

It is well known that at seven months the human foetus is entirely covered with hair. These hairs traverse the skin obliquely, and continue to increase slowly until they attain from a quarter to half an inch in length, when they are replaced by the small persistent hairs. The infant comes into the world covered with embryonal hair. The dog-men are covered with a woolly or silky hair, presenting embryonal characters. Both Ecker and his reviewer, Dr. Vars, agree that general hypertrichosis is simply an arrest of development; that is to say, the down, instead of being replaced by hair, persists and continues to develop.

I had not heard of the transfer of the Birman family to England until I read the newspaper report recently. There is no reason to discredit the account, proper allowance being made for enthusiastic hyperbole.

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CONTAGIOUS DISEASES.

In a paper recently read before the Philadelphia county medical society, Dr. Arthur V. Meigs takes the ground that scarlet-fever is very much less contagious than is commonly supposed; much less, in fact, than measles and whooping-cough; and in proof of his opinion, he cites the fact, that, while it is the rule for measles and whooping-cough to affect all the children in a household, scarlet-fever usually limits its attack to one or two, even though there may be others who have never had the disease, and are therefore presumably susceptible. There is one point which the author of the paper does not, it seems to us, lay sufficient stress upon; and that is, that, while parents dread scarlet-fever, they have but little fear of measles or whooping-cough, and, being influenced by that popular impression that all children must at some time of their lives have these latter diseases, they take no pains to isolate the sick from the well, as they do if the disease be scarlet-fever. The writer could give repeated instances where the most rigid isolation was practised in cases of measles, in which but one member of a family was attacked, though there were a number of others who were presumably susceptible. Until, therefore, the same scrupulous care is taken to separate the affected child from the unaffected in measles as is done in scarlet-fever, we shall hesitate to accept the conclusion that scarlet-fever is much less contagious than measles. This will probably never be done until parents are taught that measles is not a trivial disease, but is, in fact, many times a most serious one. In England the number of deaths in five years from measles was 42,139; in Brooklyn in ten years 1,012 children

died from this cause; and in New York during the week ending Dec. 4, 42 deaths from it are recorded. This takes no account of the countless number that are left with impaired constitutions and lung diseases, and who, within a very short time after this attack of measles, appear in the mortality statistics as victims to bronchitis or pneumonia. And the same may be said of whooping-cough, — a disease which, in the period 1875-79, caused in England alone 66,730 deaths.

SYNECHDOCHICAL MAGIC.

ALL students of anthropology are familiar with the belief among lower peoples that what is done to a part of a person or to his property is done to him. These people all dread to have the smallest part of their bodies or their intimate possessions go from them. It has always seemed to me to need further explanation, a more simple and commonplace solution.

This is given in Mr. A. W. Howitt's paper in the August number of the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*. I quote his language:—

“Connected with the throwing of magical substances in an invisible form is the belief that they can be caused to enter the body of a victim by burying them in his footsteps, or even in the mark made in the ground by his reclining body. Sharp fragments of quartz, glass, bone, charcoal, are thus used, and rheumatic affections are frequently attributed to them.

“Another form of this belief is seen in the practice of putting the jagged cone of the *Casuarina quadrivalvis* into a man's fire, so that the smoke may blow into his eyes and cause him to become blind. The idea seems to be that the *eidolon* of the cone will produce acute ophthalmia.

“A piece of hair, some of his faeces, a bone picked by him and dropped, a shred of his opossum rug, will suffice. Even his saliva may be picked up and used for his destruction.”

The explanation of all this, which I have long sought, is given in the very words of one of Mr. Howitt's informers, who said, “You see, when a blackfellow doctor gets hold of something belonging to a man and roasts it with things, and sings over it, *the fire catches hold of the smell of the man* [italics mine], and that settles the poor fellow.” In other words, the smallest part of a man, or of any thing he has touched, will suffice to give the demon his scent.

Of course, customs survive millenniums after the cause of their origin is forgotten, and it is scarcely probable that those who carefully burn their waste hair and nails do so to avoid giving