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NATIVE DISEASES, REMEDIES

Early Notes

Rough Notes

The principal diseases of the natives are colds, stomach complaints due to overeating, diseases resulting from wounds of various kinds, ophthalmia (in the North), diseases resulting from initiation operations, rheumatism, headache; cures, rheumatism cured by bandaging the affected part tightly with bark and fibre. Headache cured by making a fracture in the head with a piece of flint. Some women will ask their women friends to hit them hard on the head with their wannas sufficiently strong to draw blood, when the headache vanishes. The affected part may be sucked, rubbed, massaged, pressed and even trodden on by the sorcerer. Balbuk, informant : balgar = rheumatic pains.

Whooping cough was brought to W.A. when the 21st Regiment arrived, some of the soldiers' children having that complaint. W.H. Sholl in a letter published in the W.A. Almanac for 1842 (P. 44) states that several persons were attacked, but those who suffered most were the aborigines. The natives were thoroughly persuaded that the bugle, which they then heard for the first time, was the cause of their sufferings, and asked why "that fellow" (the bugler) tu-tu too much to make blackfellow men-diik (sick).

Before the advent of the whites the natives were what might be called a long-lived race, as when the first arrivals settled up country, they continually saw native men and women of presumably eighty years of age or upwards. Some of them having become blind from old age. Joobaitch, Balbuk, Woolber, Baabur and many others were well into the seventies when they died. Doongunit, a Vasse native, is still alive, and is probably over seventy. Wabbinyet of Denmark is also an old man and Ngalbaitch who has five generations living must be nearly eighty years old.

E.R. Parker states that several members of the York tribe live to be very old, some, as far as can be judged, reaching the ages of seventy five or eighty years.



When they are sick they resort to charms, rubbing the breast or stomach, drawing the hand away and snapping the finger and thumb. If it be a pain in the head or stomach, the patient lies down on his back and someone of his relatives stands on his forehead or stomach and presses as much of his weight as the patient is able to bear.

"Boo'yare" or "turra-murra" is the name of the piece of magic white crystal. This was only used by the boylyas who cured sick people by its aid. Jubyche states that the magic stone was placed upon the affected part and pressed as though it were being pushed inside. Then the boylya blew upon the part, when the stone went inside the patient. It was left there until the patient got better. Sometimes two or three days elapsed before he recovered and if he died it was of course through the magic of a boylya who possessed superior powers. On the death of the patient the crystal returned to its owner.

Sprained ankle rubbed and warm ashes applied till swelling subsided.

Nostalgia

Wollaston, cauterizing great toe nail of which had been torn off, bound it up and left it.

Leg wounded just below knee charred off, about 2 inches of calcined bone protruded thro flesh. Cauterization checked haemorrhage.

Amputated limbs (Richardson) bone setting (Richardson).

It is said by some that the post mortem appearance of native (consumption) differs from those of Europeans, no coughing or very little; phlegm mixed with blood comes up freely.

When infants suffer from stomach complaints, sore eyes, chafing, etc. mothers generally use hot ashes, as a remedy, rubbing or pressing the affected parts with the ashes.

Magic and sorcery were their principal remedies against all ills. Warm wet sandbaths were used in cases of fainting or prolonged unconsciousness.



The diseases peculiar to the natives of the Southwest before the coming of the white people were :- Nyeering, a skin disease, a kind of itch; me'el mindytche, bad eyes; moyer wakkain, or liver trouble; goort mindaitch, heart trouble; koon'ga, pains in the back, and gob'ble, stomach complaint, probably dysentery. Most of these inward complaints were cured by red gum (koordan) eaten either powdered or in small lumps like a pill. Colds were cured by putting fires round the body, probably to induce perspiration and keep the whole body at a uniform heat. For rheumatism, they heated some sand and laying the patient on his back in the hot sand bed, they covered him over with more warm sand and left him there until the rheumatic pains subsided. Sometimes the patient was wrapped in a couple of kangaroo skin cloaks until he felt warmed and relieved of his pain. Deaths were usually from liver disease, inflammation, acute rheumatism and consumption. These names are however only hypothetical, and have been given to the diseases described in detail by the natives and to which they state they were subject.

Baabur's information : When a man dies and returns from Kooranup he is called mun'gar'an.

A snake bite wound was sucked by a boylyaguttuk or mulgarguttuk. Baaba's own mother Urinn was bitten by a snake when she was a young girl and her ngooljar demmap Woggeen, a mulgarguttuk, sucked the wound and drew the snake right out of it and Urinn got better at once. Woggeen was Urinn's "mora", he married her sister. Doobee, Baabur's mora, cured him.

Baabur had inadvertently swallowed a crayfish (goonaak) while drinking and was being rapidly choked, when his mora Doobee, a big mulgarguttuk, came running over to him and pulled the goonaak out of his ear. Doobee was an Albany nyungar, his hunting ground was near Menbijup (Lake Muir?)

The Neenda Bookal Hills go right along to Busselton, they break there (below Busselton). Neenda Bookal Gayn, they are called, right on to Albany. From Albany they turn back (on the top road) and are still Neenda Bookal gayn.



Ngalyart, informant

Codfish was never eaten by the Mandurah natives.

Bleeding with kalyan (a piece of flint) was resorted to in case of pains in the back and headache.

Leeches were put on bad legs to draw the diseased blood off, also on sores.

"Bulya" was resorted to in almost all cases.

The jaw was cut where the toothache was and the head was cut when headaches came.

Red gum was put into sores and healed them quickly.

The liver oil of the stingaree cured a bad wound or sore applied to the diseased part.

Balbuk, informant

For snake bite, the Perth natives spear the leg right through and let it bleed, or another yungar sucked the poison out.

For headache they cut the head, "katta bor'nyn" and bled it.

For fever they made a hole and put fire into it and made it hot and then they took the fire out and put boughs in and the fever patient sat in the hole and sweated the cold out. This method was called "bolgar eeja".

Wounds were left to heal of themselves.

Broken arms or legs, Balbuk states, had a piece of wood inserted in the marrow and tied round with zamia leaves. The splint was put inside the bone instead of round it.

Warm ashes was applied for rheumatism, the natives rubbing it on the affected parts.

The booka was their only covering, winter and summer. The women were never without a covering of some sort, but the men were without their bookas in the summer and only wore malarree, a small piece of fringed fur attached to the front of the noolban.

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All the Estuary people were Darbalung, Mandurah, Perth, etc. where the estuaries are. The Perth people were called Yabaroo.

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According to the Rev. J. Flood, the New Norcia natives had no diseases before the advent of the white man except colds and perhaps toothache. They cured their colds by chewing the bark of the t-wet-ta (tuart) tree or lying beside the fire.



According to Balbuk, bleeding was resorted to in cases of toothache and headache.

For stomach ache, a rough massage was resorted to, one man would place his foot upon the stomach of the sick man and press it heavily until the pain ceased. Women or men massaged each other in this way. Liver complaint was treated in the same manner. Bleeding from the lungs did not seem to have any remedy sometimes they pressed their foot on the throat of the sick man to prevent haemorrhage. Leeches were also used.

Balbuk says that very few diseases were prevalent amongst the old natives before the coming of the Janga. She mentions an old woman named Jel-a-ban, a Didarruk, who when she was a great grandmother, had quite black hair still growing, although her children's hair was quite grey.

In the old days Balbuk states that they never had consumption nor headache nor toothache, all those diseases came in with the whites. Bad spear wounds would sometimes give trouble - children occasionally died through not being properly looked after during birth. Measles came and destroyed many men, women and children, chickenpox also came.

Dr. Ferguson vaccinated many natives during a chicken- or small-pox scare.

#### Woolberr

They knew that when excessive perspiration came the patient was sure to recover. It was usually at this period of the fever that the bulya took the patient under his care, and of course made better. When the fever patient got better his body was greased and wilgeed and that made him better.

For bad colds the Murchison natives steep the leaves of a kind of peppermint tree in water for a time and then drink some of it, also the leaves of the cuck-ar-ea (?) tree. (Woodley)



Mrs. Mills states that the wood of the pine (?) tree was used medicinally by the natives of the East Murchison district. After the arrival of the Europeans and when the natives had mastered the art of boiling, they used this method for extracting the juice of the chips of pine wood which they boiled for hours and then drank the fluid in prescribed quantities. Before they became acquainted with the art of boiling they chewed the chips and also burnt them and inhaled the odour.

Another plant is mentioned by Mrs. Mills which the natives stated possessed healing properties. It is called by them "Theoroomurry". They dig up the roots when in season and carefully preserve them. When required medicinally the roots are placed in cold water and well boiled until the native considers the juices are thoroughly extracted.

The physic is then administered to the patient. In the early days the roots were eaten dry and even then were considered to make the black man "quabba" (well or good) if he felt "mindich" (ill).

The Yuin natives pin their faith on the application of warm ashes for various diseases.

The Injibandi natives call their doctor "mobburn" as do the Kariarree (De Grey) tribes. Headaches are cured by hitting the head with a stone or stick until the blood flows. The women get their neighbours to do them this service. Nganda is the name given to a skin disease, the whole body being covered with sores. There seems to be no remedy amongst them for this disease except rolling the body in dust, sand, or ashes, at frequent intervals.

Another skin disease called "scale" is very prevalent amongst them, colds and chest troubles were also common complaints before the coming of the white people into their district. Small pox had visited the tribe in the early '60's and carried off a great number of victims. It came from the eastward, the natives said, and from that time they imagine every pestilence epidemic or misfortune comes from ee'ra-joo (the east). Boolga a kind of earth was eaten in cases of stomach trouble.



Another remedy was a kind of briony, a creeper with red berries, which the natives thought possessed curative properties. They wound the creeper round their head or stomach, or wherever the seat of pain was. (Milli-car-beedi is the native name of this creeper.) Buckararra, a species of stink plant is used for colds or earache, the leaf is folded or twisted into a ball and placed in the ears or up the nostrils.

I have seen women take their own spittle and gently rub their baby's sore eyes with it.

After a birth the mother will not infrequently smear herself all over with grease and charcoal and then go about her duties.

Ashes nearly always put on a wound.

In the Pilbara and Tableland districts a native suffering from severe skin disease will not infrequently roll in the dust, sand or ashes, just as a mangy dog will roll in the earth.

The principal diseases to which the natives of the Sherlock (Ballamon-gerry) district are subject, are skin diseases of various kinds, rheumatism and lung disease. Their chief remedies are :- hot ashes and the young tender shoots of the Eucalyptus which, before the advent of the Europeans, they bruised and applied to the affected parts. Since the art of boiling was made known to them they have boiled the leaves and applied the water as well as the leaves. This remedy was used for rheumatism and also for sore eyes. The hot ashes relieved stomachic disorders. (Information supplied by Willambong, a Sherlock native.)

In Nichol Bay, Mr. A.R. Richardson states that some of the tribes located there had had their limbs, which had been injured in battle, amputated with sharp stones. The Southern natives were stated to have been acquainted with the method of setting a broken limb.

The Sunday Island natives for fish stings or fly stings used blood taken from a relative's veins, the blood being dropped on the affected part.



Their remedies are :- for pains in the head or body, gum leaves are ground or mashed up with water and put on the parts affected; for colds and sore throat, wild thyme is steeped in water and the decoction drunk. Wounds are generally bound up, sometimes gum leaves are applied. For sore eyes the thumbs and forefinger are made as hot as possible and applied to the eyelids repeatedly. For stings of fish, blood is taken from the veins of a friend or relative and poured on the affected part.

Remedies for illness, Southern Tribes :

Ben - roots of toourt, nammern and warnt (sp. of eucalyptus) are used in cases of dysentery. The ben is beaten up with wanna (digging stick) or mill stone, and then heated slightly at a fire. When well heated it is put into water and drunk by the patient. Yocern - stump tailed lizard - is cooked and eaten as a purgative. Mēn - mungart (jamwood gum) is also used as a purgative, but marri and other eucalyptus gum is a cure for diarrhoea and dysentery in the early stages of these complaints.



### Early Notes

There were many diseases to which the W.A. aborigines were subject long before the Europeans came to mix with them, and not the least prevalent of these was ophthalmia which still afflicts the natives of the Nor' West. This disease comes principally from want of cleanliness and from travelling over the dry dusty plains of the Nor' West in the hot summer months when the heated surface casts back the rays of the sun with an intensity which affects the eyes of native and settler alike. When this great heat is added a constant plague of flies during the summer months (which means in the Nor' West two thirds of the year) it is not to be wondered at that this disease has been so common amongst the natives.

"The poor winking people of New Holland," wrote Dampier in 1688, "have their eyelids always half closed, to keep the flies out of their eyes, they being so troublesome here that no fanning will keep them from coming to one's face; and without the assistance of both hands to keep them off, they will creep into one's nostrils and mouth too, if the lips are not shut very close. So that from their infancy, being thus annoyed with these insects, they do never open their eyes as other people, and therefore they cannot see far, unless they hold up their heads as if they were looking at somewhat over them."

Dampier visited the Nor' West coast in January, 1688, when the flies are most numerous and most malignant, and to those who are familiar with the northern districts, his description is by no means exaggerated. At the present day, black and white alike suffer from these persistent pests and notwithstanding every care which may be taken, white children living in the Nor' West have often had their eyes permanently injured by these insects.

Amongst the other diseases prevalent in W.A. before the Europeans had mixed with the aborigines, were dysentery, pneumonia, a curious kind of cutaneous disorder somewhat resembling itch, called by the Southern natives "jip-jip", diarrhoea, colds, headaches, a few minor liver ailments. Very few instances of deformity have been noticed, probably due to the fact that a deformed infant is seldom allowed to live. Idiocy is very rare amongst them, madness



is unknown, and there is no instance on record of a deaf and dumb native having been met with (?). (All this to be corrected.) Blindness is common amongst the Nor'West and Northern natives, principally due to flies and uncleanness. The only hermaphrodite ever known amongst the natives is at present in the La Grange Bay district.

Helms observed amongst the Fraser Range tribe one woman who "had six perfect fingers on each hand and the same number of toes on each foot. Not only were these limbs perfectly formed but the corresponding metacarpal and metatarsal bones were also perfect." Helms was informed that this woman had several brothers and other relations having the same remarkable development.

Helms found a considerable number of deformities amongst the Victoria Desert tribe and those near Fraser Range which were however the consequence of accidents caused in most instances during childhood. He only remarked one case where it seemed likely the defect was born with the person. Not a single deformed woman was seen during the whole of the trip (Elder Scientific Expedition 1891).

Mr. Charles Harper states that in 1865-6 he was eye witness to an outbreak of small pox, which came from the North and passed over the De Grey River country and that large numbers of the Ngurla (or De Grey River) tribe died of it. Many survived its attack, and a few whites suffered from it lightly. The tribe called the small pox boola, a term applied to anything nasty or poisonous.

Mr. A.K. Richardson also mentions this disease which ravaged the Nickol Bay tribe in 1866. It was believed to have come from the tribes further east and probably was introduced at Camden Harbour by the Malays. The blacks, terrified at the horrible and unknown malady, fled from those of their tribe who contracted the disease, and left them to be attended to by the few whites then resident in the district. For some time afterwards the bleached skeletons of several natives were found in many of their deserted camps.

Ernest Giles stated in a letter to E.M. Curr (author of "The Australian Race") that in almost every part of the continent in which



he had travelled, whether in settled or unexplored country, he met blacks pitted with the small pox. (Giles only mentions this fact once in his "Australia Twice Traversed", where he met some natives at Rawlinson Range who had evidently had this disease.)

The remedies used by the natives are crude and simple, yet, in some cases of illness such as dysentery, are considered highly efficacious. Dysentery is cured by eating the red gum of a species of Eucalyptus, or the green stems of a red root called meme or meernes. In the early days of the Settlement the white people who were subject to this disease availed themselves of the natives' knowledge of the healing properties of the gum or meme, with beneficial results. Another valuable item of knowledge obtained from the natives in those early days was the great antiseptic qualities of banksia and other wood ashes which they used extensively for festered wounds, boils, etc.

For headaches a band of bark is generally fastened tightly round the head which in most cases relieves the pain, but for a severe headache bleeding is resorted to, the operation being performed by the native doctors of whom there is at least one in every tribe or family. A sharp piece of flint is the "surgical instrument" used by the "doctor", who makes an incision either in the temple or in the arm, the blood being allowed to flow freely for some time. Sometimes when the services of the medicine man are not available a woman suffering from severe headache will request a friendly female to knock her on the head with her fighting stick which is just as effective as the bloodletting of the doctor.

In the rare cases of toothache occurring amongst the natives of W.A. an opening is made in the jaw just below the aching tooth, a cure being effected by this method.

In the Perth Gazette of March 30th, 1833, a person named Lyon mentions some of the remedies then in vogue amongst the Perth natives. "When they are sick they sometimes resort to charms, rubbing the breast or belly, drawing the hand away and snapping the finger and thumb. Their practical operations are confined to pressure and bleeding. If it be a pain in the head or bowels, the patient lies down on his back and desires someone to stand on



his forehead or belly, and press so much of his weight as he is able to bear. In bleeding, they never open the veins, but topical bleeding is common amongst them and is performed with a sharp stone."

A curious native remedy for prolonged faintness was published in the "Perth Gazette" of July, 1836. "A native woman who had been imprisoned for theft was found one morning in a state of insensibility. The services of the Colonial Surgeon were at once requisitioned but his efforts to restore animation were unavailing, and he held out little or no hope of the woman's recovery. At the solicitations of her husband and several women of her tribe, the authorities allowed her to be carried away into the bush in order that her people might practice their own remedy upon her. The insensible woman was forthwith carried into the bush and buried in the sand to restore the suspended animation, this peculiar treatment being successful as the Gazette of the following week announced her recovery.

The natives regard the indigenous cuckoo (googoomit or worcongul) as the cause of all boils or eruptions on the body, the bird being supposed to pierce them with its beak in the night time while they are asleep.

Another writer in the Perth Gazette of Nov. 5, 1836, states that "The (native) medical and surgical practice and materials are... simple. Spear wounds are smeared over with gum of the red gum tree, besides the use of ligatures above and below the wound, made of the opossum fur yarn. A spear wound in the foot, or a wound in the foot from a cobbler fish, is treated by baking the foot in hot wood ashes or keeping the foot there as long as can be borne. For a severe headache, the head is struck with a stick, or one of their own hammers, until a lump is raised and the lump is then scarified until it bleeds, with quartz or glass. For fevers, it is a common remedy to sit up to the neck in water for half an hour at a time, repeating the immersion at short intervals, by day or night. For the bite of a snake they apply a ligature of the outer bark of the branches of the zamia or ground palm above the wound and scarify the bitten part with a piece of quartz or glass, but they do not apply suction to such wounds....."



For rheumatism or other pains in the body they burn the leaves of the penny-royal, and of a species of fir-like tree that grows on the sand and place the patient in the steam. But their favorite remedy for all diseases, and that on which they place the greatest confidence, is to have recourse to a sorcerer."

With regard to those sorcerers, native doctors or medicine men (called by the Southern natives boyl-yas) the natives believe most thoroughly that they possess the power by magic or enchantment of healing any severe wounds, pains or diseases, and that they have the equal power of inflicting all kinds of maladies, and even death itself, at their pleasure. Amongst the diseases which they most commonly cause are rheumatism and ulcers of various kinds. They are further credited with having the power of raising or changing the wind, and of making thunder and lightning, and of so controlling the thunder as to make it strike their enemies and not themselves.

Dr. Wilson describes the native method of treating a sprained ankle to which he submitted at R.G.S. (Wilson's Voyages, 274-5) "Mokkarē brought his relation, a native doctor, to prescribe for me; he was a man of mild and grave aspect, who was evidently highly esteemed by, and possessed much influence over, the other natives. I thanked him for his kindness, and submitted my ankle, now much swelled and exceedingly painful, to his examination. He immediately began to press/<sup>it</sup>with his fingers, blowing on it at the same time; I bore this painful operation as long as I could, and then told Eurul (so he was called) that I thought he had done me much benefit....he gave it another s squeeze or two, and then went to the door, and blew over his fingers, and also over his kangaroo skin - thus, as I was told, first taking the disease from me to himself, and then blowing it away....This was certainly a new mode of treating a severe sprain, but I understand it is their panacea for every disease."

In Jubyche's tribe a sprained ankle was cured by rubbing and an application of warm ashes, the patient keeping the ankles in the ashes until the swelling subsided.



The ceremonies used by all sorcerers in exercising their magic powers, are blowing, snorting, running about, making grimaces, pretending to extract pieces of wood, quartz and other substances from affected parts of the body, determining the cause of death which they invariably attribute to a hostile tribe, no matter how apparent the cause of death may be. Their strongest hold upon the minds of the natives consists in a firm belief that they can doom anyone who incurs their displeasure or that of their tribe to a sudden and violent death. In some places this is supposed to be effected by the sorcerer creeping on his victim "like a snake" and pressing the victim's throat between his two thumbs or fingers. (Southern word - murreek bo-myn) The death may not occur immediately but the spell is sure to work ultimately. In other places death is ensured by "pointing the bone" in the direction of the person who has incurred the wrath of the sorcerer; the bone may be one of the small leg bones of the kangaroo, and one that is used often by them for bloodletting, but the belief in this magic power is so great that when a native discovers that he has had the bone pointed at him he invariably mopes and dies.

Of these sorcerers or "boylyas", Grey says that "their supposed powers have a mighty influence upon the natives of W.A., in whose superstitious belief the boylyas are objects of mysterious dread. It is supposed that they can transport themselves through the air at pleasure. If they have a dislike to a native, they can kill him by stealing on him at night and consuming his flesh. They enter him like pieces of quartz and the pain they occasion is always felt. Another boylya has however the power of drawing them out....When this operation is effected the boylyas are drawn out in the form of pieces of quartz which are kept and considered as great curiosities by the natives. All natural illnesses are attributed to these boylyas."

Grey's interest in the sorcerers led him to question his native boy Kaiber, concerning them. "The boylyas," said Kaiber, "are natives who have the power of boylya; they sit down to the northward, the eastward and southward. The boylyas are very bad; they walk away there (pointing to the east)....The boylyas eat up a great many natives - they eat them up as fire would.... The boylyas



move stealthily - you sleep and they steal on you; very stealthily the boylyas move. These boylyas are dreadfully revengeful..... They come moving along in the sky....The natives cannot see them. The boylyas do not bite, they feed stealthily; they do not eat the bones, but consume the flesh. The boylyas sit at the graves of natives in great numbers. If natives are ill, the boylyas charm, charm, charm.....and by and by the natives recover."

Brough Smyth states that "the name boyl-ya calls to recollection at once the word boluto (Hades) in the Tonguese Mythology. (Smyth's Aborigines, I, 472.)

Dr. Scott Nind states that the sorcerers or "native doctors" are very skilful in extracting the weapon from a spear wound, afterwards applying a little dust similar to what is used for pigment, and then they bind the wound up tightly, with soft bark. "In the diet of the sick," Dr. Nind continues, "they are very particular, and the stages of convalescence are marked by the food which they are permitted to eat. At first, roots only are allowed, afterwards lizards, then fish, etc." It is most unusual for the natives to manifest the care of their sick in the manner evidenced by Dr. Nind's statement. In no other portion of the State has such a custom been noticed, the wounds healing in the ordinary quick manner common to native wounds, and no difference whatever being made in the diet during the process of healing.

The treatment for the bite of a snake is, Dr. Nind says, simple and rational. The King George's Sound natives "tie a ligature of rushes above the part, enlarge the wound with the claw of the kangaroo or the point of a spear and then suck it, washing it and their mouths frequently with water. Where water cannot be procured it is considered dangerous to suck the wound." (To be corrected.)

Jubyche says that the Guildford natives had no remedy for snake bite.



The Rev. H. Wollaston who was Assistant Colonial Surgeon in W.A. mentions some stringent remedies resorted to by the natives of King George's Sound for various wounds, etc. In the summer of 1852-3, Dr. Wollaston started from Albany to pay a visit to Mrs. Cheyne at Cape Riche about 70 miles distant, accompanied by a native on foot. They made about 40 miles the first day and camped for the night near a waterhole. After supper the native was observed to collect the embers of the fire together, and deliberately place his right foot in the glowing mass for a minute, then suddenly withdraw it, stamping the ground and uttering a long drawn guttural sound of mingled pain and satisfaction. This he repeated several times. On Mr. Wollaston inquiring the meaning of his strange conduct he only replied, "Me carpenter make-em", that is, "I am mending my foot." He then showed his charred great toe, the nail of which had been torn off by a tree stump, the pain of which he had borne with stoical composure until the evening, when he had cauterised the wound in the primitive manner above described. He next day bound up his toe in a piece of bark of the tea tree and continued his journey as if nothing had happened.

Another of Dr. Wollaston's experiences happened at Picton near Bunbury :- A native about 25 years of age applied to him to extract the barb of a wooden spear which, during a fight in the bush some four months previously, had entered the chest just missing the heart, and had penetrated the viscera to a considerable depth. The spear had been cut off, leaving the barb behind, which continued to force its way by muscular action gradually towards the back. Upon examining the native a hard substance was felt between the ribs below the left shoulder blade. Dr. Wollaston made a deep incision and with a pair of forceps extracted the barb, which was made of a piece of hard wood about 4 inches long and from  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch to one inch thick. It was very smooth, and partly macerated by its four months journey in the body. The wound made by the spear had healed long before, leaving only a small cicatrix. After the operation, which the patient bore without flinching he appeared to suffer no pain, and was perfectly well in a few days.

At King George's Sound, Mr. Wollaston had a native visitor with only one leg; he had travelled ninety six miles in that



mained state. On examination, it was found that the limb had been severed just below the knee, and charred by fire, while about two inches of the calcined bone protruded through the flesh. This bone was removed at once by the saw, and a presentable stump was made which was covered by the surrounding muscle and the patient was kept for a few days, to allow the wound to heal which it did very rapidly. On inquiry the native said that in a tribal fight a spear had struck his leg and penetrated the bone below the knee. Finding it was serious, he and his companions made a fire and dug a hole in the earth sufficiently large to admit his leg and deep enough to allow the wounded part to be on a level with the surface of the ground. The limb was then surrounded with the live coals or charcoal and kept replenished until the leg was literally burnt off. The cauterisation thus applied completely checked the haemorrhage, and he was able in two or three days to hobble down to the Sound with the aid of a long stout stick, although he was a week on the road. A carpenter in the town made a wooden leg and carefully fitted it to the stump, when the native started to return to his home. Mr. Wollaston was, however, greatly surprised a few days afterwards, when another native brought the wooden leg back as his patient had got tired of it when he had reached 50 miles from Albany.

Dr. Salvado mentions a curious and unaccountable disease which the blacks sometimes suffered from and from which they rarely recovered. "A strong and healthy young native, who never in his life knew what strong liquors or European vices were, is admitted into a private house, mission or establishment; for some time he goes on well, is gay and full of life; but in a few months, or perhaps a couple of years, a fatal melancholy takes possession of him. Being asked what is the matter with him, he answers, 'Nothing.' 'Do you feel sick?' 'No, sir,' 'Do you suffer any pain?' 'No, sir.' 'Why are you not so cheerful as before?' 'I do not know.' He takes his meals as regularly as ever, he has no fever, yet he daily and almost at sight loses his flesh, strength and health. What is the technical name of such a disease? Perhaps consumption, perhaps liver complaint. Let it



be so; but is there no remedy for such diseases? Are there no preventives of their causes? Yes, there are; but, nevertheless, that native died shortly after." Nostalgia or home sickness was evidently the name for this sickness.

Bishop Salvado consulted several medical men respecting the maladies which afflict the natives, but he could obtain no satisfactory information either as to the origin of the diseases or their treatment. It must be said too, that in the matter of curing wounds etc. the natives are best left to the treatment administered by their own native doctors, in whose methods they have the most absolute faith.

White doctors confess that as a rule the European method of treatment is more often injurious than successful, and that whereas the native will make no improvement when placed in a hospital or private house, as soon as he is consigned to the care of his friends and taken into the bush he rapidly recovers.

When living amongst the whites, the natives quickly adopt their habit of taking quack medicine and will greedily swallow the most nauseous drug given by a white man, who pretends to a knowledge of physic, although they may at the time be under the care of a qualified medical practitioner. "Pain killer" has become the panacea for all ills amongst the Nor'West natives and is used externally or internally. As a rule whatever the disease may be, whether it is a broken limb or some pulmonary complaint, they prefer to take this medicine inwardly for they have developed a fondness for it on account of its fiery pungent taste.

Bishop Salvado wrote of the measles having been introduced amongst the natives in the latter end of 1860, several of the boys dying from its effects. He also relates an extraordinary cure in connection with tuberculosis and chest diseases. "A young native had been ploughing....for about three weeks, at the end of which time I ordered him to suspend his ploughing, for I had observed he was unwell. He stayed, but unwillingly, seeing the other natives going ahead of him with their ploughing. After a few days, continuing still to spit blood, he told me he would be all right in a few days if I would allow him to go hunting horses....That



native, after having been hunting for three or four days, ceased to spit blood, and immediately went again to his ploughing."

Bishop Salvado found that an application of cantharides, in order to raise blisters, was very efficacious, and records his indebtedness to Dr. Ferguson for having acquainted him with the curative properties of cod liver oil. These two specifics the Bishop considered had saved the lives of five natives, and after he began the use of those two medicines he lost none of his sick natives.

It is said by some that the post-mortem appearances of natives who have died from consumption differ from those of Europeans. Curr mentions this, but up to the present the statement has not been confirmed. There is not however that distressing cough under which Europeans labor. The phlegm is accompanied with blood, but comes up freely, without the exertion and straining which is usual amongst white consumptives.

This disease is one of the most fatal amongst the aborigines, for whereas in many of the others they have certain remedies which are to some extent efficacious, for consumption they have none, and as soon as the disease touches the respiratory organs the case is hopeless. There is strong evidence that the natives were subject to this disease before the Europeans came amongst them, but its progress was then not so rapid as in these later days, when the fire-water of the white man, the unaccustomed clothing necessitated by the exigencies of civilisation, the strange foods and other causes, aid so materially in increasing and precipitating the mortality from consumption.

Jubyche states that natives died from "spitting blood" before the white man came to West Australia.

Wounds of all kinds, however desperate they may be, unless they affect a vital part, heal in a marvellously quick space of time. They are usually attended to at once by the native doctor who, if the wound is in a fleshy part, sucks the blood from it and then, putting a little ashes on it, leaves it to heal. Sometimes the open wound is filled in with soft gum or native wax. If the wound festers the gum or ashes is removed and a fresh quantity is applied. Their "lancet" is a small sharp pointed bone,



usually the small bone of the fore leg of the kangaroo, and with this they probe the wound if to their minds an insufficient quantity of blood has come from it. They seem to realise the danger of stagnant blood or matter remaining in a wound particularly in the upper parts of the body. The lancet is also used to probe boils and gatherings. Protruding bowels have been replaced, the opening filled in with gum and held together by leaves, string, and the wounded man has recovered. They bear the most severe pain with the greatest stoicism, whether it is a wound received in battle or a tribal punishment, or a surgical operation.

Friction is used in cases of rheumatism, or swelling of any kind, also for headache, stomach ache, liver trouble and other indisposition, and their method of using hot ashes, made usually from soft bark, has been successfully practised by the whites in similar cases. All the while the friction process is being gone through the "doctor" blows and hisses in much the same manner as an energetic groom indulges in when rubbing a favorite horse, and at intervals he stops to perform sundry incantations, without which no amount of friction would avail.

Skin diseases of many kinds are common amongst them, chiefly owing to exclusive fish or flesh diet, absence of vegetables, dirt, and their constant habit of sleeping with their dogs, many of which are covered with mange. It is stated that through their habit of fondling their dogs, many of them suffer from hydatids. Erysipelas sometimes sets in, until the patient can with difficulty move about the camp. Grease or fat mixed with red ochre is rubbed into the parts affected but the disease does not disappear until the diet is changed, either by the inland natives coming to the coast or the coastal tribes going inland. The propensity of the natives to gorge on the abundance of fish or flesh food is however largely responsible for many of the skin diseases to which they are subject.

Sand, earth, or cold baths were used as curatives for fever and other disorders. The efficacy of the sandbath as a means of restoring animation has already been alluded to. Cold baths were sometimes taken to allay fever as also mud baths, the patient being



buried up to his chin in the soft mud, remaining in his bath for some time. The "cold water cure" for fever was known to the aborigines before the advent of the whites. If camped on the bank of a river they usually plunged into the water every two or three hours until the fever abated. Sometimes the doctors will fill their mouths with water and spurt it over the whole of the patient's body back and front, then with their hands throw it over face or breast, lay the patient on his back, and breathe incantations upon him. The fever patient is usually forbidden animal food.

A writer in the Perth Gazette of August 2nd, 1834, says that "no part of the medical or surgical treatment was so readily submitted to...as scarifying or cupping....The Aesculapian art appears to be only dawning upon the inhabitants of this part of the world, for in addition to those mentioned above, friction on the diseased parts, softening them at the same time with the local vapour bath of heated air expired from the lungs was the extent of their chirurgy."

In December 1833, an epidemic of whooping cough attacked the natives of Perth, which they believed was communicated to them by the bugler of the Settlement, from the infectious blasts which they imagined passed through the bugle and spread their contagion. The noise emitted by this instrument somewhat resembling the sound of the "whoop" it may have been that the similarity of sound gave rise to this superstitious idea amongst them.

"The ignorant black," says Worsnop, "believes firmly in the curative properties of his vapour or other bath, in the drink which is made for him from Eucalyptus and water, in a decoction of geranium, in his bleedings, his kneadings and rubbings and pressings and treadings, in his anointings with the sap of trees, the sucking of the parts affected, the withdrawal from his body of pieces of wood, bone, stone, or twine, in the power of his.... doctor to extract them, and in the wild incantations and dances of the old men....."

"In the case of boils and hard swellings they lotion the part well with a decoction of wattle bark; if this is ineffective they boil wild marsh-mallows and paultice the swelling; if it should



soften and not break they lance the part with a sharp bone and suck the wound. They frequently get severe burns, which they dress by dabbing the parts with melted fat, and whilst this is warm they cover the whole with fur from an opossum skin and the dust of the red ochre. For dysentery, to which they are much subject, they drink copious decoctions of wattle bark which is of a most astringent nature, chew wattle gum, and make themselves pills of wattle bark and gum, which they take when retiring at night. For fever their treatment is almost always the cold water cure."

(To be corrected)

Occasionally a dropsical native has been met with in the inland districts, but there is no account of any native cure for this disease. If contracted when in the service of the settlers, a few months of bush life will generally cause the native to recover. (Jubyche does not remember any native of his tribe having this disease.)

Inflammation of the lungs is mainly caused through the natives sleeping on wet ground, or through over heating themselves at corroboree dances, during which they indulge in most violent exercises. These are usually the beginnings of pulmonary trouble and they generally end fatally. It is said that the aborigines are well acquainted with the various stages of lung disease and as soon as blood is expectorated they know the end is near. It is at this period that the peculiar and cruel ceremony of crushing out the remaining spark of life in the poor sufferer takes place, the relatives of the dying man believing that they absorb his spirit and thus increase their own strength with the addition of his. If a native is in the service of a white man during the progress of this disease, as soon as the "doctor" is convinced that the case is hopeless, he insists upon the native's removal into the bush with his people, in order that his "spirit" may be secured by them in the manner before described.



The Rev. P. White of the Beagle Bay Roman Catholic Mission, mentions a circumstance in connection with the illness and death of a young native which bears some similarity to the custom observed by Mr. Durlacher amongst the natives of the Nor'West :-

A boy named "Nabbee" while tree climbing in search of opossum or iguana fell from one of the trees, and though stunned for a little while had apparently received no other injury, and came back to the mission. An hour or two afterwards he commenced screaming and was evidently in great pain gasping for breath in a most peculiar manner. Father White took the boy into his room and as soon as the paroxysm passed, asked him where he had felt the pain, the boy said, pointing to his throat, "Water running down there," which evidenced some injury to his windpipe. He was given medicine at intervals during the day, but the paroxysm returned regularly, and the boy was evidently dying. Father White was absent from his bedside for a few moments, and on his return saw a crowd of natives rushing towards the room where the boy lay. Before the priest could reach his side, one of the natives, a very big athletic savage, had caught the dying boy in his arms, and crushing him to his breast extinguished the little life that had remained in him, evidently in pursuance of the same tribal custom as that obtaining amongst other Nor'West tribes and noted by Mr. Durlacher. The Beagle Bay natives vouchsafed no explanation of their action, and Father White could only conjecture that it had something to do with the release of the imprisoned spirit in the boy, or, as Mr. Durlacher suggested, that the man crushed the youth in order that he might be the one to absorb his spirit and so acquire additional strength, and also prevent the boy's spirit from entering into an enemy's body, and thereby injuring the family to which the boy belonged. The native Alexis who killed the boy belonged to the same family as Nabbee.



Grey and Moore have furnished a few native names of certain diseases peculiar to the aborigines.

Bambala, film or cataract over the eye

Ko-ko-rum, festering

Kool-boo, to cough

Koon-do, a sore, a boil

Min-jing-ing, scurf

Nee-nat, covered with sores

Birr-kan, a sore

Goom-boor goom-boor, the itch (Grey)

Jip-jip or gumburgumbur, the itch (Moore)

Pandopen, to faint, to swoon

There seems to be no doubt in the minds of those who have studied the manners and customs of the natives that those habits which they have learned from civilisation have been instrumental in hastening their decay as a race. In their native wilds they are impervious to all weathers, for they wear no clothing and are consequently hardened against the change of seasons; their own natural food suits the physiological constitution which they have inherited from their ancestors; and their free, open, wandering life is the only one suited to their nature.

Now, in all the districts to which civilisation has come, the natives are obliged to clothe themselves, either with the cast off clothing of the whites or else with the blankets which the Government distribute to them once a year. During the wet weather these garments whether blankets or clothes, get soaked with rain, yet the native, not knowing what to do with his wet clothing, or else having no change, and being still compelled to wear garments, moves about all day in these wet clothes, only taking them off when he lies down to sleep by his camp fire. Next morning the garments are still wet, but whether the day be warm or cold, the clothes are put on. Is it to be wondered at that pulmonary disease has increased to such an extent that it is together with the other diseases which the native has contracted from European contact, rapidly exterminating the aborigines? Again as to their food, the artificial food which is given them in place of their own natural food



which, suited to their physical wants, is a poor substitute to them for their kangaroos, opossums, honey, fish etc. and from its unsuitability and the impoverishment of blood which it causes, and the consequent susceptibility of the debilitated system to the diseases which European vice communicates, they droop and die, and will continue to do so until the entire race has disappeared. In the more populous towns of W.A. the natives have long become extinct. Governor Stirling computed in 1830 that there were probably about one native to two square miles around Perth and Ogle states that "seven hundred and fifty" were known to have visited Perth from the district surrounding it, about forty miles each way. There is not one Perth native alive at the present day. Fanny (Balbuk), a Ballarruk, is the last Swan native. Even in the more sparsely settled districts, though the process is more gradual, the end is the same, and many of the bush tribes have totally disappeared; for sheep and cattle, which they were forbidden to touch, have occupied their territory, and the wild animals upon which they subsisted have been driven further and further inland away from their own hunting grounds, and into those of a hostile tribe where their native laws forbid them to follow. And the progress of civilisation, in spite of the fostering care of the Colonial Government and notwithstanding the many missionary efforts to reclaim and preserve the race, seems likely to compass their total extinction at no very distant date.

It may be said that in their natural state, the diseases of the natives, though few, are severe, and are aggravated by want of shelter and the absence of food suitable to the complaint. Notwithstanding their belief in the "charm doctor" nature's medicine has a powerful effect upon them, and the simple remedies with which they supplement it are the most efficacious and the best suited to their system. They bear their wounds and sickness with the utmost fortitude and until they have been in sufficient contact with the whites to learn the whining, canting, complaining tone of the beggar, they suffer in silence, neither grateful for any attention that may be paid them by the other members of their family, nor querulous at the want of it, accepting their chances of recovery or death with



that ignorant fatalism which is one of their chief characteristics.

The future of the Australian race is a painful subject to dwell upon. Gradual extinction seems to be the doom of all savage races that come in contact with the white man, but in W.A. they are fast, not gradually, disappearing, not by any intentional human agency, if one excepts the communication of those vices by Europeans, which are so deadly in their effect upon the aborigines, but in obedience to some mysterious law of nature which scientists cannot as yet explain; and it is probable that less than fifty years hence not a single representative of this interesting race will be found in the settled districts of this State. Utter extinction and complete oblivion awaits them in the near future, and with the exception of a few works intended to represent their manners and customs, most of which are now out of print, they leave no memorials behind them for the enlightenment of future generations.

Fortunately, the West Australian settlers with a few exceptions, have the satisfaction of knowing that they have - to a great extent - avoided those acts of cruelty and persecution which in Tasmania especially hastened the extinction of the aborigines of that Island.