

Should the Views of the Medical Profession upon Vaccination be accepted without question ?

Not a few people consider that vaccination is essentially a medical question and that it is presumptuous for lay persons to question the judgment of the profession in regard to it. It is proposed to set out briefly a few reasons for doubting the wisdom of this attitude :—

(1) Vaccination is not the only practice which has been endorsed by the medical profession and afterwards abandoned. It is the second "infallible preventive" of smallpox which the medical profession has "unanimously" advocated. The first, smallpox inoculation, is now not only abandoned, but rendered penal, by the very Act of Parliament which enforces the second. Bleeding was once universally believed in. The history of medicine is strewn with the wrecks of such theories. This simple historical fact at least proves that the medical profession is a highly fallible body, and should not be allowed to be counsel, judge and jury in its own cause.

(2) There is, admittedly, no scientific basis for vaccination. Medical experts are still trying to find this. For 150 years the practice has been supported by the State on a flimsy foundation built up on mere assumption and hypothetical conjecture. A short study of the subject reveals the fact that amongst the advocates of vaccination themselves the most extraordinary confusion of opinion reigns. Jenner himself simply repeated a superstitious belief held by credulous people in the West of England, and his own views have actually been thrown overboard by his professional followers.

(3) In their student days doctors are taught to regard vaccination as a closed question not open to serious argument. Their professional guides and teachers definitely commit them to a belief in the practice and merely teach them how to perform it. A medical man, Dr. W. R. Hadwen, who through independent study became an opponent of vaccination, observed when speaking of his college days : "Students were treated to a tissue of stereotyped assertions concerning the wonderful protective virtues of vaccination, which my own experience had convinced me to be incorrect. As to the practical part, I visited a public vaccination station three times to learn how to scratch a baby's arm with a lancet, and at the end of this 'course' I received the usual certificate to the effect that I had attended a Course of Instruction upon the Science and Practice of Vaccination, that the instructor had examined me with regard to it, and that I was competent to hold an appointment in that branch of the profession. I then understood for the first time the dogmatism of medical men upon the subject—the dogmatism of ignorance." When medical students have passed their examinations it is virtually too late for them to change their views. The easier course is to fall into line and keep step with the serried ranks of the orthodox.

(4) Doctors are naturally conservative and defer to the leaders of their profession. Having little personal acquaintance (as far as the majority are concerned) with the results of vaccination and few of them ever having seen a case of smallpox, they accept the assurances of the more prominent among them that vaccination is perfectly harmless and a protection against smallpox.

(5) Vaccination was made compulsory on the representations of leading doctors, and on **false** representations, for the profession asserted with one voice that a primary vaccination in **infancy** was a certain protection for **life**. It was on the strength of this that compulsory vaccination was instituted, and the law of England still rests on it. The compulsory law of this country, admitted by Mr. Walter Long in 1902 to be a farce, as it enforced only the primary vaccination of infants, has been, and still is, strenuously defended by the medical section of the Department administering it. Medical men have been responsible for the pressure put on the public to have their children vaccinated. In the circumstances, it is only natural that the profession will not admit that it has been deceived. Corporate bodies, even more than individuals, are unwilling to admit that they have been mistaken. Nations seldom or never officially admit that they are wrong, and professions will not either. Dr. Charles Creighton put the whole matter in decisive language when he said: "Vaccination differs, however, from all previous errors of the faculty, in being maintained as the law of the land on the warrant of medical authority. That is the reason why the blow to professional credit can hardly help being severe, and why the efforts to ward it off have been, and will continue to be, so ingenious." Doctors have, in recent years, accentuated their claims to control the health of the people, and an admission that they have been wrong in regard to vaccination would weaken their position in the eyes of the laity.

(6) Not all doctors, are, however, believers in vaccination. A few who have devoted time and thought to the question have come to a conclusion adverse to the operation. Men like the late Dr. Charles Creighton, the late Professor E. M. Crookshank, the late Dr. W. Scott Tebb, the late Dr. Garth Wilkinson, Sir William Collins, the late Dr. Bell Taylor, the late Dr. W. R. Hadwen, Dr. Herbert Snow, Dr. Beddow Bayly, Dr. Fergie Woods, Dr. Bertrand Allinson, Dr. Valentine Knaggs, and others, can be deemed experts on vaccination, as they gave weeks, months, and in some cases years, to its investigation, but the great mass of the doctors have not even read Jenner's "Inquiry." When the few who **are** experts on the subject differ from the many who have made no study of the question, which opinion is to be followed, if the views of medical men are to be accepted?

(7) Doctors who have written or spoken against vaccination have in the past suffered from a professional point of view. One was deprived of the post of Medical Officer of Health which a local Health Authority had given him: one lost all chance of a

Court appointment ; one received no further advancement at his hospital from the time his chief heard him read a paper against vaccination ; others found their careers blocked from the time they published a work against vaccination. One prominent medical anti-vaccinator found himself "sent to Coventry" by his colleagues, who refused to appear in consultation with him, and it was only by sheer determination that he established himself and made his way in the profession. **IT REQUIRES A LARGE AMOUNT OF COURAGE FOR A DOCTOR TO DECLARE HIMSELF TO BE OPPOSED to Vaccination.** That as many as sixty doctors have associated themselves with the National Anti-Vaccination League is, in these circumstances, of tremendous importance. It is not in the least surprising that the number is not more, but rather that it is as many.

(8) The only defence of vaccination ever made by medical men is based on statistics. Dr. Guy said in 1882 that there was no answer to the vaccination question, but such as is couched in the language of statistics. Medical men are usually poor statisticians, and in any case non-medical people can master statistics quite as easily. The eminent scientist, Alfred Russel Wallace, considered that doctors possessed a special inability to understand the significance of figures. No statisticians have ever been called on to pronounce judgment on vaccination. There was not a trained statistician on the Royal Commission. The history of smallpox in this country from the year 1838 is contained in the Registrar General's Reports, and on vaccination, from the year 1872, in the Reports of the Local Government Board and Ministry of Health. A medical training is not required to understand these figures.

(9) There is, however, another point which every citizen ought to consider very carefully. When a medical prescription is endorsed and enforced by law its discussion by all on whom the law presses is not only a right, but a duty. Every parent, therefore, ought to make himself acquainted with the facts of the case, and we earnestly appeal to all thinking members of the community to study the matter for themselves. The support given to vaccination by the majority of newspaper editors and proprietors, solely on the ground that the majority of doctors believe in it, assists the doctors in their turn to maintain the superstition. The Press plays into the hands of the doctors, and the doctors have no opportunity of getting the facts from the newspapers because everything that tends to discredit vaccination is suppressed. That portion of the public that takes its opinions from the Press accepts without question the newspaper endorsement of the practice, reluctant to have its accustomed ideas disturbed. A leading London daily paper has, on occasion, had the falsity of its statements proved to it by reference to Official Reports, without any retraction on its part resulting.

(10) Every citizen should take an interest in the laws of his country, especially those which enter into his personal and family

life. The vaccination laws concern every parent. They authorise outsiders to inflict a dangerous medical operation upon his children when they are quite well and a danger to nobody. It is his duty to understand how this came about and whether it ought to be allowed.

(11) If vaccination were a good thing it would not need to be enforced by law, but would recommend itself to all by its merits. When a medical practice is enforced by law, it is doubly difficult to get rid of it, if it is bad, for a great vested interest is behind it and the mentality which vested interests always create. Vaccination endows the medical profession with nearly £200,000 a year, and the receivers of this sum will certainly not surrender it until they are forced to do so. It may be said that this is an aspersion on the honesty of medical men. This is not so. Circumstances and habits make and mould men's beliefs. Who would expect butchers to advocate vegetarianism, however good the arguments for the latter might be? It would be ridiculous to entertain such an idea. There have been doctors in the past who surrendered a lucrative vaccination practice when convinced that the operation was an evil, but they were men of exceptional mentality. The medical profession has been endowed to the tune of millions of pounds out of the rates and taxes for the vaccinations it has performed. This fact should be remembered when medical opinion is quoted in favour of the operation.

(12) The opponents of vaccination have nothing to gain for themselves by their crusade. They devote time, money, strength, and personal abilities to the abolition of this dangerous delusion. Many of them have made very great sacrifices for their belief. After a comprehensive and critical investigation of the facts they have decided against the practice, in many cases with the greatest reluctance. They include in their ranks some very brilliant men such as Herbert Spencer and Alfred Russel Wallace. When men of the highest mental endowment are forced, after investigation, to conclude that vaccination is a delusion and a grotesque superstition and that its penal enforcement is a crime, a) honest seekers after truth should at least read both sides.

Those willing to investigate the subject should obtain "The Minority Report of the Royal Commission," price 1/-; Milnes' "What about Vaccination," price 3d.; McCormick's "Is Vaccination a Disastrous Delusion?" price 3d.; Trobridge's "Vagaries of Vaccination," and his "More Vagaries," price 4d. each; and "Smallpox and Vaccination in the East," price 3d.; from the National Anti-Vaccination League. The League's monthly journal, "The Vaccination Inquirer," 3s. per annum, post free, supplies up-to-date information on the question. A list of publications will be sent on application to the Secretary of the League at 25 Denison House, 296 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, S.W.1.

THE ARCHIVE COLLECTION

THIS LITERATURE WAS COLLECTED
FROM VARIOUS SOURCES
OVER THE YEARS OF MY RESEARCH
ON VACCINATION
WHICH STARTED IN SEPTEMBER 1991.

FORTUNATELY I RECEIVED
SEVERAL DOCUMENTS
AND BOOKS FROM INDIVIDUALS
WHO HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN
THE ANTI-VACCINATION LEAGUE OF GREAT BRITAIN
DURING THEIR LIFE TIME.

THE LATE DR GORDON LATTO, WHO SERVED AS THE MEDICAL
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE LEAGUE DURING THE MID 1900s.
ALSO, IAN & MONIQUE STIRLING TO NAME A FEW.

ALSO THANKS TO JOHN WANTLING, AN INDEPENDENT
RESEARCHER, FOR PATIENTLY PHOTOCOPYING
NUMEROUS ARCHIVE PUBLICATIONS & FORWARDING
COPIES TO ME BACK IN THE MID-NINETIES.

I HAVE SCANNED THESE PUBLICATIONS & LITERATURE
TO PRESERVE THE WEALTH OF INFORMATION
CONTAINED WITHIN THESE DOCUMENTS
IN THE HOPE THAT THEY WILL BE CIRCULATED
& MADE AVAILABLE TO ANYONE WHO WISHES
TO STUDY THE HISTORICAL DATA
SURROUNDING THIS SUBJECT.

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