dead and the hair began to grow again before the month was over. The cases of tinea circinata under this treatment disappear like magic under one application. Of course, in many cases of tinea tonsurans more than one application may be found necessary but never more than three. The efficacy of formic aldehyde in the treatment of ringworm is, no doubt, in great part due to the pungency of the vapour which penetrates down into the hair follicles and destroys the cocci. I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Tetbury, Glos., July 14th, 1906.

DESBOROUGH BRODIE.

A FAMILY TENDENCY TOWARDS FRACTURE OF THE PATELLA.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS.—The following series of facts is, I think, of some general interest and therefore worth recording.

In the Westminster Hospital, under Mr. C. Stonham, senior surgeon, there is at the present time a patient, aged 38 years, with a transverse fracture of his right patella. Nine years ago the same man fractured the left patella. His father when 20 years of age fractured his left patella; one brother when 32 years old fractured his right patella; and another brother at the age of 35 years also broke his right patella. All accidents were the result of indirect violence, and all are healthy men and carry on different trades. I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

July 14th, 1906.

J. H. HEBB,
House Surgeon.

MUMPS AS AN AILMENT OF ADULTS IN THE ARMY.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS.—I should like to add a word or two in support of the efforts made by recent writers to secure more serious consideration for the disease known as mumps, for the malady is still regarded by the majority of people as of a trivial character.

A small outbreak occurred among some troops under my medical care. There were only 11 cases but no less than five of these had complications of a severe nature. Four men had orchitis which, in at least one case, will probably lead to atrophy of the testicle or testicles (one man having had double orchitis). In three instances it was orchitis which led to the diagnosis. One man had double iritis on the twelfth day after onset of the disease. In three cases the temperature was 104°F . for more than one day—one of these men had intense headache and delirium, indicating cerebral disorder. The remaining complication or rather sequel took the form of great weakness of the lower limbs, which symptom became marked in one man after he had returned to duty. The patients were all isolated—the total loss of working days was therefore considerable. The cases are of recent date and may yet be followed by serious after-effects, such as, for instance, deafness.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

F. SMITH,
Major, Royal Army Medical Corps.

NOTES OF TWO OUTBREAKS OF DIPHTHERIA SUCCESSFULLY STAMPED OUT BY THE FREE USE OF PROPHYLACTIC INJECTIONS OF DIPHTHERIA ANTITOXIN.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS.—The free use of prophylactic injections of diphtheria antitoxin has proved so successful in stamping out outbreaks of diphtheria in two very susceptible communities under my care that the instances seem worthy of record.

1. In a girls' school containing 16 boarders and six day scholars a boarder fell ill on March 13th, 1906, with diphtheria. The following measures were at once taken: (1) the school was broken up; (2) all the day scholars received a prophylactic injection; (3) all the boarders were sent to their homes with a strongly worded appeal that they should receive an injection (in 13 instances this advice was taken;

in two cases isolation and medical supervision were substituted); and (4) the mistresses and inmates of the school-house were injected. These measures were completely successful and no second case occurred.

2. In a second and contiguous girls' school containing 60 to 70 day scholars and six boarders, a day scholar fell ill with diphtheria on March 23rd, 1906. As this scholar had attended school for some days no further steps were taken than the injecting of the child's household and a notification to the head mistress to at once report any case of illness. On March 29th, however, a second day scholar fell ill with the disease. The school being too numerous to inject in every case I judged it sufficient (1) to inject all the class mates of the two cases; (2) all the boarders; (3) a few other scholars who, being friendly with one or other of the two cases, were known to be contacts; (4) the school was broken up; and (5) all parents were requested to notify at once any case of illness. No further case occurred.

The following general remarks suggest themselves to me. The prophylactic injection used in each case was 1000 units. Each of the three cases was of a severe type and in each case Klebs-Löffler bacilli were proved to be present. None of the children developed any serum disease. Two of the adults developed transient urticaria and one muscular pains in addition lasting a few days. No connexion could be traced between the outbreaks in the two schools; this connexion, however, must have occurred, as there have been no other cases of this disease in the neighbourhood for a considerable time and the interval of ten days between the cases is about the time which experience has taught me a contact is usually found to be suffering from the disease. When one thinks of the ease with which these two outbreaks were stamped out without loss of life and without any serious trouble or risk one cannot be too thankful that we have at our command so potent a preventive as the serum. Without serum the outbreaks would probably have spread widely, as the two schools are attended by children of all ages from five to 16 in constant association with each other, both in and out of school.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

WILLIAM BLIGH, M.D., B.S. Lond.

Caterham Valley, July 14th, 1906.

INACCURATE TEXT-BOOKS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS.—The position of a medical man working a general practice single-handed and at the same time attempting to read for the D.P.H. is not an enviable one, for he is absolutely dependent for his knowledge upon his reading altogether unaided by the systematic teaching of his hospital days. How important then is it to be able to rely upon a good, sound, up-to-date text-book as a foundation for one's reading. With this object I obtained a certain well-known text-book, which has been before the public 16 years, and of which a revised edition appeared less than a year ago. From this I have already learnt the following astonishing facts. That air contains 5 per cent of argon; that proof spirit contains only 42.7 per cent. absolute alcohol by volume; that rectified spirit contains 16 per cent. of water; that the formula for milk-sugar or lactose is $\text{C}_{12}\text{H}_{24}\text{O}_{12}$, and that of stearin $\text{C}_{21}\text{H}_{40}\text{O}_6$; that the proper way to join a drain to a sewer is to connect the drain with the lower half diameter of the sewer; that potassium bichromate—i.e., the red chromate—is the usual test for lead; that in making a quantitative examination for calcium in water the amount should be calculated from the weight of the calcium oxide formed by ignition; that Gaertner's bacillus ferments lactose and sometimes dextrose (in this statement I think the authors have Muir and Ritchie on their side but no one else); that—but what need to continue? Surely, Sirs, it would go hard with one if he made such statements before the examiners.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

July 14th, 1906.

BETA.

* * Two examples which "Beta" gives are surely not inaccuracies. It is the fact, for instance, that rectified spirit contains 16 per cent. of water and, again, $\text{C}_{12}\text{H}_{24}\text{O}_{12}$ is the correct though empirical formula for milk-sugar. It is, of course, better represented as $\text{C}_{12}\text{H}_{22}\text{O}_{11}\text{H}_2\text{O}$.—ED. L.