

The Villian of Many a Tragedy

The Fly and Infantile Paralysis

By Thomas D. Wood, M.D.

While much is yet to be learned with reference to all of the sources of the contagion in infantile paralysis (anterior poliomyelitis), it is now believed that the germs may be conveyed by some of the domestic animals. We are coming to realize what a dirty and deadly enemy of mankind the house fly is, altho it has long been considered quite harmless and only a bit disagreeable and annoying. Millions of bacteria have been found on the innocent-looking feet of a single common fly.

It is now believed that the fly is responsible for many cases of typhoid fever, tuberculosis, infantile paralysis and other serious communicable diseases, and that germs of infantile paralysis may live for forty-eight hours, at least, in the body of the fly.

We believe also that these germs may live for several days in the dust, and more especially in the floor dirt, of a room in a house in which there is a case of this disease. It is important that the highest degree of cleanliness should be maintained, especially in a building in which the disease has broken out. The house should be most carefully kept clean, not by dry sweeping, which scatters the dust and germs thru the air for people to breathe, but by mopping or by use of oiled dust rags, or by vacuum cleaning where possible. This collected dirt should be burned and the moist cloths thoroughly disinfected.

The latest lessons we are learning about infantile paralysis and other diseases point many morals with reference to the importance—for the prevention of the disease—of the highest standards of cleanliness and sanitation in the construction, equipment and keeping of the house.

Swat the Fly

Suppose a fly were as big as a sparrow, and the filth which it carried on its hairy body and legs were plainly visible to the naked eye. Would you drink milk from a pitcher into which a fly of that size had fallen? It is only because the fly is so tiny that its dangerous character as a carrier of disease germs is not apparent. The germs are there, whether one can see them or not—germs and filth from every place where decaying animal or vegetable matter can be found, for it is on such material the fly feeds by preference.

Epidemics have been traced to flies which carried germs from unprotected cesspools to the milk cans of an otherwise clean dairy. The germs carried by a single fly are sufficient in number to infect whole families. On one fly as many as 6,600,000 disease-causing bacteria have been found, and in a recent experiment the average number of germs found on the bodies of each of 414 flies was 1,250,000. These germs were counted by dropping each fly into a bottle of perfectly sterilized water, after which the water was subjected to microscopic examination. The germs found in the water represented the number of germs that would be found in a milk pitcher after a fly had struggled in it for a moment or two.

Every female fly is the possible progenitor of billions of flies during a single summer, but only about 8,000,000 of these usually survive to become carriers of disease.

The Fly Can Be Eradicated

It is not difficult, only troublesome, to get flies out of a house, even after several generations have developed since the beginning of the season. And you can keep them out. Twenty drops of carbolic acid poured on a hot shovel in a tightly-closed room will give off fumes that will kill all the flies in the room. Sticky fly paper and poisons are useful, but the most effective way of getting flies out of a house is to kill them, one by one, with "swatters," made of wire screen on the end of a stick.

"Swat the fly" was the slogan of important campaigns carried on in a dozen American cities last summer, and is again the battle cry of a larger and more elaborately planned warfare this summer. The crystallized experience of

last year shows that while swatting is effective in houses, it is not a solution of the problem of ridding communities of flies. But these campaigns have been of great value along educational lines. The crusade in Washington, D.C., attracts special attention because it is in the nation's capital and it has the sanction and support of the health department.

A contest with prizes for the largest number of flies killed was conducted last summer by one of the leading evening newspapers. The health department was able, by closely observing the progress of this contest, to locate "fly centres," or localities where unsanitary conditions provided breeding places for flies. Many of these places have been wiped out, and all of them will go. School teachers taught their pupils to regard the fly as the greatest menace to health. Settlement workers took up the fight, taught lessons of cleanliness and carried into the alleys warnings emphasized by striking pictures on cards. Commendations of the crusade came from pulpits and, while all Washington was swatting the fly with the mistaken idea that the pest could be wiped out by that means, a great awakening was going on and the foundation being laid for complete victory in the future.

The 1912 campaign in Washington opened informally in February, when the same newspaper which conducted the contest urged everybody to search for half dormant flies. It was pointed out that one female fly killed before the egg-laying season began would be worth several millions swatted later on. The possibility of heading off a million of flies by a single stroke of a swatter or a blow from a folded newspaper appealed to the Washingtonian, and he went to work.

Then, to prepare for the big fight, a week of city cleaning was planned. The district commissioners gave the aid of all the machinery of the district government: the Y.M.C.A., the W.C.T.U., the public schools, and in fact everybody in Washington went to work cleaning up. The district contractor could not handle the dirt and rubbish unassisted, but a citizens' central committee saw that he had help. Then the fly fight began and will be waged all summer along broader lines than those of the first campaign.

Once a house is clear of flies, screens will keep them out. A mixture of carbolic acid and kerosene swabbed over a screen door will drive away the flies that usually congregate there waiting for someone to open it and let them in. If the garbage can is equipped with such a fly trap as can be bought in most house furnishing shops, the flies will gather there, for the most part, and be caught before they can enter the house. Then if food is kept screened and everything that goes into anyone's mouth, spoons, tumblers and baby's nursing bottles are scalded after a fly has walked on them, there will be little danger of infection.

The really important thing is to teach children that a fly is just as dangerous as a rattlesnake—even more so, for it leaves a poisoned trail wherever it walks.

The test of the good housekeeper used to be the flyless house. Later it was the amount of fresh air and sunshine she let in. Now it is the combination of both—a task more difficult than that which grandmother faced, but not impossible. —Good Housekeeping.

ONLY A "RING-OFF"

"Auntie, did you ever get a proposal?"
"Once, dear. A gentleman asked me to marry him over the telephone, but he had the wrong number."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

HOPELESS

"You say you have no references as a cook. How is that?"
"Well, you see, mum, I've always stayed in wau place until the people died."—Boston Transcript.

A wedding is a place where women weep because they are happy and men smile because they are sad.—Life.

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