

## CAN A HEALTHY DOG GIVE HYDROPHOBIA?

One would think that sufficient publicity had been given by the papers to the fact that hydrophobia is now definitely known to be a germ-disease, communicable only from one infected animal to another; but the following quotation from *The British Medical Journal* indicates that there is yet room for a "campaign of education," at least in Great Britain: "It is surprising and melancholy to see how the most mischievous popular fallacies seem to die the hardest, and still more vexing is it to find them kept alive by want of what is really ordinary knowledge on the part of a medical practitioner. Of this the following is an example. At an inquest recently held at Cheadle in the case of a child which had died of hydrophobia, the medical practitioner who had attended the patient is represented in the local press as having replied, when asked by a juror whether a child would be liable to take hydrophobia from the bite of a dog not suffering from rabies. 'It just depends upon the constitution of the patient. It does not necessarily follow.' In other words, the occurrence of hydrophobia is not due to the introduction of the specific virus of rabies, but may be caused by any bite of a healthy animal. Such a distressing lack of familiarity with the commonest-known facts about rabies is only paralleled by the celebrated occasion on which a certain surgeon-general stated that if a man broke his leg hydrophobia might result. But such a mistake unfortunately is no merely ridiculous; it causes endless misery, and the worst apprehensions in the minds of those who may endure the common mischance of a bite from a healthy dog. The present instance is an illustration of the very old story that too often a medical man in the witness box forgets when he is speaking as an ordinary witness to facts and when as an expert he should always be on his guard never to express himself in an *ex cathedra* manner on questions of pathology unless he is absolutely sure of the facts upon which his opinion is based. It has been truly said that the 'misfortune of ignorance is publicity;' it is doubly so in an instance of this kind."

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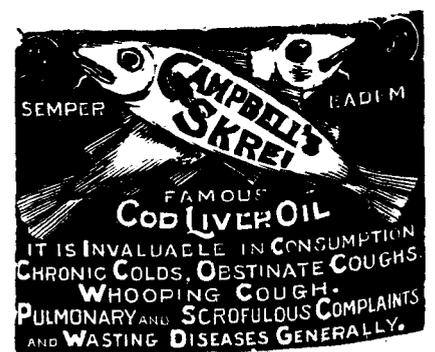
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