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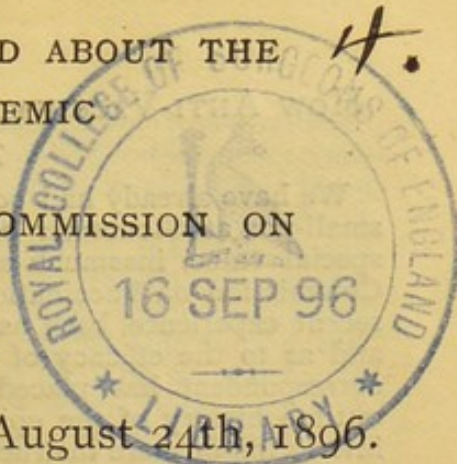
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WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT THE
GLOUCESTER EPIDEMIC
AND THE
REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON
VACCINATION.



From an article in the *Times* of August 24th, 1896.

"Of the general history of the Gloucester epidemic in its relations to vaccination it is not possible here to speak. A great deal of interesting information about it will be found in the Report of the Vaccination Committee of the Gloucester Board of Guardians, which may be obtained on application to the Secretary of the Jenner Society at Gloucester. To those who have any doubts on the value of vaccination as a protection against small-pox its perusal may be strongly recommended, for, if the evidence which it contains does not bring conviction, it is scarcely likely that any other will. That it has at any rate completely convinced the Gloucester Board of Guardians is evident from the fact that they are now prosecuting vaccination defaulters with energy as great as was their previous indifference. But what is even more important still is that the apathy hitherto displayed by a large section of the community in Gloucestershire, who have never lost their faith in Jenner, has been shaken off. They have learned from the misfortune which has befallen the town that they also have a duty to discharge in regard to vaccination, and that it cannot be performed by sitting still and treating with contempt the fallacies and misrepresentations on which the anti-vaccinationists found their attacks. Under the name of the Jenner Society they have established an organization, the object of which is 'to counteract the mischievous efforts so persistently made to discredit the name and work of Edward Jenner, and to bring home again to the mind of the nation, on this the centenary of his great discovery, the immense benefit he conferred by it upon mankind.' This object the Society purposes, amongst other ways, to accomplish 'by collecting, diffusing, and popularizing knowledge in regard to the history of small-pox before vaccination and to the evidence which has been accumulated during the last hundred years of the value of vaccination as a preventive of that disease, so much of which is embedded in publications which are not available for popular use.' The Society also hopes to be able to do useful work in focussing public opinion on matters which, now that the Vaccination Commission has presented its report, must come under the consideration of Parliament. As the Society has the Earl of Ducie, the Lord Lieutenant of the County, for its President, and includes on its Council all the leading men of Gloucestershire, it may be assumed that it will not speak without some weight."

HOW ANTI-VACCINATORS GOT A FOOTING IN GLOUCESTER.

Times, Aug. 24th, 1896.

We have already had occasion to point out that the recent outbreak of small-pox at Gloucester occurred at a period when it was likely to be of special value, inasmuch as it would enable the members of the Royal Commission on Vaccination to speak with authority, and by the light of recent experience, both as to the undiminished virulence of the disease, and as to the efficacy of vaccination in controlling it. A well-informed correspondent has placed us in a position to publish this morning an outline history of the epidemic, and it would be difficult to find more interesting or more instructive reading.

The letter of our correspondent deals very instructively with the manner in which the resistance to vaccination in Gloucester had been organized and rendered general. It was commenced, he tells us, by the establishment of a local anti-vaccination society in the city, the promoters of which, without openly making vaccination a political question, succeeded in identifying it in an irregular way with the Liberal party. The possibility of such an achievement constitutes part of the price which Englishmen are called upon to pay for political freedom and representative government. It is the interest of politicians to assume or to declare that electors understand the questions submitted to them, although it is often impossible that they should do anything of the kind. One of the characteristic tendencies of modern electioneering is to exalt and glorify ignorance, and to induce ignorant people to believe that their crude notions are of sufficient value to be taken seriously into account. In dealing with purely political questions of the minor order this result may be of comparatively small importance, at least as regards domestic legislation; because even the educated class of politicians have been as often wrong as right in their predictions, and it has probably mattered little, with regard to most of their points of difference, whether the view of one or of the other party, or some compromise between them, has ultimately found acceptance. But, when we come to questions of a different kind, the mischief which may be done is twofold. In the first place, in the words of FARADAY, people are encouraged to draw conclusions when they have little or no power of judgment in the cases, and not only to draw conclusions, but to agitate and cavil if these conclusions are rejected by those who understand what they are talking about. In the next place, politicians are apt to lose sight of the simple fact that some things do not lend themselves to compromise, and that to this order all matters relating to physical science belong. A door must be open or shut. A natural law must be obeyed or broken, and all who break it must be prepared to accept the consequences. It does not afford opportunities for playing fast and loose. If vaccination and re-vaccination, properly performed, affords security against small-pox, then vaccination and re-vaccination ought to be enforced. If vaccination does not afford security against small-pox, then it ought to be discontinued. There is no rational middle course. The common contention of the politician that "black is not black, nor white so very white," has no legitimate place in the discussion. The decision of the question, whether or not the security is afforded, cannot with safety be left to the ignorance to which politicians and agitators alike too often find it convenient to appeal.

"CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTIONS."

Daily Telegraph, 22nd August, 1896.

The recent epidemic at Gloucester has had the merit or dismerit of raising questions of vital interest to the safety and welfare of the community at large. Everyone knows that Gloucester has been for many months past a tainted city, a place with which no one would willingly have communication, because of the extraordinary virulence of an attack of small-pox, due,

as the majority of us would say, to preventible causes, a self-inflicted plague, the reasons for which are to be found not in the mysterious counsels of Providence and Destiny, but in the arrogant folly of mankind. If there is one thing more certain than another in modern therapeutic science, it is the fact, supported by statistics and testified to by the highest and most trustworthy authorities, that vaccination is a prophylactic against small-pox, and that if we take two communities, one of which adopts and makes use of JENNER's great discovery, while the other rejects and disbelieves it, the mortality will, in visitations of this kind, be far greater in the latter case than in the former. So much, we might have supposed, could be taken for granted, were it not for the existence of certain "conscientious" souls, who, either through sheer ignorance or a mental predisposition to idiosyncrasies, or a disbelief in BUTLER's great maxim that a reasonable probability is the great guide of life, still think that vaccination is the inoculation of a disease, and that its actual perils far outweigh its supposed advantages. The experience of Gloucester is quite enough for most of us. Here is a city, notorious amongst all other localities as a badly vaccinated community, which has reaped the reward for its deplorable obstinacy in giving us a death list startling in the gravity of its records. Of two railway companies running their lines through the city, the one which vaccinated its servants escaped with a few losses, the other was overwhelmed with disaster; and, according to some witnesses, no such sudden conversion of opinion ever took place anywhere—unless, indeed, connected with some form of religious belief—as that which transformed a place remarkable for the fervent folly of its anti-vaccinators into an orthodox, reasonable society, holding by JENNER's doctrines as the sheet-anchor of their faith. But we fear that the report of the Vaccination Commission which has just been published will do much damage to this healthy change in public feeling; and that not a few of those who were—possibly on the principle "The devil was sick, the devil a monk would be"—inclined to confess their past errors will now be encouraged to adopt once more their old misconceptions, and think that after all they were not wrong in their former attitude of self-righteous contumacy.

Amongst those who signed the report there are two and two only who wish to keep the law as it is—Sir GUYER HUNTER and Mr. HUTCHINSON. They have added a memorandum declaring their belief that a parent or a guardian refusing to allow a child to be vaccinated should be, as at present, summoned before a magistrate, but, even in their case, one may observe the first sign of wavering in an expressed dislike to the imposition of a fine. As for the majority, they do not hesitate to show that they respect the scruples of the anti-vaccinators. Two members, Mr. WHITBREAD and Mr. J. A. BRIGHT, who represent the extreme section, openly reject the notion of compulsory vaccination altogether. The majority do not, it is true, go as far as this, but they speak with lamentable complaisance of the rights of conscientious objectors, and try, with no great success, to find a halfway house between such compulsion as the law at present allows and the free volition and unhampered choice of parents. One salient example of this is to be found in their views on re-vaccination. They are quite aware of the importance of a point like this; they know that if a child has been vaccinated in infancy he cannot be considered to be reasonably safe against an epidemic of small-pox unless he undergoes a similar operation at the age of twelve. But for reasons which are not so much scientific as sentimental—and, therefore, proportionately dangerous—they make much of difficulties and obstacles, and would like to leave a large amount of scope to personal initiative and as little as they can to the positive injunction of the law. What they seem to desire is the offer of vaccination in a kind of house-to-house visitation, and full provision for medical treatment if any untoward results should ensue. This is the species of compromise, which is always dear to humanitarianism and scrupulosity, and which thinks a great deal more of the conscience of the individual than the interests of the community. Why "conscience" is introduced into the question is not very easy to see, except that it is the usual excuse for many forms of anti-

social delusion. The man who refuses to perform the plain duty which lies before him as a citizen and a member of the community very often covers his idiosyncrasy under the specious plea of conscience: whereas, if he were to analyse his moods with logical impartiality he would discover that his conscience is only at bottom an exacting selfishness, a pitiable anxiety that his own personality should be respected, even though a world should fall in ruin. The conscience which is not attuned to and informed by the rights and demands of the social state is at once feeble and dangerous, valueless to its possessor, and a positive menace to society at large.

We do not wish to be misunderstood in such a matter. Every man has a right to his opinions and his faith, to his own mode of life, to his own amusements, to his chances of cultivation and progress. But there is one all-important limitation to liberties of this kind. He may not and must not injure the society in which he lives. If his amusements do harm to other people, other people have a right to restrict them; if his manner of living constitutes a public offence, the public has a right to interfere; if he adopts a creed which, for example, sacrifices his children to Moloch, law and the police must be invoked to take action against him. It is an old fallacy that the individual has absolutely indefeasible privileges; it is an old truth that no man liveth to himself or dieth to himself. By being a member of a community, a man's freedom is circumscribed and limited by the interest of the community; he can no longer think only of himself, because his very essence and personality cannot be defined except in terms of his relations to his fellows. When, then, a citizen of Gloucester declares that he will not vaccinate his child "for conscientious reasons," or, for the matter of that, when a member of a Commission says that the scruples of objectors must be considered and given weight to, the real implication is that a man is to be allowed to please himself, even though his actions constitute a menace to the security and lives of the community. What kind of conscience is it which will bring contagion and death on a city rather than abandon its inveterate fads? Of what value is the personal scruple which lays a whole society under a ban in order that its own miserable liberty may be secured? It is one of the best-known characteristics of a weak-kneed sentimentality that it does an incalculable amount of harm from the most plausible motives, and sacrifices a world to its own emotional pangs. If one desires a terrible example of misapplied humanitarianism, let the present condition of our Indian Army serve as witness, decimated as it is—if, indeed, the proportion be not much more than one in ten—because the scruples of certain tender-hearted "consciences" at home were allowed to override the plain dictates of expediency and humanity. The worst consequence of fads, whether they be sentimental or political, is that they not only harm their possessors, but everyone else who has the misfortune to be included in the same community. Gloucester, with its old anti-vaccination craze, has, we will still continue to hope, now repented of its evil ways, but if there is any paltering with conscientious objectors on the part of a Commission, or any fatal weakness on the part of the Legislature, not merely the unfortunate city itself but the whole of England will reap the fruit of such deplorable folly.

JENNER'S CENTENARY TRIUMPH.

North British Daily Mail, Aug. 13th, 1896.

The Gloucester small-pox epidemic is now at an end. The time has come, therefore, for pointing the moral, and very rarely do we get so striking and even dramatic an object lesson. Jenner, the discoverer of vaccination, was a Gloucestershire surgeon. His statue stands in the nave of Gloucester Cathedral, in spite of the efforts of the local anti-vaccinators to have it removed; and it is safe to say, now, that it will continue to stand there. It was in 1798 that he published his inquiry into the causes and effects of cow-pox. While still an apprentice his attention had been drawn to the common tradition that people who had

suffered from cow-pox were safe against small-pox, and he spent thirty years in investigating the subject. The medical profession and others interested have since spent close upon a hundred years more in the same task, with the result that Jenner's conclusions are more firmly established than ever. Yet now, as in Jenner's time, there is a strong body of disbelievers whom no evidence, apparently, will convince, and Gloucester was one of their strongholds. It is a remarkable coincidence that at the period of Jenner's Centenary, and whilst the results of a State inquiry into the subject of vaccination are still pending, one of the most striking demonstrations ever witnessed not only as to the scientific value but as to the popular appreciation of Jenner's discovery should come from the birthplace of vaccination. Gloucester has tried to do without vaccination, and, after a bitter experience, has been glad to return to it again. In 1887 the Board of Guardians resolved by a majority of 12 votes to 10 that no further steps should be taken in vaccination prosecutions until authorised by the Board, and no prosecutions have since been initiated until the present year. This was a triumph for the local Anti-Vaccination Society, which had been established in Gloucester prior to 1887.

In the early part of the present year the epidemic, which had begun in 1895, got out of control and spread alarmingly. The city was full of susceptible children and adults, and the disease flourished accordingly. There was nothing for it but to get the whole population, both adult and infant, vaccinated or re-vaccinated as speedily as possible. This was the one great line of defence on which the authorities and the people fell back. The local authorities exerted themselves strenuously, with the advice and assistance of the Local Government Board. A large proportion of the population were vaccinated, but there still remained a residue who were hostile or indifferent. A few prosecutions had to be resorted to in the end—the Board of Guardians having rescinded their former resolution—in order to overcome the last remaining obstacles of hostility or carelessness. But the conversion of the population to the side of vaccination has been very complete. It can now be claimed that Gloucester, which in 1892 headed the record of badly vaccinated communities in England and Wales, showing a percentage of 86.9 of children born during the year and not accounted for in the vaccination returns, is now, in regard both to its infantile and adult population, probably one of the best vaccinated towns in the Kingdom. When the reports are before the public there will be plenty of statistical and other evidence to prove again, for the thousandth time, the efficacy of the vaccination system when efficiently carried out. No doubt anti-vaccinators will argue about it till they are black in the face. We do not wish to enter into the controversy here. The fact about which there can be no possible dispute is that Gloucester, under the stern and costly teaching of experience, has returned to vaccination. There has seldom been an instance of a conversion so widespread and thorough on the part of any community. It is Jenner's Centenary triumph.

WHAT DO THE COMMISSIONERS REALLY SAY?

Gloucestershire Chronicle, August 22nd, 1896.

The Report of the Royal Commission on Vaccination has at length appeared. After seven years of travail the mountain has brought forth, not exactly "a ridiculous mouse," but a progeny, which in some respects has scarcely more value. The Commission was appointed to answer certain specific questions, which need not be recapitulated in full, but may be briefly summarised in a very few words. It was to inquire into and report as to the truth about vaccination. It was to ascertain what truth there was, if any, as to the alleged dangers of vaccination from arm to arm, and in what way they could be obviated. It was to inquire into the value of vaccination as a protection against small-pox. And if it could arrive at satisfactory conclusions on these points—satisfactory, that is, to the maintenance of vaccination as a public ordinance, necessary to the

public interest and not to be replaced by any other substitute—the Commission was to advise as to the desirability of modifying in any respects the existing law that regulates vaccination. That law was enacted by Parliament after half a century of experience, consideration, and inquiry, and it is scarcely to be expected that the legislature will disturb it unless upon the strength of strong evidence as to its inexpediency or impracticability.

What, then, are the conclusions at which the Commission has arrived as to the merits of vaccination, and what is the advice which it has to give in regard to its enforcement? The Commission finds, in the first place, that vaccination, when properly performed and renewed, is an unquestionable protection against small-pox, for which there is no effective substitute. It finds, further, that the dangers which have been alleged to be incidental to vaccination, though considerable "in gross" are, when regarded in the light of probabilities, so inconsiderable that they may be disregarded. What we presume this means is that, though there may be, say, one hundred cases a year, in which unsatisfactory results of one kind or another may follow vaccination, yet when this number is compared with the enormously larger number of cases in which no harm of any kind results from vaccination, and with the risks which unvaccinated persons run, any probabilities of mishap are so infinitesimally small that they are of no account. When, to this conclusion, we add the opinion at which the Commission has arrived, that these assumed dangers from the use of human lymph can be entirely obviated by the employment of calf lymph, it will be seen that the case in favour of vaccination is so strengthened as to become impregnable.

Under these circumstances it might be supposed that the deliverance of the Commission on the enforcement of vaccination would be correspondingly plain and uncompromising. The law at present requires that every infant shall be vaccinated, unless a special certificate is forthcoming that it is inexpedient in the interests of the child itself that the operation should be performed. And it requires this because experience has shown that an unvaccinated child not only runs great risks itself but that it is a standing source of danger to the community as a whole. The Commissioners having satisfied themselves that such is the case, it might have been naturally expected that they would have advised that the law as it stands should be enforced. They do, indeed, state that they are not prepared to recommend the abolition of compulsory vaccination, but they then proceed, in fact, to whittle compulsion away until there is practically nothing of it left. There is a formula with which the pill of compulsion is occasionally sugared in order to make it seem less obnoxious, which runs; "There is no compulsion, only you must." The Commissioners propose to make compulsion easy by reversing the formula: "There is compulsion, only you needn't." What they propose is, in so many words, that infant vaccination shall still continue to be compulsory in theory, but that in fact it may be evaded. How this ingenious result is to be arrived at they do not precisely indicate. They make several suggestions as to how it *might* be done. They are evidently not at one as how to solve this insoluble problem, and they, therefore, toss it to the legislature to puzzle out for themselves in what way the trick is to be performed.

This is really no exaggeration of the actual meaning of the conclusions which the Commissioners present for the acceptance of Parliament after their seven years' incubation of the matter on which they were appointed to report. Reduced to its simplest form it comes to this—"We are convinced, or at any rate the great majority of us are, that vaccination is an effective protection against small-pox; that it involves no risk worth consideration; and that it ought to be generally adopted; but, because some few parents assert that they have conscientious objections to their children being vaccinated, we propose that, by some arrangement, which we leave to other people to devise, any one who objects to vaccination shall be allowed to evade the law." Was there ever such a feeble attempt to patch up an appearance of unanimity exhibited before by a body of

such incoherent composition as this Commission? That it is a compromise is evident on the face of it. The majority are convinced that it is in the interest both of the child and of the community that the child should be vaccinated. But they are frightened by the spectre of the "conscientious objections" of the parents. One is naturally led to ask how far this principle is to be carried? If the "conscientious" scruples of everyone who objects to obey the law are to be respected where are we going to end? A parent may have a conscientious right to object to have his child vaccinated. But the community, of which he is a member, are rightly entitled to hold a conscientious objection to running the risk of being infected with small-pox by his unvaccinated child. If those who conscientiously object to vaccination formed any considerable portion of the community at large, the enforcement of compulsion would, of course, be practically impossible. But this is just the point which the Commissioners appear to have missed. There is every reason to believe that this section of the community is an extremely small one, and that the large majority of those who have, in Gloucester as well as in other places, allowed their children to remain unvaccinated, have done so not because they had conscientious objections against vaccination, but because they had no strong views on the matter of any kind, and simply followed the example of others who they saw were allowed to defy the law with impunity.

What will be the result of the Report remains to be seen. The law remains, of course, as it was until it is altered or abolished by Parliament. We can hardly think that public opinion, fortified as it will be by the recent experience of Gloucester, will sanction any alteration of the law which will practically lead to the same state of things as that from which Gloucester has, at so terrible a cost, at length extricated herself.

"SANITATION," AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR VACCINATION.

Manchester Weekly Times, Aug. 28th, 1896.

Of course there is a minority report from the Royal Commission on Vaccination. It would have been singular if there had not been. Commissions are very rarely unanimous in their findings, and on such a topic as vaccination unanimity of view was scarcely to be expected. The dissentients are two in number—Dr. Collins and Mr. Picton. Dr. Collins is a physician of some distinction. Mr. Picton, it will be remembered, was for some time Member for Leicester, and he has always been in the forefront in the crusade against vaccination. Seven years' study of the subject has confirmed them in their objection to Jenner's treatment as the chief means of combatting small-pox. They do not believe in vaccination, but they do believe in improved sanitary organization, prompt notification and isolation of cases, effective measures of disinfection and cleanliness, and healthy conditions of living generally. Given these things, small-pox, they say, will be brought under control, and ultimately will disappear. But having failed to convince their colleagues on the Commission that sanitation, in its widest sense, is an all-sufficient weapon against a loathsome enemy, it is not likely that their statement will attain that end with the general public. No doubt in the past too little attention has been paid to preventive and precautionary measures other than vaccination. The firm believer in the Jenner system would admit that. It has long been recognised that vaccination is not an infallible safeguard. But the relinquishment of vaccination, and the acceptance of sanitation as a substitute for it is a very different matter. Even if we could accept the sanitation these gentlemen have in view as a safe alternative, it is obvious that it cannot be secured all at once. It will be many years before we have a state of things in England such as they foreshadow, when there will be, besides perfect cleanliness, no over-crowding on areas, or within houses or rooms, and when all dwellings will be so constructed as to admit

of thorough ventilation. The minority do not, of course, dissent from the proposed abolition of repeated penalties and other reforms suggested by the majority, so that on these points the Commissioners are unanimous.

NATURE'S SCHOOL AT GLOUCESTER.

The Spectator, August 29th, 1896.

In the *Times* there was a lengthy summary of the statement put in by Mr. J. A. Picton and Dr. W. J. Collins of their reasons for dissenting from the conclusions of their eleven colleagues on the Vaccination Commission, on whose report we commented on the same day. Prominent in this manifesto of the two dissentient Commissioners are references to the strength and wide diffusion of local opposition to vaccination, and it is emphatically asserted that the origin of that opposition, notably at Leicester, was the growth of disbelief in the operation as a prophylactic against small-pox. Experience of the outbreak of 1893-94, we are assured, has not changed Leicester opinion on the subject. On the contrary, it is alleged there that the cessation of vaccination, together with the adoption of sanitary and isolation measures, has been much more effective in saving life than was the enforcement of the vaccination law at the time of the epidemic of 1873, when the town was held to be well vaccinated. Similar views, it is said, prevail in many other places. The replies to a circular issued by the Vaccination Commissioners in 1891 to all Boards of Guardians in England and Wales showed that in about fifty unions the enforcement of the vaccination laws had been altogether abandoned, and in about thirty more it was in abeyance pending the Report of the Commission; and there is hitherto no sign whatever, in view of the evidence published by the Commissioners from time to time, of any change in the local opinion of the unions in question, "except in the rare cases where epidemics of small-pox have occasioned panic." "The rare cases where epidemics of small-pox have occasioned panic!" It is a precious phrase, for which we thank the two dissentient Commissioners, or the summary writer who has thus conveyed their mental attitude. It stands for a world of resolute, though doubtless unconscious, refusal to learn Nature's lessons. She has held her school of late years in many towns, Leicester included, where the value of Jenner's discovery had been derided, and the eleven sagacious and eminently representative signatories to the report of the Vaccination Commission, as our readers are already aware, are agreed, as the result of very careful study, that she has emphatically condemned the mockers. Their detailed analysis of these courses of instruction is not even yet before us. But in last Tuesday's *Times* there was a clear and most impressive account, from an obviously well-informed correspondent, of the case of Gloucester, where, during the first six months of 1896, Nature took in hand a community which had condemned her faithful servant and interpreter, even within a few miles of the scene of his beneficent labours, and reduced it to penitent and practical recognition of his work. It is an intensely and painfully interesting story throughout. Gloucester has suffered terribly for its disregard of Nature's lessons. Out of its population of a little over 40,000, 2,036 persons were attacked by small-pox, and 443 of that number, or more than one-fifth, perished. But, as we have seen, a return to obedience was at once rewarded. We may fairly ask that Parliament, in any action it may take on the Report of the Royal Commission, shall be very careful to secure that the indulgence which the Commissioners would give to the scruples of conscientiously objecting parents shall not lend itself to the development of situations such as that from which Gloucester has just emerged. On the other hand, we gladly support the recommendation of the Commission in regard to steps for making vaccination as easily obtainable and as free from risk as possible. The State should do all it can to facilitate the acceptance of Nature's teachings by ignorant citizens, and the more enlightened members of the community should actively co-operate, as, happily, they seem now to be doing in Gloucestershire, to counteract mischievous misrepresentations and to set forth the true value of one of the greatest of medical discoveries.