

foods. Sometimes she is made to vomit and then, as mentioned by Professor Hellier, her own pigtail may be used for the purpose, being thrust down the throat. Should this be of no avail the cord is pulled upon or a special midwife is summoned who, without any previous cleansing, thrusts her hand into the uterus and brings out parts of the placenta. The umbilical cord is left long. It is not cut with a knife or scissors but severed with a broken piece of crockery or bitten through with the teeth. A large number of children die from infection at the umbilicus. The child is usually washed on the third day after birth. When the next bath is given is very indefinite. The baby is fed with rice and cakes on the first day of its existence. I have noticed that the boat women sometimes chew the rice themselves before giving it to the infant. No doubt this assists the child's digestion by supplying some of the starch-converting ferment which is lacking in the infantile economy, but as a rule the rice and cakes are given in the same way as they would be given to an adult. It is not to be wondered at that in these circumstances the mortality among new-born children from digestive complaints is very great.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,  
PHILIP REES, B.A., B.Sc., M.B. Lond.,  
Surgeon to the Customs, Wuchow.  
Wesleyan Hospital, Wuchow, China, April, 1908.

### TRICHOPHYTON AND MICE.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—It may be of interest to your readers if I mention a coincidence that happened to me in connexion with the above subject. Some three years ago I mounted a section of a mouse's testicle and on examining it found it contained a most perfect specimen of pure culture trichophyton. This specimen was put amongst my collection. Some few weeks ago a medical man sent me two tubes of pure ringworm from London to mount four specimens of trichophyton, four of microsporon; in all I mounted about 20. But there was one beautiful specimen and this I compared with the specimen mounted from the mouse; I find the two specimens are exact.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,  
Maldon, Essex, June 29th, 1908. CHARLES DIBBEN.

\* \* We understand that in the laboratory at St. George's Hospital there has been an epidemic of trichophyton in the mouse. The condition was at first thought to be favus but culture showed it to be a microsporon. It caused some ulceration, indeed the skull seemed to be destroyed by it in places, and possibly some such similar condition might account for the condition observed by Mr. Dibben in the mouse's testicle.—ED. L.

### THE STRAWBERRY SEASON.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—The interesting annotation which appeared in THE LANCET of June 20th *in re* "the strawberry season," suggested to me in the course of perusal that some of your readers might be glad to know that the semi-popular idea that the strawberry is "good for the gout"—as well as for some other things—is one which has been stamped with the highest botanical authority. The name of the great Swedish physician Linnæus is pretty surely known to most readers of the present generation only as that of the great student of natural history and founder of the modern science of botany, not of the active medical practitioner which he actually was during the greater part of the period of his most original researches. In his native land of Sweden, as might be expected from a soil and people of strangely romantic history, inspiring scenery, and somewhat uncanny meteorology, the folk-lore medicine of the people, the miracle methods of the clerics, the faith-cure of the quack pretender, and the witchcraft treatment of the wrinkled sorceress, for many centuries included the bulk of the practice of the healing art as carried out in that country. Herbal cures, ranging in value from that of the "All heal"-ing mistletoe downwards, were largely employed by the people of all the Scandinavian territories. One of the medicinal products of the vegetable kingdom which have been largely used by the Swedish people is the wood strawberry, and the belief in the

therapeutic efficacy of this fruit has been by no means confined to the peasantry and the unlearned vulgar. Linnæus himself has placed on record the fact that by eating of this fruit he was able to bring a violent attack of gout to a precipitate conclusion, and for the remainder of his life he consumed a maximum quantity of fresh strawberries. There was thus a very good precedent behind the attempted boom of the "strawberry cure of gout" which was made in the latter years of the past century, although the "discoverers" of the "cure" did not, so far as I can remember, quote that authority! And it is of interest to add in this association a passing reference to a still more remarkable specimen of folk-lore prescience of recent—"modern"—discovery in the domain of scientific therapeutics: the Swedish appreciation of the *wintergreen*, which has been time out of mind recognised by the peasantry of that country as a "miraculous" cure for rheumatism, and is on that account popularly known by the highly expressive epithet of *Stat up och gatt* (Stand up and walk).

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,  
Dublin, June 23rd, 1908. JOHN KNOTT.

### CHILDREN'S COUNTRY HOLIDAYS FUND.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—The delightful weather of the early summer brings to the minds of your readers happy memories of pleasant holidays spent abroad or at the seaside or in the country and is turning their minds to the days when they will again leave London. May we remind them of the needs of the poor children of London, most of whom have no such happy memories confined as they are to the streets.

The Children's Country Holidays Fund, which is now entering on its twenty-fifth year of work, exists to send the poor children of London into the country for a fortnight's holiday with cottage hosts. All children between the ages of five and 14 attending the elementary schools are eligible without distinction of creed; and in all cases where they can, the parents contribute towards the cost. Last year 41,970 enjoyed a fortnight in the country. May we ask your readers to help us to send 50,000 this year? Every guinea subscribed will provide a fortnight's holiday for two children. All donations, large or small, will be gratefully acknowledged by the Hon. Treasurer, the Earl of Arran, 18, Buckingham-street, Strand, W.C.

We are, Sir, yours obediently,  
ALFRED LYTTELTON } Trustees of the Children's  
W. F. D. SMITH } Country Holidays Fund.  
Buckingham-street, Strand, W.C., June 23rd, 1908.

### DIRECT EXCRETORY IRRITATION

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—On p. 1776 of your issue of June 20th you have a review of Dr. Norman Walker's new edition of "Introduction to Dermatology." The writer therein remarks: "We agree with the author that most of the substances causing urticaria certainly act as toxins on the skin, probably as they are being excreted, and that they do not cause the disease merely by reflex irritation, as is still often taught," and so on. This passage confirms my theory of the origin of many symptomatic skin rashes by direct excretory irritation. It was first published at the Birmingham meeting of the British Medical Association some 18 years ago. Later, it was somewhat more elaborated in a little volume "Excretory Irritation," published in 1897. The theory has passed through the early stages of derision and neglect and is now virtually adopted by implication in the writings of various dermatologists. Dr. Norman Walker, however, is the only dermatologist who has so far formally and publicly acknowledged my position in the matter—and he has done so in several past editions of his book. To the latter fact I venture to call the attention of your reviewer. Personally I have always been content to accept the position that if my theory attains the established dignity of a general law the question of authorship does not much matter. At the same time I am sure THE LANCET would wish its readers to be accurately informed upon a point of the kind.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,  
Bryanston-street, W., June 29th, 1908. DAVID WALSH.