Blindness in Animals in 1641

The 33rd volume of the publications of the Surtees Society, dated 1857, is entitled "Rural Economy in Yorkshire in 1641; being the farming and account books of Henry Best, of Elmswell, in the East Riding of the County of York." On page 79 occurs the following note on blindness in animals which may prove of interest to our readers.

"It is usuall with sheepe, and especially with hogges and lambes, to fall blinde by reason of a humour that falleth out of the head into the eye, wharby groweth (as it weare) a scumme over the stive of the eye; many shepheards will undertake to cure this by bleeding them in the wykes of the eye with a penne-knife, but the onely way is to take groud-ivy-leaves, and to chewe them in the mouth, and take out the leafe with the finger after yow have sucked the juice from it, this juice yow are to spurte into the eye morninge and eveninge, or if yow will thrice a day; and duringe the time of the blindnesse, if it bee in summer time, yow are to putte into some little place wheare it can neyther hang itselwe in briars nor runne into any water; if it bee in winter time, yow are (to putte) to some hey-mowe, and in a fortnight or three weeks it will eate of the scumme and the sheepe will see again."

None of the dictionaries at our disposal shed any light on the meaning of the words stive and wykes, but a possible cause of the blindness may be suggested in an attack of traumatic interstitial keratitis; we have seen an excellent example of this years ago, in a retriever, at the end of the shooting season, and by the following September the corneae had recovered their transparency and the vascularisation, to superficial examination, had disappeared. The method of treatment here outlined may possibly have some bearing on the idea among a certain section of the community that fasting spittle is a good eye wash.

ABSTRACTS

GENERAL MEDICINE


(1) Albrich makes the following postulates with regard to the influence of general infection upon diseases of the eye.