

Chirr-bookie, the Blue Crane

Chirr-bookie was a Wimmera man. His sister, the only woman in his family, married into the Raminyeri tribe. This is how he became associated with the Raminyeri. He would often visit his sister and he at last decided to live with his brother-in-law. Chirr-bookie's sister had three sons, and, like all uncles on the mother's side, Chirr-bookie delighted to take part in their education. They had to be instructed in hunting, fishing, bushcraft, and all the customs, traditions, and legends of the tribe. When the three boys grew up they received their names. The older one was called Eurowie because he was a great jumper, and was able to leap over obstacles like a kangaroo. The second was called Pithowie. He was not gifted as Eurowie was. He could not run or jump, but he was persevering, and was a good hunter in following game such as emus and wallabies. If a subject wore in dispute Pithowie would always hold by his opinion. The youngest brother was called Koolatowie. This name means 'easy to bend,' yet he was strong if there arose a dispute among the brothers. Koolatowie would always willingly yield in order to avoid angry words that might lead to a quarrel. This won him the respect and love of his mother and father and his uncle Chirr-bookie and the tribe of the Raminyeri, but it made his two brothers hate him. They were always seeking a cause of quarrel with him, and this grieved their good old Uncle Chirr-bookie, who at last summoned the chief and the elders in order to suggest that Eurowie and Pithowie should be sent to another tribe. This was agreed to, and it was decided to send both to make their homes with the Adelaide tribe. So a messenger was commanded to approach the chief of the Adelaide tribe to ask if he was willing to receive the two young men and their wives. When the brothers were told of the intention of their tribe to transfer them they vowed secretly to take the life of Koolatowie, and it was with the spirit of revenge in their hearts that they bade farewell to their mother, father, uncle, and brother, and set out on their journey to their new home, to begin life in a new country with new people who spoke a strange language.

After Eurowie and Pithowie had become conversant with the language of the Adelaide tribe, and could speak it fluently, they began to plan ways and means of being revenged. They tried to prejudice the other tribes against their father's tribe, but no one would think of going to battle against the Raminyeri because they were a peaceful tribe, and were respected by all. Then the brothers thought of another plan; they suggested that as certain animals and birds were becoming scarce it would be well to station men at the boundary of their country, in order to prevent these creatures from departing and wandering away into the land of another tribe. This plan appealed to the Adelaide tribe, and all the hunters—men, women, and children—were told to help to carry it into effect.

Now Eurowie and Pithowie knew that emu food was much sought after by their uncle Chirr-bookie. It was his favourite dish, and his nephew Koolatowie would travel long distances and endure, at hardship and face great danger to procure it. They therefore made a plan to prey, the emus from passing, and drove them down toward a peninsula formed by a river bending in its course to enter the sea.

Every day Koolatowie would rise early in the morning and set out in search of an emu, but he would return to his mother and uncle with the same story that there were no emu tracks, he could not understand this. After some time Eurowie and Pithowie sent messenger to their aged uncle to inform him that emus were plentiful in their hunting-ground, and that at the next full moon they would send a nice fat one. When Chirr-bookie received this message he sat down and took from his punauwe a stone and made some marks upon a smooth stick about four inches long and half an inch wide. The message was that, although he loved the fat and flesh of the emu so much, he had vowed

midnight Chirr-bookie rose and set fire to the camp of Eurowie and Pithowie; and the spirit of fire consumed Eurowie, Pithowie, and their families.

The old man wept bitterly for his two nephews, because he still loved them after a fashion, and he cried, "O my children, sons of my only sister, it is because of what you have done that the anger of all the spirits and gods has punished you."

Chin-bookie then set out on his journey homeward, and at Aldinga he met a man of the Hawk totem tribe, who was fishing. The Hawk man sat with his eye gazing seaward_ Chirr-bookie called to him, and said, "O cousin, have you any fish to offer me?" The Hawk man would not answer, so Chirr-bookie threw his waddy at him with such force that it killed him instantly. Then he called out, "O cousin, thy body shall become a stone, and thy spirit shall take unto itself the body of a bird."

Chirr-bookie continued on his journey till he came to Yankalilla. Here he saw a man of the Shag totem, sitting up and sunning himself upon a rock. "O cousin of mine," said Chirr-bookie, "give me fish to eat." But the Shag man took no notice. So Chin-bootie threw his waddy at him and killed him. Like the man of the Hawk totem tribe, his body became a stone, and his spirit took the form of the body of a bird.

When Chirr-bookie reached his home he took the remains of Koolatowie into a cave and placed them upon a ledge, and stretched himself out beside them. He prayed to the Father of All Spirits to come and transform him into a blue crane, and to call back the wandering spirit of Koolatowie and command it also to become a crane. The spirit came and sang a song that belonged to the Spirit World, and the body of Chirr-bookie became a stone Man, which is still to be seen, and his spirit entered into the body of the blue crane.