SNAKE BITE BY THE MALAYAN CORAL SNAKE *MATICORA INTESTINALIS*

Lieutenant-Colonel P. D. MEERS, M.D., M.C.Path., Dip. Bact., R.A.M.C.

*Central Pathology Laboratory, FARELF**

The family of snakes known as the *Elapidae* are terrestrial, front-fanged and venomous, producing a neurotoxin. In Malaya and Singapore four genera and nine species of this family have been reported. These are three species of krait (*Bungarus*), two species of cobra (*Naja*), and four species of two genera of coral snake (*Callophis* and *Maticora*). Kraits and cobras are well known for their ability to cause death in persons envenomed. However, members of both genera of coral snake have small or very small mouths, so that extremely few instances of these snakes having bitten man are on record. Of the two genera, the species belonging to the genus *Maticora* have much the bigger venom glands, and the larger species, *Maticora bivirgata* is known to have killed a child, who died two hours after being bitten on the web of the thumb (Tweedie, 1961). The only authentic record of a bite by the other member of the genus, *Maticora intestinalis*, the banded Malayan coral snake, was on the web of a finger and not fatal (Tweedie, 1961).

The bite

Major H, who takes an interest in snakes, was brought a small colourful snake by a friend, who had caught it in Singapore. While examining it, it fell from his hands onto the ground, where it was seized by his dog. Major H retrieved the snake, and while handling it subsequently, it opened its mouth to a gape of nearly 180°, and pressed its upper jaw onto his finger. By wriggling backwards, it managed to embed one of its two fangs into the skin of his left middle finger just above the base of the nail bed. After disengaging the snake, he noticed a small collection of yellow fluid at the site of the puncture, which he wiped off. Almost immediately, the finger became very painful and began to swell. The pain radiated up the inside of the elbow and into the neck during the next one to two hours, when considerable relief was obtained by immersing the finger in iced water. The pain subsided over the next ten to twelve hours, and together with the swelling had disappeared by the next day, when he was left with mild paraesthesia in the fingers on either side of the one bitten, which bore a small red puncture mark at the site of the bite. There were no constitutional symptoms.

The snake

Length 22 cm, tail round, ventral scales distinct. Thirteen rows of dorsal scales at mid-body, the head having three shields between the eyes. Anal scale entire, vertebral row of scales not enlarged. The third upper labial touches both the eye and the posterior nasal. The under surface of the tail is bright red, barred with black, the remainder of the ventral surface being barred black and white. Above, the colour is generally brown with a vertebral row of red between rows of black scales. There is a narrow white stripe edged

*Now: Pathology Laboratory, The Queen Alexandra Military Hospital, Millbank.

with black low on either side. The snake corresponds to *Maticora intestinalis* according to the key given by Tweedie (1961).

Summary

A case of a bite by the banded Malayan coral snake *Maticora intestinalis* which resulted in an adult being mildly envenomed is described.

REFERENCE

TWEEDIE, M. W. F. (1961) "*The Snakes of Malaya*". 2nd Ed. Government Printer, Singapore.

Manson Medal

The Council of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene has awarded the Manson Medal for 1968 to Brigadier Sir John S. K. Boyd, O.B.E., M.D., F.R.C.P., F.R.S., LL.D., D.P.H., D.T.M.&H., R.A.M.C. (Retd.). The announcement states:—

"Sir John is doubly qualified for the award as he has attained eminence both in tropical medicine and in hygiene. His research has included the rickettsial diseases in India, virus hepatitis, and bacterial dysentery: his work on virus parasitism of bacteria is classic and has opened up large fields both practical and speculative. His name is associated with a new group of bacteria, and he was active in the field trials of sulphaguanidine."

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