

## « Charlatans et pseudo-parasites »

### Les « Vers des Yeux »

by G. S. SWAMINATH

I was very interested to read two notes of Prof. R. BLANCHARD under the above heading in the *Bulletin de la Société de pathologie exotique*, vol. XI, pp. 579-586 and 724-725, as a very similar incident has occurred in my case also. In my observation it was a case of dentistry. It was in the beginning of 1917, in Calcutta that I came across a group of illiterate and superstitious men in a narrow street, surrounding a doctor. The « doctor » was a chinese woman, who was getting money out of the some of the people assembled there by making them believe that she could cure them of their toothaches. She used to explain to them —

(1) La description de cette nymphe ne correspond à aucune de celles données par NUTTALL. On sait qu'un certain nombre de nymphes d'*Hæmaphysalis* sont encore inconnues.

as I came to know later from one of the victims — that the pain was caused by worms (maggots) which remain at the root of the tooth which is paining and which could never come out unless forced by charms and incantations.

The process by which the maggots were extracted was as follows: — The patient was made to stand in the sun with his mouth open and the head turned, so that the face was turned upwards. Then the « doctor » by means of two iron needles, one in each hand began to tap the troublesome tooth gently uttering at the same time some strange words. After ten minutes or more, the time depending on the person and the amount he paid, she used to take one of her palms just down below the paining tooth and by continuing to tap the tooth with the other hand a maggot was made to appear on the palm.

The trick, so far as I have been able to follow, appears to be a simple one of sleight of the hand. The woman has some maggots hidden in her sleeves and gradually when the attention of the onlookers is diverted towards the tapping, she, by bringing her hand parallel to the body and shaking the sleeve she drops the maggots to one of her palms. The dropping of these larvae to the other hand is quite simple, as when the tapping is being done, she lets fall one of them quickly.

With great difficulty, I was able to get two of the « worms » thus extracted and on examining them they proved to be *Cecidomyiid* larvae.

*Pasteur Institute, Shillong, India.*