

acceleration of the frequency of the heart's action, which the experimenter refers to stimulation of the cardiac ganglia, or muscle substance. That it is not due to any action on the vagi is shown by the fact that, if muscarin is first applied so as to arrest the action of the heart, the stimulating effect of the cyanogen can still be observed. The chief difference between the action of cyanogen and hydrocyanic acid consists in the persistence of the respiratory movements after the heart's action has ceased, and in the early occurrence of the rigor mortis. In the mammalia, cats, rabbits, and mice, the cyanogen gas, whether inhaled or injected in watery solution into the blood, causes dyspnoea, and the animals die from respiratory paralysis, just as after poisoning with hydrocyanic acid. The blood-pressure falls, and the heart's contractions are at first rendered more frequent, but in the later stage are retarded. They continue after respiration has ceased. The toxic effect of cyanogen is less violent than that of hydrocyanic acid, '02 grm. being required to produce the same effect as '004 grm. of the latter.

THE VETERINARY DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL.

THE Annual Report of the Veterinary Department of the Privy Council, lately issued, must be pronounced, on the whole, satisfactory; in some matters unsatisfactory. It shows that, notwithstanding the opinions which at one time dominated this department, the severe scourges which have done such damage to our agriculture, and were allowed to ravage the pasture and farmstead for so many years unchecked, can be exterminated without injury or inconvenience to the general public. Since our ports were thrown open to the unrestricted importation of foreign animals, some forty years ago, exotic contagious diseases of the most destructive character have been permitted to run riot over the country, and the loss to the farmers, which means also a national loss, must have amounted to several millions of pounds annually. Much ignorance seems to have prevailed with regard to these diseases, and Government of late years appear to have only become slowly enlightened with regard to them. Their history, geographical distribution, nature, and even their transmissibility, seem to have been but little known. Hence the neglect of repressive and sanitary measures until the cattle plague visited the country, and caused such havoc in 1865. The awakening was a rude and a costly one, and a kind of system of checking that, and one or two of the other contagious diseases, was forthwith inaugurated. But it must be confessed that the Government has moved slowly, and has often indeed been a long way behind public opinion; it has had to be urged to adopt the simplest and most elementary measures, and only too often it has shown itself strangely ignorant of the prevalence and mode of combating diseases regarding which there should have been no doubt or hesitation. This was the case until 1877, when another invasion of cattle plague—quite unexpected, and therefore unprovided for—visited England. It was then somewhat roused out of its torpidity and driven into more vigorous action by the report of a Select Committee of the House of Commons, and in 1878 the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act was passed. Since then the chief pests which had for so long wrought incalculable mischief have been gradually extinguished, though not nearly so rapidly as would have happened had the Act been properly framed and the measures energetically carried out. However, at last foot-and-mouth disease has been nearly got rid of, and contagious pleuropneumonia is greatly diminished, though far from being extinguished. It is somewhat singular that, in view of the persistency of the last-mentioned disease, the Government should ignore the benefits to be derived from protective inoculation. It is painful to read of the destruction of entire herds of cattle, only one or two of which are diseased, without this measure, the benefits of which are now placed beyond doubt, being at least tried. There is yet much torpidity, incredulity, and apathy exhibited, and we trust that the new Government may contrive to effect the removal of these barriers to improvement in this matter of contagious diseases among animals. The Act now in force is faulty in several particulars, and we shall probably have to suffer yet for many years from these disorders, unless more enlightened and efficient action is adopted.

Glanders among horses is on the increase, and the returns evidently do not represent a tithe of the cases occurring. Everything appears to be left to chance with regard to this dangerous disease; there is no compulsion in the matter of reporting the existence of the malady, nor yet any attempt to trace the source of those cases which are reported. Considering the risk human beings incur, and the loathsome and incurable character of the disorder, surely the public have a right to expect better protection from it.

From the report before us we observe it is stated that foot-and-mouth disease was detected among sheep imported from the United States; yet, strange to say, from all we can learn the disease is now unknown there. Surely a mistake has been committed.

American swine are largely infested with trichinæ, yet nothing is done to protect the pork-eating public from this source of danger.

Though the report is satisfactory to some extent, yet it bears on the face of it signs of lassitude, and a tendency to allow things to go as they may. No account is taken of that terrifying and far from rare disease, rabies; nor is any mention made of anthrax—a malady of rather rare occurrence—but very fatal in different parts of the country, and being transmissible to various species of animals and man, it should, we think, secure some share of attention from the authorities. Tuberculosis of cattle, also, is unmentioned, though the disorder is rather rife, and is apparently on the increase. We wonder if the Government has heard of it, and of the recent startling disclosures made with regard to its communicability, not only by inoculation, but by ingestion of the milk and flesh of diseased cows, as well as its infectiousness through the respiratory organs! It is indeed high time something was done to keep the Government up to the level of sanitary requirements; it should lead, not follow public opinion.

STATISTICS OF FATAL CHOREA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I can add six to the eighty fatal cases of chorea brought together by Dr. Sturges in his interesting paper published in THE LANCET, July 17th. No single observer can contribute many. All my patients died of chorea, not merely with it. The cases came under my notice when I was resident physician in the Queen's Hospital. I watched them closely during life, and I examined all the bodies post mortem.

CASE 1.—Selina W—, aged fourteen years, died Nov. 30th, 1866. Death by asthenia. *Tænia mediocanellata* in small intestine.

CASE 2.—Sarah J—, aged eighteen years, died April 2nd, 1867. Death by syncope. Suffering from gonorrhœa. She was much perturbed about the venereal disease, and was very anxious to conceal it from her mother.

CASE 3.—Emily C—, aged fifteen years, died May 19th, 1868. Death by asthenia, after illness of seven days. Malady attributed to dread of destitution; she had neither relatives nor friends, and had been about to lose her situation.

CASE 4.—James N—, aged sixteen years. Died March 11th, 1870. Death by asthenia. Chorea lasted six weeks, and followed acute rheumatism. *Tænia solium* in small intestine.

CASE 5.—Emma H—, aged twelve years. Died Dec. 27th, 1870, ten days after the onset of chorea. Her illness began as acute rheumatism; when the joint affections and pyrexia were subsiding the choreic movements began. Endocardium normal.

CASE 6.—Sarah P—, aged twenty-five years. Died March 7th, 1871, by asthenia. Was delivered of a dead six-months' fœtus, forty-eight hours before death; her second pregnancy. She attributed the chorea to fright and bad food.

These cases, so far as they go, support in the main Dr. Sturges' conclusions. The points worthy of note in my cases are—(1) the ages of the patients (twelve, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, eighteen, and twenty-five years respectively); (2) the sex of the patients (five females, but only one male); (3) the association of acute rheumatism, emotional disturbance, intestinal worms, and pregnancy, with chorea.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Birmingham, July 15th, 1880.

JAMES SAWYER, M.D.