

COW-POX AND VACCINAL SYPHILIS.

(APPENDIX to [LEPROSY AND VACCINATION](#) by [WILLIAM TEBB](#))

The following extracts from Dr. [Creighton](#)'s "Natural History of Cowpox and Vaccinal Syphilis" (London, 1887) express the conclusions of his historical inquiry—namely, that cow-pox is a disease resembling small-pox only in name, but resembling the great pox both in name and in reality, and that so-called vaccinal syphilis is only cow-pox in its original form, as the milkers used to experience it:---

"The real affinity of cow-pox is not to the small-pox but to the great pox. The vaccinal roseola is not only very like the syphilitic roseola, but it means the same sort of thing. The vaccinal ulcer of every-day practice is, to all intents and purposes, a chancre. It is apt to be an indurated sore when excavated under the scab; when the scab does not adhere, it often shows an unmistakable tendency to phagedaena. There are doubtless many cases of it where constitutional symptoms are either in abeyance or too slight to attract notice. But in other instances, to judge from the groups of cases to which inquiry has been mostly directed, the degeneration of the vesicle to an indurated or phagedaenic sore (all in its day's work) has been followed by roseola, or by scaly and even pemphigoid eruptions, by iritis, by raised patches or sores on the tonsils and other parts of the mouth or throat, and by condylomata (mucous tubercles) elsewhere." (Page 155)

"The first duty of everyone is once for all to disabuse his mind of Jenner's invention of the name *variolae vaccinae* for cow-pox. The affection of the cow's udder was long recognised by common folk as a pox in the original and classical English sense of the word the name of it in Norfolk was pap pox. No one had dreamt of discovering any resemblance in it to the pustules of the foreign contagious skin disease which came to be called the small pox until Jenner by a masterstroke of boldness and cunning, placed the Latin name *variolae vaccinae* first on his title page as if he were merely expressing in scientific form the universally accepted meaning of the colloquial name. There was no candid or overt attempt in the body of his essay to justify that daring innovation; most of his readers from that time to this have hardly realised that it was an innovation at all, for the reason that Jenner adroitly left his title page to justify itself. His trumped-up name somehow passed without challenge, except for a grammatical objection on the part of Pearson, and a general criticism by Moseley; and although the want of likeness, still more in circumstances than in form, between the pustules of small-pox and even the modified kind of inoculated cow-pox vesicle, has been pointed out in elaborate detail by several writers, and ought, indeed, to be so obvious to any one as not to need pointing out at all, yet the Jennerian fable of *variolae vaccinae* continues to be the creed of the medical profession." (Page 157.)

"The rational theory of the Morbihan disaster (of vaccinal syphilis in 1866) is that ulceration, followed by induration and (or) phagedaena, is part of the natural history of cow pox infection that it is nearly always latent or kept in check; that in some circumstances it may be brought reverted to; that these circumstances, in the particular epidemic, date and number of the vesicles raised on the vaccinifer, and the draining of their lymph to the last drop, so as to vaccinate an enormous number; and lastly, that a continuous reproduction of lymph from that stock tended to confirm and even to intensify the reawakened powers of the cow-pox matter, as evidenced by the more decided 'syphilitic' character of the secondaries (mucous patches on the tonsils) in two cases of the last group." (Page 140.)

"The origin of vaccinal syphilis remains, as Bohn says, 'shrouded in mystery.' Readers who have followed my argument hitherto will not be surprised if now I claim the phenomena of so-called vaccinal 'syphilis' as in no respect of venereal origin, but as due to the inherent, although mostly dormant *natural history characters of cow-pox itself.*" (Page 124)

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