

## TSETSE FLY AND SLEEPING SICKNESS

The dreaded Tsetse fly, called by the natives obawli, which carried the fatal sleeping sickness, prevails in countless numbers in the Congo country, in Africa. As a result of its bite, many natives and an occasional European have suffered and died from this insidious disease of the tropics.

The fly is apparently increasing in numbers. Along the lower levels of the far interior thousands of people have died from the sickness, and here the tsetse abounds in the greatest proportion. Its victims are often infected for months before they know it. Local physicians, where there are any, which is rare, and some of the missionaries scattered throughout the Congo, have been taught by physicians especially sent out by the French government to make a blood test by a simple method which definitely determines whether or not one has fallen victim to the disease.

Not every bite of the tsetse fly, however, brings on the sleeping sickness, as is commonly believed outside of Africa. If this were the case, with the tsetse prevailing in such numbers, there would not be a human being left alive in Central Africa, and newcomers would shortly perish. As a matter of fact, only once in a number of times does the bite of the tsetse prove to be infected with the virus of the sickness. No one in the Congo can escape being bitten occasionally, no matter how closely he may guard himself against it, and anyone with a purpose, such as study of jungle life, is doubly exposed to its bites, and must trust to luck or Providence in the outcome.

The tsetse fly is of a dark-brown color, though it looks black. Its wings overlap on its back, and with its peculiarly-formed body it appears to have the shape of a catfish, only it is shorter in proportion to its width. It is, therefore, a villain that looks its part. It is very stealthy in attack, and almost as if it had a knowledge of human anatomy, it nearly always attacks a part of the body which one cannot conveniently reach. On the back and shoulders, and on the legs under the deck of the canoe, where it is able to ply its proboscis undisturbed and for a brief moment unnoticed, it attacks.

The daylight variety of tsetse stealthily sinks its proboscis into the skin, causing no pain, and therefore seldom attracting the attention of the victim until too late. It fills up with the blood and withdraws its proboscis. Then its victim feels the sting for the first time. The proboscis is shaped like a barbed spear, which tears the sides of the tiny wound, and the stinging and itching sensation continues for an hour afterward.