieves two or three of the men of their bows and arrows, returning with them to their respective parts of the long open house; the visitors follow their bows and arrows, and are soon seated on freshly dusted skins under the shade of the roof, while a pipe is filled, lighted, and handed round; and the newcomers proceed to answer questions as to whence they come, where they slept the previous night, how many days they have been travelling, and what they have had to eat on the journey. A stranger is not expected to be too effusive, it is quite the correct thing for him to sit almost silent for hours at a time. The men are often accompanied by their wives and children on these visits.

A noticeable and curious habit is the repetition of speech by the listener, especially in leave-taking, which is invariably formal and polite. An Indian ready to leave, with his blanket carefully girded up, and his bundle of arrows stuck through the belt at his side, will come and stand in front of where the chief is sitting by his house, and lean carelessly on his bow, while a conversation such as the following may take place, not in a hurried manner, but slowly and deliberately:—

A. I am going to leave.
B. You are going to leave.
A. I am going home by the straight road.
B. You are going home by the straight road.
A. I shall sleep at so and so.
B. You will sleep at so and so.
A. We shall see fish there in the streams.
B. You will see fish there in the streams, the *savalo*, fine and fat, my word!

A. Fine and fat, my word!
B. You will see pumpkins at the village beyond.
A. We shall see, etc., etc.
B. You will arrive home by the full of the moon.
A. I shall arrive, etc. Perhaps we shall kill a deer on the sandy patch.
B. Perhaps you will kill a deer on the sandy patch.
A. (*With a sudden air of "well, I must be going"*) I am going away.
B. Go!

Government (*N.Q.* xxxvi).—We may here glance at the principles of *socialism* which are so deeply instilled in the minds of these Indians. Unlike many other native tribes who have their chiefs and head men, the Lengua natives rule their lives almost exclusively by public opinion. So-called chiefs there are, certainly, but a better name for them would be "Father of the Family." As far as I know there are no rites or ceremonies in this connexion, the most influential man naturally taking his place as spokesman or head of the little gathering. The chief is also expected to provide for his followers, and in this respect he is more like the father of a family than a chief, in the recognized sense of the word. A young chief once said to the Superintendent of the South American Mission, "Why do you not give me presents? My followers expect me to give them things, and I do so; you are my chief, but I find you do not give me any presents." The more intelligence a chief has, the better he is able to provide for his followers and to work for their welfare. Should an important question be discussed a chief would hardly venture to lay down the law or any particular point where his views were likely to be at variance with those of his followers, though he might wish to do so; he would find out, by listening to conversation, the wishes of the majority, and then carry the matter through as if it was entirely his own idea. A heated discussion is almost unknown; in really serious matters they are very quiet. Only twice in four years have I seen what in England would be called "a row," and in each case a woman was the subject of dispute. The natives are very much attached to each other and to their own country; in telling the story of "the Prodigal Son" to a Christian native, so that he might tell his friends, I found, in spite of repeated explanations, that it was impossible to make him understand that the elder brother could have been aggrieved by the return of the Prodigal; such an idea would hardly find room in a native's mind; it would be considered such "bad form" by public opinion, that he would not be able to bear the disapprobation of his fellows. This feeling is so ingrained in them, that it is difficult to get an Indian to compete against others for a prize which is to be received by only one. Those who lose feel hurt because they lose, and he who wins feels grieved because the others are hurt. Anger there may be, but it is usually cloaked over with smooth words; backbiting and slander come afterwards, as for instance with the Northern Lenguas or Sanapana who occasionally visit the station to trade. They are courteously treated while they stay, but after they have gone it is common for an Indian of the district to come in with the tale that

"the Sanapanas have been stealing the mandioca or pumpkins out of your garden as they passed by."

These Indians are a reasoning and reasonable people, if they are treated as such. Though one may be angry with them, experience teaches that it is wise to keep one's temper, and a quiet reply with a dash of sarcasm in it has more effect than a blustering command; in the latter case the native would properly make no open reply, but subsequently would remark to his friends, perhaps with a smile, "he is cross, he is angry," and he would probably be advised to visit the next village for a day or two. Should a native be dismissed for incapacity it is always well to give him a comforting reason for it; to suggest that his garden at home needs weeding, or that his father and mother are longing to see him again.

Music (*N.Q.* xli).—Chaco Indians are decidedly unmusical as we understand music, being quite unable to follow the simplest tunes. They have, however, droning chants of their own,[1] and a few instruments with a range of only two or three notes. One is a round flat whistle (Plate XLI, 2, 3), which is worn around the neck (Fig. 1); it has a hole at the top which is held to the lips, while the thumb and fore-finger make the notes from two side holes. A kind of flute is also used, made of bamboo or bone; as well as a small rough kind of violin, made from a single block of wood, with one string of horse-hairs and a bow (Plate XLI, 1).

The wind instrument of cow's horn, figured in Plate XLI, 4, is used mostly by the Suhin, Tóóthli, and Western Lenguas, and either with or without the reed mouth-piece which is shown in the figure. Some Indians can blow the horn, which is used for signalling in the open country, without inserting a reed. Those, on the other hand, who cannot manage the horn by itself, insert the reed in order to produce the sound. To the Indian, therefore, the reed seems to be rather a makeshift than an improvement.

Language (*N.Q.* xliii).—The Lengua language is of the polysynthetic order and is of the same general formation and character of expression as the above

[1] In the two examples which follow I can vouch for the words; for I have often recited them to the natives to their satisfaction. The chant has its musical intervals, but they are too vague and irregular to be reproduced in our notation.

1. *Lengua chant*, at *Maning* dance (from a Suhin source). The word *hiuerkla*, upon which much stress is laid, means "moon" in Suhin.

Hé e ní
Hé a háni yá
Hé a háni yá
Hé a í ní
Hé a háni yá
Hé a háni *hiuerkla*
Hé a háni hé i a
Hé a háni hé i a
(*Repeat.*)

2. *Lengua chant*, at the *Maning* dance, from a Suhin, or Tóóthli source.

Hé-ní-a-á
Hé-ní-a-á
Hé-ní-a-ái-i
Hé-ní-a-ái-i
Ha-ée-ní-a-ái-i
He-é-ní-a-ús-a-á
Hé-ní-a-á
Hé-ní-a-á
Há-e-ní-a-ái-i
Ha-é-ní-a-ús-a-á
(*Repeat.*)

mentioned tribes, though in all of them the tongue itself is different, and it is impossible to class them as dialects one of the other. They do not readily incorporate foreign words into their language, being in this respect unlike other native races, who with a turn of the tongue will make an English word their own. To a New Zealander, for instance, a kettle immediately becomes a *ketara*, but to a Lengua it always remains *mithing chischama-yingmin*, "a thing to boil water in." To a Maori, horse is *hoiho*, but a Lengua calls it *yatnathling* or *yat-napothling*, "like a tapir," this animal being the nearest approach to a horse that he had known before its importation by the Spaniards.

For the numerals see below (*Arithmetic, N.Q.* lx).

History (*N.Q.* xlv).—With regard to the origin of these Indians, they themselves say that they come from the north-west, and their superstitions rather point in that direction, for the witch-doctors in the West are said to be more powerful than their own. And in the wearing of their blankets and string bags some connection may be found with those Indians who were known to be subject to the dominion of the Incas four hundred years ago, for bags almost identical in pattern and texture have been found in ancient graves in Peru; and the Indians in the West, at least the two tribes there with whom I have come in contact, are able to weave much better blankets than the Lenguas. But any statement with regard to their origin must of necessity be most indefinite, for they have no tradition of the past for more than a man's lifetime; and leave no monuments by which to trace their history.

Archæology (*N.Q.* xlvi).—It is said that a part of the district now inhabited by the Lenguas was at one time occupied by another race called Paiagua, or "people of the river," and this is corroborated by the discovery of stone axes and pottery, the presence of which can only be accounted for by the natives, by the theory that the pottery belongs to spirits or ghost people, and that the stones fell from Heaven.

Hunting (*N.Q.* xlviii).—The bow and arrow are the principal weapons; and since civilization has brought hoop-iron within their reach, iron arrow-heads are common; these, with their stiff bows, which require a strong arm to use with proper effect, have great penetration. The iron arrow-head (Pl. XL, 7) is fixed into a wooden socket (*b*) which in its turn has a point to be inserted into a bamboo shaft (*c*) bound to prevent splitting. The old wooden barbed arrow-heads (Pl. XL, 8) which are still extensively made and used, need, of course, no socket. The two feathers are always fixed with a slight curve, which gives the effect of a screw, and is quite sufficient to make the arrow spin in its passage through the air. It is difficult to say if this is done purposely, or whether the idea has been handed down till it has become an invariable custom. Most arrows have barbs, but I met an Indian who was travelling in a part of the country where he thought he might chance to meet an enemy and he had provided himself with a bundle of arrows without barbs, saying they were for his enemies. If this proves to be the usual custom, as it well may be, it speaks well for their considerate dispositions. Blunt

headed arrows (Plate XXXIX, 2; XL, 6) are also used, for small birds, by the boys, who begin to handle their little bows and arrows at three or four years of age.

The boys also use a kind of sling-bow, or pellet-bow (Plate XXXIX, 1).

Traps are sometimes used for foxes, and string snares for the rhea.

In hunting the rhea, the natives almost always provide themselves with a large bundle of grass or creepers with which they envelop their head and shoulders. Without this precaution they could seldom get near enough for an accurate shot, but with it the ostrich appears not to notice the approach of the hunter. Dogs are much used in hunting.

Poison for arrows may be known, but is not in general use.

Training of Animals (*N.Q.* lxii).—All kinds of wild animals are tamed when caught young, but generally revert to their wild state at maturity.

Infanticide (*N.Q.* lvi) is quite common among the Lenguas; an interval of seven or eight years being always observable between children of the same family. Not only are babies, which are born in this interval, immediately killed, but abortion is also practised. The reasons for this are obvious from the Indian's point of view.

The woman has the hard work of carrying food from garden and field, and all the transport to do; the Lenguas are a nomadic race (p. 281), and their frequent moves often entail journeys of from ten to twenty miles a day, the woman carrying all the household furniture, pots, water jars, wool and skins in a large net bag on her back with a supporting string round the forehead. In one hand she carries a palm-digger (which is a bar of iron sharpened at one end, used for getting at the tops of young palms), sometimes a reed mat, which is used as a roof, occasionally a cat, a fowl, or some other tame animal, and seated on the top, the baby. The man walks in front, carrying nothing but his bow and arrows, for he is the food provider on the journey, and custom allows his freedom from all impedimenta, although he sometimes gives his little boy a lift. Travelling with natives under these circumstances, one is forced to the conclusion that it would be impossible for a mother to have more than one young child to carry and to care for.

The Lenguas are also extremely socialistic, and public opinion on the subject of a screaming child at night is very much the same as among civilized races; while it is customary to suckle children till five or six years of age.

Again, the child of a girl whose first marriage is not a success, and whose husband deserts her, is generally killed at birth, the mother feeling that it is the man's part of married life to provide meat for them both, and failing the food provider she does not care to be burdened with a child, who may also prevent her from procuring a second husband.

It is also possible that medicine men and the head men of a family may have some idea of regulating the population to suit the existing food supply of their particular district. These are the probable reasons for infanticide, though there may be more remote causes of which the Indians prefer to keep strangers in ignorance.

Burials (*N.Q.* lviii).—As death approaches, a kind of stupor seems generally

to overcome the sufferer, and as Indians are unwilling that death should actually take place after dark, the dying man's end is sometimes purposely hastened by suffocation. This seems cruel, but I believe it is done out of supposed kindness to the victim. When death is due to causes which they cannot understand, and which they therefore attribute to some foreign witch-doctor or *yihothma*, the body is mutilated at death; the stomach being cut open, and a stone being inserted, together with some charred bones. This is supposed to secure the victim's revenge, by killing the offending witch-doctor.

I have only seen one burial, that of a little girl nine or ten years' old. Dysentery was the cause of death, which took place about midday. I was away at the time, and though she was mutilated in the manner described, I did not see the process. She had been carried by her father to a shady spot under some trees about half-a-mile from the house, and when I arrived, was laid down on her right side, covered over with a new apron of red-and-white check-pattern. I uncovered the face for a moment to see if she were really dead, but made no further examination, for I did not wish to hurt the feelings of the parents, who—especially the father—had been very kind to her during her illness, and I am quite sure that anything they may have done to her was done according to their ideas of kindness. I was surprised that they should have buried her with the new cotton wrapper, for they must have valued it considerably. The ground was very hard, and the grave was dug under a tree, 18 inches or 2 feet deep, with room enough for the child to lie on her side in a slightly doubled-up position with the knees drawn up. When they had filled in some of the earth, there was evidently a proposal to kill the child's favourite dog for interment above her, but in deference to my presence it was not done. I believe it was not killed afterwards. A woman who was sitting near produced a ball of wax, and stuck a few snake's teeth in it, with the remark, "*We* will take care of our friends"; this was placed by the grave-side, but whether it was put in afterwards or not I am unable to say. The child's skins, petticoats, and other effects were afterwards burnt close by, and no mound or mark was made to show the position of the grave.

Arithmetic (*N.Q.* lx).—The Lenguas can count without much difficulty up to twenty, using, of course, their fingers and toes. Beyond that comes "many," and if a very large number is required, "the hairs of the head" are called into requisition. *Thlama* "one," and *anit* "two," are apparently root words; the rest appear to depend upon them, and on the hands. *Antanthlama*, for "*three*," appears to be made by these two words joined (3 = 2 + 1). *Four* is "two sides alike."

Five:—"One hand."

Six:—"Arrived at the other hand one."

Seven:—"Arrived at the other hand two," and so on.

Ten:—"Finished the hands."

Eleven:—"Arrived at the foot one."

Sixteen:—"Arrived at the other foot one."

Twenty:—"Finished the feet."

Games (*N.Q.* lxvii).—Several games appear to be universal among these tribes. A characteristic game, represented in Plate XXXVIII, 1, is called "*Hăstāwa*," and is much on the same principle as our race-games played with dice. About twenty holes are scooped out in a semi-circle on the ground, about 4 to 6 inches long and 4 inches apart. One round hole deeper than the rest is in the centre, and this represents a well or deep stream of water, in which the players may be "drowned" and so put out of the game. The dice are four pieces of wood, round on one side and flat on the other. Two are held in each hand, and brought smartly together, and then are swept off the under hand on to a smooth piece of hide. Even numbers, flat or round, score variously, and allow another throw; odd numbers give the next man his turn. The scoring is done by means of arrows stuck in the holes, and as they are not good at counting, this part of the game appears rather complicated to an observer. But to the players it appears fascinating (though only indulged in at one season of the year) for the sibilant "*hăs-*" of the players and the click of the dice as they toss them down may be heard for hours together. An element of gambling is apparent in this game, for beads, and other small articles of apparel, frequently change hands. I believe that this game is meant to represent a war party on a raiding expedition, for little bits of wood or stick, placed in several of the small holes, are said to be "gardens" or patches of mandioca, pumpkins, or potatoes, which are supposed to be destroyed by the enemy, who plays himself into one of the holes and throws out the contents. The players take sides, and the rule is to proceed from one end to the other of the row of holes and back again.

The game of hockey appears to be indigenous amongst them, but it is hard to discover any rules in the general scramble for the ball. I have seen a goal at each end, composed of a pile of sticks heaped up, and as many as forty men playing in one game, among the Suhin.

With their turn of thought, one could hardly expect complicated rules among these Indians, for the idea of keen rivalry or competition seems to find no place in their ideas except in wrestling, at which boys and men are very adept.

A sort of battledore-and-shuttlecock is played by the children, who use their hands for the bat; the shuttlecock is a doubled-up wisp of corn-cob leaves, tightly tied round to form a knob, with the loose ends cut square, and two or three long rhea feathers inserted. These will carry a longer distance than our Badminton shuttlecock.

Tops are known and used, but whether they are indigenous or not it is hard to say. The doll shown in Pl. XL, 4, is merely a small unaltered bone dressed up in rags.

Chaco Indians are very fond of feasts, and any occasional abundance in their food supply is eagerly welcomed as an excuse for one.

Dances form a prominent part in these feasts, and of these dances there are four or five different classes—

(1) That called *Kyaiya* is the most common. It generally commences at sunset, lasting through the night, and the next day and night, and concluding at the

following dawn. The *Kyaiya*, which gives the name to the feast, is a gourd rattle. When once started the rattle is supposed not to stop till the feast is over. Mere amusement is connected with this feast, and no superstition, as far as is known. The men stand round in a ring and sway their bodies with a slight motion, as they beat time with the rattles, while the chanting chorus rises and falls. The women join in occasionally, dancing behind with their hands on the men's belts.

(2) The women also have a separate dance of their own, where they appear to protect a young girl from evil spirits, who twine in and out, in line, uttering shrill cries (Pl. XXXVII, 1; XXXVIII, 2). The boys who represent these evil spirits are dressed up in rhea-feathers, and wear a bag over their head.

(3) The *Yanmana* is a long feast at which marriages are contracted and during which all the other dances may take place.

(4) The *Wainkya* is so called from the "*Wainkya*," or pot, which, converted into a drum by means of a piece of leather tightly stretched over it, is beaten like a drum throughout this particular feast.

(5) The *Maning* (= "circle") is a series of short song-dances which may take place at either of the above. For the songs at the *maning* dance, *see* above p. 293 n.

Contact with Civilized Races (*N.Q.* lxxiv).—It is too soon yet to comment definitely on the effect of civilization on the Lengua Indians. In many ways they are undoubtedly open to good influences. Morality, for instance, which is generally so low in native races, is with them so high that they compare favourably with all but the higher class of the civilized Spanish-speaking population, their neighbours over the river. Of course there is room for improvement, but in teaching, for instance, that a man should only have one wife, we are emphasizing their own unwritten law or custom. At the station of the South American Missionary Society, a marked improvement is observed in the manners and behaviour of the Indians who are resident there. They become open and frank, clean and smart in their dress, quick to learn and dependable.

It is not to be expected that their nomadic habits would be cast off in a day: a generation would be short in which to effect such a change, and it is found wise when they get restless, or dull, after a month or so of continued settled occupation, to change their work, or to let them visit their friends for a time. They are not encouraged at the mission stations to alter their style of dress, though they themselves are delighted to throw off their heavy woollen blankets, and to don European shirts and trousers. Yet these do not become them so well, and are less healthy. Indeed, the wearing of the left-off clothing of Paraguayans becomes a source of actual danger to them, on account of infectious diseases, from which, among themselves, they are remarkably free. Those Indians who go and live at the "Coast," as the banks of the great Paraguay River are called, are brought in contact with that debased form of civilization which everywhere obtains on the borders of a new country, and rapidly give way before its evil influence. Drink, of course, in the form of the common cane-rum, plays havoc amongst them.

Missionaries are sometimes blamed for penetrating into new countries, but their influence for good on the natives amongst whom they have settled in the Chaco, when these are compared with the raw material, or with those who are often met with in the town, cannot for one moment be doubted. Yet at the same time it must be confessed that by their very good works they have placed an obstacle in their own path, and in that of the future welfare of their converts. Fifteen years ago no Paraguayans would enter the Chaco, unless well armed and in large numbers. Now you may travel in all parts unarmed, and alone, if you wish it, with only native companions. In consequence of this, which is the effect of the British missions, the country is now being filled up rapidly with Paraguayan settlers, who have but a poor influence on the native life and character.

The Paraguayan Government having sold every acre of land in their part of the Chaco, there is no provision whatever for Indian reserves, and an Indian has no more social rights, until he is baptized, than a tiger or other wild beast, and this is the light in which he is generally looked upon in South America.

The British public does not appear to sympathize with the combination of Industrial with Missionary work, and seems to consider that the Gospel alone should be sufficient enlightenment to enable an Indian to find his level in the daily increasing strife of race and creed. But to an unbiassed observer it is evident that if no means can be taken to prevent the increasing influx of a debased form of civilization whose chief agent is rum, it will not be many generations before there are no more Chaco Indians to discuss.

*** Plates XXXV, XXXVI, XXXVII, XXXVIII and XXXIX, 1, are from blocks kindly lent by the South American Missionary Society.