TWO CASES OF A FOREIGN BODY CAUSING DELAYED DISABILITY.

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The following cases appear worthy of record for two reasons. (1) The ignorance of the patient that he was harbouring a foreign body. (2) The length of the history.

Case 1.—A Qm.-Sjt. aged 38, admitted to hospital complaining of attacks of “bronchitis,” periodical attacks of severe pain in the left chest and loin, and loss of weight.

Previous History.—(1) Slight wound in the left loin in March, 1915, not sufficient for admission to hospital. (2) Bullet wounds in the right thigh in 1917 (twice) and 1918. (3) “Pneumonia” five years ago. (4) “Bronchitis” three years ago.

On Admission.—The temperature was 101°F.; he had a severe cough with profuse mucoid expectoration and tenderness in the left loin. Investigations for malaria and enteric were negative. The pain in the loin was persistent and the temperature was of continuous type. The urine was found to contain a few pus cells and hyaline and tube casts. X-ray examination of the chest was negative. After nine days he was transferred to the Surgical Division as there was swelling obviously of an inflammatory nature in the left loin. The total white blood-count was found to be 21,000—mainly polymorphonuclear.

Operation.—Under general anaesthesia a curved lumbar incision was made and a large abscess cavity was revealed, extending down to the surface of the left kidney. The abscess contained about three pints of thick pus, and lying on the upper pole of the kidney was a cubical metallic body about half an inch in length, presumably a piece of shrapnel. This was removed and the cavity drained. Convalescence was normal, the wound being soundly healed in about three weeks’ time, during which there was a gain in weight of six pounds and disappearance of chest symptoms. Since then the patient has been well and has not suffered from “bronchitis.”

Case 2.—An Aircraftsman aged 25. Admitted to hospital complaining of a small swelling on the upper surface of the base of the left great toe.

History.—The patient had had pain and swelling in his big toe, especially if he walks too much or kicks a football. The “joint” swells up and is stiff and painful.

Condition on Admission.—There was a small ulcer about one-eighth of an inch in diameter on the top of a swelling the size of a marble over the metatarsophalangeal joint of the left great toe. The movements of the underlying joint were restricted—but this was thought to be due to the mechanical interference of the “tumour.”

Operation.—Under nitrous oxide anaesthesia the small tumour was excised. It was found to contain a thorn about three-eighths of an inch in
length. The wound healed by first intention and thereafter the movements of the joint were free and painless. The patient had no knowledge of the presence of the foreign body.

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CANNIBALISM AMONGST MOSQUITO LARVAE.

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"They are extremely active, and though their food consists usually of algae and vegetable matter, some species are carnivorous and rapacious." Dr. Alcock apparently wrote this of the larva of the Culicidae in general. ("Entomology for Medical Officers," 1920 Edition, page 60.) In the list which he gives later of the natural enemies of mosquito larvae he includes "certain predaceous Culicid larvae, such as Chaoborus, Mochlonyx, Megarhinus, and others." I have not been able to discover exactly who these others are, but that is doubtless due to the limitation of my ability to search the literature; nor can I remember actually having read anything more detailed than the words just quoted—there are only too obvious limitations here also. However, even if it be as old as the hills amongst recorded observations, what follows interested me sufficiently to make me late for lunch, and several other things, and enabled me to bear the subsequent recriminations with that outward fortitude and calm which is sustained by an inward satisfaction. Whether the reader will feel the same about it, if this attracts his attention for long enough to delay him, is quite another matter. Anyway, it happened in June, 1935, at Gibraltar.

By some chance what appeared to be undue movement in a bottleful of mosquito larvae attracted my attention for more than a passing glance. Culicine larvae and pupae of all ages were in the bottle, some of the latter, I knew, about ripe for hatching; so I looked a little closer in case I might just see that rather attractive phenomenon—the birth of an adult mosquito. It rapidly became clear, however, that the cause of the excitement was a large larva of the fourth instar which appeared to be definitely attacking its smaller companions. How long it had been at this I do not know, but within a couple of minutes of my commencing to watch, it had seized a small larva by the back of the neck—that is, more accurately, by the front of the thorax on the right side immediately behind the head. By comparison with other larvae of the same size and appearance in this bottle I should say that the victim was a second instar of Culex pipiens. The assailant, similarly, was a Theobaldia longiareolata. This finally successful attack was made in mid-water at the end of what appeared to be a definite though short, chase of a selected individual.

Having secured its victim the cannibal then resorted to the surface where, banging by its syphon, it proceeded calmly and quietly to chew through the other's thorax. The mild struggles of the victim appeared to