

X 2e

DISEASES, REMEDIES

Early information;
additional sundry notes.

The remedies practised by the medicine men (moppin culbriah - mobburngurra) in cases of sickness are thus described by J.O. Brown. "If anyone is sick the moppin culbriah comes to him and pounds the patient all over, chiefly in the region of the stomach. He will pull the flesh and run off into the dark, muttering and blowing on his fingers. The natives think he is blowing away the evil spirit. He then brings a spearhead or a stone back with him, and he will suck the patient hard in the back or over the stomach. After this has gone on some little time, he produces the spear head or the stone or anything he has at hand and will say he has taken it out of the stomach or the back of the patient. He will then probably pay a visit to another patient and go through the same performance. The tremendous faith of the natives in the power assumed by the medicine men is evidenced by the fact that these men will sometimes produce a long spear, and say they have pulled it out of the patient's body, the patient solemnly believing in the operation."

If the natives have a cut or wound of any kind it is a common thing for them to put ashes over it. After a birth a woman smears herself all over with charcoal. A native woman goes about her duties a few hours after her confinement.

A sorcerer will sometimes bleed a patient by making an incision near the temple or in the arm.

Pains in the head or bowels cured by patient lying on his back and someone standing on his forehead or belly and pressing as much weight as the patient can bear.

The veins are never opened for bleeding, but topical bleeding is common and is performed with a sharp flint.

Woolyal disease, "rattling of the organs", is heard by the bulya, but this disease is rarely cured, although the bulyaguttuk goes through all the performances as in heart disease.

Lung disease is also generally fatal, as the bulyaguttuk's services are only called in when the disease has reached an acute stage. The blood is sucked out from the seat of pain. The bulyaguttuk does his best but he generally tells the relatives that the patient has only a few days to live, and his words prove true. His lungs are too far gone, and he does not attempt to cure the hopelessly sick.

Questions 12 & 13.

Their illnesses came they say from the wind and the water. Quibberan is Nilgee's name for me and she gives me "gabba narriana", running water, for my oobarree. Quibberan was the action of a small bough quivering in the water.

Bashur, informant

Walberning - curing by a sort of massage and enchantment.

The boylya extracts a piece of quartz from the affected part and throws it in the direction of the boylya who sent it and it returns to the boylya who sent it. These pieces of quartz are equivalent to the spirits familiars of the boylya.

Marginal note - Yarbuk, there go - add - a spear without barbs.

Borongur and oobarree - synonymous terms.

Koorlyoogan, not hurting.

Diseases

Ngalyart, informant

Walba, mindytech coming? sickening

No venereal diseases.

Mindytech was the general word used.

Growing headache - katta mindytech

Bookal mindytech- pains in the back.

Mata windoop - letting a bad leg rot away.

The Wonunda (Eyre's Sand Patch) people suffered much from consumption. Their wounds were covered with ashes or sand and in cases of colic their friends pressed hard and kneaded with their feet the stomach of the sufferer.

The Busselton natives generally suffered from colds.

When measles was introduced amongst them it killed off a great number, as cold water was their only cure for it. Their remedy for wounds was to rub dirt into the sore. Mr. Whitchurch has never known a case of "fever proper" amongst these natives. When they were ill, the aid of the boylya was sought. If the sick man had a boil the boylya opened it with a piece of flint and then danced about making grunting noises.

Any of the old men amongst the Busselton natives acted as boylyas on occasion.

Lung diseases and consumption were the diseases prevalent amongst the Cape Riche natives. Their methods of cure, J. Moir says, were "only native doctors called 'melgar' who performed sleight of hand work upon their patients." This word 'melgar' is given by Mr. Moir as distinct from boylya or sorcerer which the Cape Riche natives have amongst their tribe.

Melgar is given in Moir's vocabulary as "native medicine".

(Mulgar is the southern word for thunder and also for a native sorcerer - "mulgarguttuk" - having mulgar, or supernatural power.)

S. Hadley states that there are no medicine men amongst the Sunday Island natives, and they do not ascribe any deaths to the influence of sorcery. The custom of attributing deaths, no matter from what cause, to sorcery, is so general throughout Australia that up to the present, Sunday Island is the only part of W.A. where this custom is not followed.

Joobyteh's people (S.W.)

While Joobyteh was lying ill and his sons and sons-in-law were sitting round him he suddenly imitated the scratching of a yongar or male kangaroo, scratching his ribs after the manner of the male. Immediately his daughter said, "Some yongar borungur have put bulya into the old man." Another afternoon, shortly after this, Joobyteh drawing his fingers together made the tracks of a goomal on the dusty floor and they knew by these that he was aware that the bulya came from some goomal borungur. Fred Mead, one of the few last goomal borungur, had had one of Joobyteh's sisters who ran away from him, and it was for this that he had put bulya into Joobaitech.

Arthur Buick, Pinjarra, states that the native remedies for wounds, sickness and fever, are as follows. "If limb wound, tie cord tight above and below the wound, to stop bleeding. In sickness, where the pain is, cut around the part with a sharp flint, or bits of broken glass, to make bleed. Fever, sit in water up to the chin for several minutes, several times during the day."

D.G. Roe states that in the Yerkla mining tribe the medicine men are the Headmen, and are called mobung-bai, from mobung, "magic". They decide disputes, arrange marriages, and under certain circumstances, settle the formalities to be observed in combats by ordeal, and conduct the ceremonies of initiation. They cut the gashes which, when healed, denote the class of the bearer, or his hardihood and prowess. In fact, they wield authority in the tribe, and give orders where others only make requests.

(Howitt's S.E.A., 313)

Although the Rev. J. Flood states that there were no boylyas amongst the New Norcia natives, the late Bishop Salvado (Page 354 et seq.) mentions the possession of this belief in the "boglias" by the Maura tribe.

Questions asked of Jubytch and his answers.

92. Had Jubyche's tribe marks of smallpox?

Ngorrart (scab) was the name given by the southern natives to smallpox. Jubyche says his mother told him that this disease carried off very many blacks and he saw many marked with the disease, but it had passed over the country before his time. His mother told him it came from the north inland over the ranges. None of the present day natives have any marks from this disease. Jubyche states that his mother was a young woman when the disease passed through her tribe. Her two brothers died of the disease. Jubyche's mother was very old when she died. P. 53.

103. To what diseases were the natives subject and of what did they die? P. 16

Nyeerang, a skin disease, a kind of itch, meal mindytche, bad eyes; moyar (liver), goort (heart), wel-yal (lights), ngarral (ribs), bungal (side), koonga (back) - pains in these organs were cured by red gum, curdan narla, (also gobbel (stomach), equivalent to dysentery), eaten either powdered or swallowed it in small lumps like a pill.

Colds were cured by putting fires round and keeping all the body warm. For rheumatism they made some sand very hot and laying the patient on his back in the hot sand they covered him over with some more hot sand and so induced a perspiration; sometimes he was wrapped in kangaroo skins and kept warm until the rheumatic pains subsided. Some died of liver disease, some of inflammation, some of acute rheumatism, but this is only supposition. P. 54-55

114. Had the blacks any cure for sickness?
How did they treat wounds?

They bound spear wounds with pieces of wattle bark or mahogany bark, and tied them up with narrow strips of the same.

P. 58.

115. Did Jubyche's tribe tie a band tightly round the head in cases of headache, and did they also resort to bleeding for severe headache, and if the women had very bad headaches, did they ask other women to hit them on the head?

P. 17

Yes, these were all native remedies.

P. 58

116. Give the native (Guildford) names for some of their diseases and wounds.

P. 17

The answer given on P. 58 also is given in X 2a, P. 5

117. Was the cuckoo regarded as the cause of all boils or sores on the body? Was the bird supposed to pierce the natives with its beak while they were asleep?

P. 17

No.

P. 58

122. When a splinter ran into their hands or feet, how did they extract it?

P. 17

They dug it out with a piece of sharp pointed wood.

P. 58

NATIVE DISEASES. REMEDIESFITZROY

C.J. Annear states that when a native is very ill, any one of the elders (the old are all doctors) will look at the sick one and feel the seat of pain, and squeeze the patient's stomach. They then pretend to take something from their own stomach or groin and press it tightly into the affected part, at the same time taking away the cause of the illness, which is buried. Sometimes they all sit around and sing over the patient to drive the disease away.

A native never believes another of his kind dies a natural death, they will always assert that he has been killed and they would swear a man's life away on this point.

One night I went to inquire into the cause of their crying, which I recognised was for a sick person. A woman who had a very bad cold was much worse and complained of a pain about the lungs.

Every native vowed that a native had just been in and speared her. The next morning I pointed out that there was no wound or blood, therefore she could not have been speared, but they asserted that a black from a far country had speared her and that the spear head would remain inside and the wound close at once.

If I gave a native medicine just before death they would consider that the cause."