

SPREAD OF THE RABIES

Treatment of Disease Which Is Spreading Because of Carelessness of Persons Owning Muzzled Dogs—Methods of Cure.

By FREDERIC J. HASKIN.
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Washington, D. C., June 24.—With July will come the "dog days" when the dog star Sirius rules the heavens for 40 days, and according to a world-old belief, dogs with rabies will run wild in the land. This superstition with many others dear to the heart of many long since has been exploded by science, for Sirius has no more to do with hydrophobia than has any other bright and friendly member of the sidereal world. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, in making a case for the homeless dogs, the pariahs of the animal world—who are put to death in greater numbers in the summer—declares that there is no greater prevalence of rabies in summer than in winter. Yet the fear remains and precaution is absolutely necessary in guarding against the spread of this most terrible of all diseases, a precaution that must be practiced assiduously until this enlightened American people learn that the disease can be affectually stamped out in one way—by muzzling dogs for several years.

Whenever the suggestion is made that dogs be muzzled, or whenever a progressive city enacts an ordinance to that effect, a storm of protest goes up from dog owners and dog lovers over the inhumanity of the practice. There is only one question with which to meet this: Is it not better that members of the dog family be given this slight discomfort in the few hours they are on the street, than have three or four little children or grown persons die in the most horrible convulsions known in the annals of human suffering? The majority of European countries have almost stamped out rabies by legislating in an intelligent manner against it. They require the killing of suspected dogs and the muzzling of those that appear on the streets. Prussia began this work in 1876 and since 1883 no case has been known in Berlin, and the rest of the country is now free from it. Holland has had no cases since 1879, except such as occur along the Belgian border. Great Britain has had the same sentimental kind of folk to contend with in the enforcement of muzzling ordinances as certain American sections have had.

That country ordered dogs muzzled in 1880, and within three years the disease had almost disappeared. Then the determined opposition of misguided sentimentalists prevailed and the law was next three years in an alarming fashion. Then muzzling again became the fashion and since 1887 Great Britain has been free from disease and England proper with Australia does not know the meaning of rabies among human beings. So much for intelligent handling of a situation.

Locating Disease.
It is to such a plane of intelligence and cooperation that the United States government, through its bureau of animal industry of the department of agriculture, hopes to some day lift the 50,000,000 people of the nation. Certain districts in this country have always been absolutely free from the infection, and others have been known to have cases for years. The largest area, according to a careful census made under the direction of the American Kennel club lies about 50 miles south of Philadelphia. Philadelphia began in a Philadelphia suburb in 1870 and in 20 years it spread out to such an extent that cases were reported in half of these being confined to six special places. A report before the American Veterinary Medical association last year showed that the badly infected country in Pennsylvania was then free from rabies, and last summer it was necessary in Chester county to destroy 184 dogs, 25 cows and 10 horses, an expensive affair to say nothing of the danger.

American Kennel Club.
When the American Kennel club made its investigation 10 years ago its specialists reported that rabies was unknown in the New England states north of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, with occasional isolated cases in Massachusetts and Connecticut, and very rare cases in New York and New Jersey; that Pennsylvania was badly infected only in certain districts, notably about Philadelphia; that there was little proof of its existence in the southern states or in the majority of the states east of the Mississippi; that in Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Kansas there had been less than 100 all told, and that the disease was entirely unknown west of the Rockies.

Whether this report was inaccurate or whether the disease has become more widely spread is not stated by the department of agriculture says conclusively: "There is abundant evidence to warrant the statement that not a single state is free from the disease."

Special cases of rabies are cited, as in 1906, a severe outbreak in Waterbury, Conn., where 175 dogs were destroyed and several persons hurried to the Pasteur hospital for treatment; in 1905-6, an outbreak in Jacksonville, Fla., when 1,200 dogs were destroyed and 12 persons bitten three died of hydrophobia; in Indiana the state veterinarian reports more than 100 rabid dogs, but in any other infectious disease; Norfolk, Va., has had the disease among its dogs and cattle, and among its people, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Charleston, W. Va., recently reported an outbreak.

Pariah Dogs.
The District of Columbia, knowing that the eyes of all the nation are turned that way in search of a good example, has during the present year waged persistent warfare on the pariah dogs, the "great unwashed" of the dog world. The law requires the licensing of dogs and the upper tundra of dogdom goes about with tags on its collars, and often with leashes safely held in the hands of careful owners, but from Virginia and Maryland waifs and strays, members of the tramp kingdom, smell from five the license, and thousands of kitchens and stray into Washington, to become the legal prey of the vigilant dog catcher. The dog catchers have been overworked, for since January 30 over 3,260 of these tramp dogs have been put to death. Of these 16 were found to have rabies, the bodies of suspects having been sent to the bureau of animal industry for laboratory examination. Because the epidemic has increased and human life been greatly endangered, the authorities are ordering the muzzling of all li-

censed dogs and the immediate execution of all unlicensed ones. The president has taken the matter up and this has brought an added interest to the situation.

There is a widely popular belief among many medices and laymen that death from hydrophobia is due, not to the malignancy of the disease, but to auto-suggestion on the part of the patient, whose fear of so horrible a death eventually brings about such a death as he had fancied. A new name coined to fit this death is hydrophobia. The death of William Marsh, the wealthy Brooklyn man, has been attributed to auto-suggestion by the followers of this school because at his request physicians had told him just what was the nature of his illness. In contradistinction to

this comes evidence from the other side. A few days after the death of Marsh, Captain Edward Rabey also died in New York, his physicians pronouncing the case a decided one of rabies, and the point is this—he died without ever knowing what his trouble was.

The primary preventive measure against rabies lies in the muzzling of dogs that the disease may not spread and infect other members of the animal kingdom, and prevention after infection lies in the treatment given at Pasteur institutes. There the disease is fought and conquered by inoculations of the very virus that is poisoning the patient. Pasteur, as Dumas said years ago when decorating him with a great order, has "taught how a mortal poison may be made an innocent preservative." It took Pasteur many years to prove this,

for it was the most dangerous of all his experiments. Where bacilli of other diseases could be cultivated in rabbit or chicken broth, the bacilli of rabies had to be cultivated in living animals, and he and his assistants worked with wild eyed, ferocious beasts until they found the prevention and cure of the dread disease. He found that as certain animals were inoculated in succession with the virus, the poison grew weaker, but that after a certain number of inoculations among rabbits the strength of the poison increased to a certain point, and then remained constant and he could procure a "fixed virus."

This virus is strongest in the spinal cord of infected animals, so in Pasteur institutes, now located wherever rabies is prevalent the civilized world over,

two rabbits are painlessly inoculated every day, and eight days later, when rabies has developed, are painlessly killed and the spinal cord extracted. This cord is hung to dry in a bottle that has caustic potash placed in the bottom, and from this cord the gray liquid for inoculating patients is made.

After he had upset the theory of spontaneous life and established the vitality of ferments, Pasteur turned to the study of rabies. When he proved the truth of his work by successful experiments in 1884 he opened a new door of hope to the world. It was in July, 1888, in Paris, that he first tried his powerful virus on human beings, three persons having come all the way from Alsace to ask that the experiments he had made on the 16 dogs the year before be made on one of their number who had been

bitten. This was a success, and in less than a year he had successfully treated 447 cases, and had changed the death rate of rabies in Paris from one in six to one in 170.

At Pasteur's Paris institutions about 50,000 patients have been treated since then, many from all parts of the world, including Russian peasants suffering from the most malignant form, that given by mad wolves. New York had the first Pasteur institute in America, opening its early in 1890. Chicago opened one in July of that year. Since then others have been established in Baltimore, Richmond, Atlanta, Pittsburg, Ann Arbor, St. Paul, New Orleans, St. Louis and Houston, and the percentage of mortality among the patients in these—both human and animals—has been gratifyingly small.

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