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Nasal Trichobilharziasis : a New Avian Schistosomiasis

IN the course of research on the schistosomes of birds in the Belgian Congo and in the Ruanda-Urundi, I have discovered schistosomes in the nasal cavities of birds¹. Nasal schistosomiasis is known to affect cattle in India, but it does not seem to have been mentioned in birds.

All parasites that were discovered—there being five new species—belong to the genus *Trichobilharzia* Skr. and Zakh. (1920). Nasal schistosomiasis is very common in the Anatidae. At Astrida (Ruanda-Urundi) we have observed it in the yellow-bill duck (*Anas undulata undulata*), in the spurwing goose (*Plectropterus gambensis*), in the Egyptian goose (*Alopochen aegyptiacus*), in the white-faced duck (*Dendrocygna viduata*) and in the knob-billed duck (*Sarkidiornis melanota*). Further, we have also met it in the Hâdeda ibis (*Hagedashia hagedash* Ciconiiformes) and in the grebes (*Podiceps* and *Poliocephalus*).

The adult schistosomes are found in the small veins of the nasal cavities, and the eggs, often in great numbers, are met with in the nasal mucus. It is remarkable that the *Trichobilharzia* of the nasal cavities are exclusively found in these organs, and never in the liver or in the intestinal veins.

The histopathological lesions consist in a thickening of the nasal lining together with an accumulation—often considerable—of lymphocytes and the presence of numerous and voluminous giant cells. Sometimes additional infection is noted together with necrosis.

The discovery of this schistosomiasis opens a new field of research to the parasitologist, and promises to be fruitful. It is also of considerable interest from the medical point of view. Indeed, we know that the cercaria of *Trichobilharzia* are capable of causing a dermatitis known as 'swimmer's itch'. Recently, B. de Meillon and N. Stoffberg² have reported the first case in Africa of 'swimmer's itch', and I described, at Astrida (Ruanda-Urundi), a new furcocercaria of the Ocellata group which produces experimentally the same skin affection³.

Up to now, no attention has been paid to the role

that cercaria could take in the pathogeny of pruriginous skin diseases in Central Africa. I am reporting my observations in order to direct attention to this highly important matter.

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¹ Fain, A., *Rev. Zool. Bot. Afr.*, 51, 373 (1955); and two papers in the press: *Ann. Parasitol.*, 30, 321 (1955); *Ann. Soc. Belge Méd. Trop.* (in the press).

² De Meillon, B., and Stoffberg, N., *South Afr. Med. J.*, 28, 1062 (1954).

³ Fain, A., *Ann. Soc. Belge Méd. Trop.* (in the press).