

Dr. Charles Creighton M.A., M.D. quotes

[Dr. Charles Creighton M.A., M.D. Smallpox quotes](#)

Quotes on Creighton

"Dr. Charles Creighton, Alfred Russel [Wallace](#), William [White](#), Prof. Edgar [Crookshank](#), William [Tebb](#), [Dr. Scott Tebb](#), Dr. William J. [Collins](#) and his father, of the same name, who had been a public vaccinator for 20 years and had renounced the practice, were all head-and-shoulders above their opponents, both in intellect and in integrity. They may therefore never be mentioned on the radio, nor may their history.....Who can dispute the opinion that Dr. Charles Creighton was the greatest of these doctors? His History of Epidemics in Britain, in two volumes, 1891 and 1894, was justly called "the greatest medical work ever written by one man". Having previously written for the Encycloptedia Britannica, he was asked to contribute the article on vaccination for the Ninth Edition. Its appearance, in 1888, was such a profound shock to the advocates of, and vested interests concerned in, vaccination that Creighton's article was replaced as soon as possible by what was little more than an advertisement for glycerinated calf lymph written by one of its promoters. Creighton, perhaps the greatest medical mind of the last century, was virtually turned out of his profession."--[Lionel Dole](#)

Quotes by Creighton

"It is difficult to conceive what will be the excuse made for a century of cowpoxing; but it cannot be doubted that the practice will appear in as absurd a light to the common sense of the twentieth century as blood-letting now does to us. 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." [\[1889\] Jenner and Vaccination A Strange Chapter of Medical History by Charles Creighton M.D.](#)

The anti-vaccinists are those who have found some motive for scrutinizing the evidence, generally the very human motive of vaccinal injuries or fatalities in their own families or in those of their neighbours. Whatever their motive, they have scrutinized the evidence to some purpose ; they have mastered nearly the whole case ; they have knocked the bottom out of a grotesque superstition.¹ The public at large cannot believe that a great profession should have been so perseveringly in the wrong. [\[1889\] Jenner and Vaccination A Strange Chapter of Medical History](#)

THE historian of the Cowpox Legend has always a double thread to unwind : on the one hand, the secret history of Jenner's project, as we can now follow it by the help of posthumous documents ; and, on the other hand, the history of it as it was presented to and received by the public and the medical profession at the time. If the profession

and the public had been permitted to know then all that is known now (not reckoning the practical failure of cowpox to exterminate smallpox after ninety years' trial), they would probably have found out Jenner to be the vain, imaginative, loose-thinking person that he certainly was by nature, and they might have so acted as to prevent him from becoming the impostor and shuffler that the course of events made him. [\[1889\] Jenner and Vaccination A Strange Chapter of Medical History by Charles Creighton M.D.](#)

It is one of the evils of making a man a fellow of the Royal Society, that people will be apt not to recognise any subsequent nonsense that he may write, in the name of science, for what it really is. [\[1889\] Jenner and Vaccination A Strange Chapter of Medical History by Charles Creighton M.D.](#)

It was not until 1886-88 that we began to find out that "the filth and nastiness which must unavoidably mix with the milk in an infected dairy of cows" was a not uncommon cause of scarlet fever in those who used the milk. [\[1889\] Jenner and Vaccination A Strange Chapter of Medical History by Charles Creighton M.D.](#)

She had the areola on the fourteenth day, and an ulcerous state of the arm for some time after, which had to be treated with mercurial ointment. These facts are given by Jenner himself, although he prefers to call the ulcer a "pustule." [\[1889\] Jenner and Vaccination A Strange Chapter of Medical History by Charles Creighton M.D.](#)

"During eight years I reckon more than 600,000 vaccinated by my own hand." In his quarto treatise, published more than twelve months later, the number has decreased to 500,000, so that we may take Sacco's figures as not intended to be accurate to a hundred thousand or so. [\[1889\] Jenner and Vaccination A Strange Chapter of Medical History by Charles Creighton M.D.](#)

It was an open secret in the profession that the great discoverer was a disappointing person at close quarters. He was vain, petulant, crafty, and greedy ; he had more of grandiloquence and bounce than of solid attainments. In London, at least, his presence was a bore, and his reputation an incubus, which the profession, outside his own small following, would have gladly got rid of. [\[1889\] Jenner and Vaccination A Strange Chapter of Medical History by Charles Creighton M.D.](#)

For Bavaria, whose vaccination arrangements had been held up as a pattern to other States, the facts for the year 1871 were published fourteen years ago by a medical official of the bureau of statistics at Munich.² The cases of smallpox in 1871 were 30,742, of which the vaccinated were 29,429, or 95.7 per cent., and the unvaccinated 1,313, or 4.3 per cent. There were 3,994 deaths among the vaccinated cases, a rate of 13.8 per cent.; among the unvaccinated, there were 790 deaths, a rate of 60.1 per cent.

But 743 of the latter were in infants under one year, leaving 47 deaths of the unvaccinated of all other ages. The excessive mortality of infants is, of course, not peculiar to smallpox. [\[1889\] Jenner and Vaccination A Strange Chapter of Medical History by Charles Creighton M.D.](#)

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.

The longer the compulsory law is maintained, the more marked will the contrast become between public intelligence and professional dogma. [\[1889\] Jenner and Vaccination A Strange Chapter of Medical History by Charles Creighton M.D.](#)

"The title of Jenner's cowpox paper is: "An Inquiry into the Causes and Effects of the Variolae Vaccinae, a Disease discovered in some of the Western Counties, especially Gloucestershire, and known by the name of the Cowpox." An objection might be taken to "discovered," but let that pass. The leading line in this full and learned title is Variolae Vaccinae, which is the only name in the short title. Now Variolae Vaccine is Latin for smallpox of the cow. An affection of cows and milkers, which had been known to country people for generations as the cowpox, is suddenly introduced to the learned, who had never heard of it before, under a brand-new name. The new name is put in the forefront of the title, it overshadows the old country name both by its prominence and by its semblance of scientific precision, and, for purposes of short reference, it becomes the sole name. This startling novelty is on the title-pages, and only on the title-pages. Jenner never says, in the preface or text, that the name is a new one, hitherto unheard of in veterinary or medical writings; he never says a single word to justify its invention; he never once uses it in the preface or text at all. But there it stands in the title as the full, correct, and scientific name of the disease, to be copied in journals and repeated in a hundred ways when not one word of the essay would be copied or repeated, carrying with it, in short, all the power over the ideas that a descriptive synonym for an unfamiliar thing does naturally carry with it." (Jenner and Vaccination, [Dr. Charles Creighton](#), p. 44).

"In Bavaria, in 1871, of 30,742 cases of smallpox, 29,429 were in vaccinated persons....The Bavarian contingent (of the army), which was re-vaccinated without exception, had five times the death-rate from smallpox in the epidemic of 1870-1 that the Bavarian civilian population of the same ages had although re-vaccination is not obligatory among the latter."-- Creighton (Vaccination and the State p29)

"Dr. Creighton also informed the Royal Commission (Q5584) that up to 1886, when the article on vaccination in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* was written, he had no doubt about the value of vaccination, that it never occurred to him to question the thing at all, and that he took it as one of the things he had been taught as a student. He left the Commission in no doubt as to the result of his studies. **"In my opinion," he said (Q-5430) "vaccination affords no protection against smallpox."**"-----[Joseph Swain \(The Vaccination Problem, 1936.\)](#)

[1888] "At Boston, U.S., the same kind of lymph was raised and put in use in 1852. But at Attleborough, Mass., the same experiment had in 1836 led to disaster. Smallpox was inoculated on a cow's udder, and the product used to vaccinate about fifty persons. The result was an **epidemic of smallpox**, a panic, and the suspension of business.(*Bost. Med. and Surg. Journ.*, 1860, p. 77)."---[Dr. Charles Creighton M.A., M.D.](#) *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published in **1888**

"Many of the alleged **deaths from erysipelas after vaccination** have been the subject of coroner's inquests; the verdict is often an open one, and even such cases as those near Gainsborough in 1876 and at Norwich in 1882 were found to have been returned (all but one) by the certifying medical practitioners as due to erysipelas merely."---[Dr. Charles Creighton M.A., M.D.](#) *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published in **1888**

"It is only within the last few years that **jaundice** has been recognized as a post-vaccinal effect; and at present there is only one accepted instance of it on the large scale. This was the epidemic among re-vaccinated adults in a large shipyard at Bremen from October 1883 to April 1884. Owing to an alarm of smallpox, 1289 workmen were re-vaccinated between the 18th August and 1st September with the same humanized lymph preserved in glycerin; of these 191 had jaundice at various intervals down to the month of April following."---[Dr. Charles Creighton M.A., M.D.](#) *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published in **1888**

"The widespread belief that much of the **eczema** of childhood dates from vaccination is not by any means to be dismissed as a mere fancy."---[Dr. Charles Creighton M.A., M.D.](#) *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published in **1888**

"Healing is frequently an affair of weeks, and may be aided by **mercurial** treatment."--[Dr. Charles Creighton M.A., M.D.](#) *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published in **1888**

"**Whitehead** states the results of his inquiries on post-vaccinal illness in children. he admits as truly **post-vaccinal 34 cases of syphilis or pseudo-syphilis**.....Whitehead's Report was published in 1859; but, when **Hutchinson** published his first series of London cases in 1871, the subject was considered to be quite new. Here again it was the concurrence of some **ten cases** in a group that helped the reluctant assent of the profession. The first group of London cases had hardly begun to be talked of when one of Hutchinson's colleagues was led by two cases of skin disease at a hospital to follow up the traces of another group, the **very existence of which was unsuspected by the public vaccinator or general practitioners in whose district the eleven patients with vaccinal ulcers and occasional secondaries resided**."---[Dr. Charles Creighton M.A., M.D.](#) *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published in **1888**

"From the **early part of the 18th century a remission was noted; but the latter half of that century saw a considerable extension of the area of the disease, for which the practice of inoculation has been blamed.** It is a mistake to suppose that smallpox has shown In Europe it has been peculiarly a disease of infancy and of the **most crowded parts of cities.** It has had victims among the upper classes, just as cholera has had; but, like that disease, **its habitat is among the crowded poor;** and it would have touched the well-to-do-classes less in former times if there had always been spacious west-end quarters in cities or the modern "**passion for clean linen,**" personal ablutions, and fresh air. Tenement houses and ill-ventilated courts or alleys have been the natural harbourage of smallpox; in proportion as these have been demolished the disease has disappeared or been circumscribed in its area. It is fallacious to estimate its prevalence now in ratio of the whole population; for a just comparison of one period with another, we have to take into account, not the death-rate per million living, but the death-rate per million still living under the old-world conditions. From the earliest period of its history in Europe, the disease has had its seasons of quickening or revival, with long intervals of quiescence ; **only in the most crowded parts of Western cities has it ever been endemic from year to year.** These epidemic outbursts have varied much in intensity and in area, the conditions of variation being mostly unknown. In that respect, it need hardly be said, smallpox is like other epidemic diseases.."---[Dr. Charles Creighton M.A., M.D.](#) *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published in **1888**

"The evidence as to re-vaccination on a large scale comes from the army. According to a competent statistician (A. Vogt), the **death-rate from smallpox in the German army, in which all recruits are re-vaccinated, was 60 per cent, more than among the civil population of the same age;** it was ten times greater among the infantry than among the cavalry, and sixty times more among the Hessians than among the Wurtembergers. **The Bavarian contingent, which was re-vaccinated without exception, had five times the death rate from smallpox in the epidemic of 1870-71 that the Bavarian civil population** of the same ages had, although re-vaccination is not obligatory among the latter.."---[Dr. Charles Creighton M.A., M.D.](#) *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published in **1888**

It is often alleged that the unvaccinated are so much inflammable material in the midst of the community, and that smallpox begins among them and gathers force so that it sweeps even the vaccinated before it. Inquiry into the facts has shown that at **Cologne in 1870 the first unvaccinated person attacked by smallpox was the 174th in order of time, at Bonn the same, year the 42d, and at Liegnitz in 1871 the 225th.**"---[Dr. Charles Creighton M.A., M.D.](#) *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published in **1888**

"Moreover, smallpox being a foreign contagious skin disease lurking in congenial haunts, it would be quite according to precedent that it should one day cease absolutely in a community where **sanitary progress had advanced so far as to take the ground from under the feet of the pestilence; such absolute cessation would have no more necessary connexion with almost universal vaccination than the alternating quiescence and recrudescence of epidemics have been connected with each new Act of Parliament.** The epidemic of 1871-72 was one of the worst in the whole history of European smallpox; and it may be that it was one of the last flickers of a slowly expiring flame. The universal practice of cowpoxing, however, is based upon the assumption that this contagious skin disease imported from the tropics is a thing that Europe must reckon with for an indefinite time. On the other hand, the teaching of epidemiology is that a foreign pestilence never stays unless it finds quarters suited to its existence, and that it may even take its departure capriciously, as in the case of the plague, after it has had a certain career, or on being displaced by some congener such as typhus. Vaccination is considered to have turned smallpox in great part aside from the early years of life and thrown it more than ever upon the later ages, while measles and other maladies proper to childhood have at the same time increased (See Farr, *Reg. Gen. Report* for 1867, p. 213: "To operate on mortality, **protection against every one of the fatal zymotic diseases is required; otherwise the suppression of one disease-element opens the way to another**" (p. 219). He quotes Watt (1813) to show that the **decrease of smallpox mortality among infants in Glasgow from 1783 to 1812 was balanced by a great increase in the infantine deaths from measles.** See also Guy, *Journ. Statist. Soc.*, 1882, p. 430.)"---
[Dr. Charles Creighton M.A., M.D.](#) *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published in 1888

"Thus far as regards the utility of vaccination to the state; we have now to consider its utility to the individual. Do the vaccinated escape in an epidemic? or, if they do not escape an attack of smallpox, do they escape death from it? In answer to the first question, apart from the familiar negative experience of everyone, we have the statistics of smallpox hospitals, which relate to the poorer class and probably do full justice to the fact of non-vaccination, inasmuch as the unvaccinated residue is mostly to be found in those slums and tenements of the poor where smallpox (now as always) is apt to linger. At the **Eastern Metropolitan Hospital (Homerton) from its opening early in 1871 to the end of 1878 there were 6533 admissions for smallpox, of which 4283 had vaccination marks, 793 had no marks although vaccinated, and 1477 were unvaccinated, giving a proportion of 0.29 unvaccinated.** In the epidemic hospitals of Liverpool, Glasgow, and Dublin the proportion was 0.25 during the same period. **For some of the German states the proportion of unvaccinated cases comes out a good deal less than one-fourth ; thus, in Bavaria in 1871 of 30,742 cases 29,429 were in vaccinated persons, or 95.7 per cent., and 1313 in the unvaccinated, or 4.3 .per cent** (Majer, *Vierteljahrschrift fur gericht. Med.*, xxii.

355.). In some of the small local outbreaks of recent years the victims have been nearly all vaccinated (e.g., at Bromley in 1881, a total of 43 cases, including sixteen confluent, all vaccinated-- Nicolson, *Lancet*, 27th August 1881). In the army and navy, where vaccination and re-vaccination are absolutely without exception, the proportion is accordingly 0. It would thus appear that the rather excessive proportion of cases among the small residue of unvaccinated in the civil population must have other associated circumstances besides non-vaccination; and these are not far to seek.."[---Dr. Charles Creighton M.A., M.D.](#) *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published in **1888**

"The official figures (Majer, *op. cit*) for Bavaria in 1871 are more precise: **among the 29,429 cases of smallpox in vaccinated persons there were 3994 deaths, while among the 1313 unvaccinated cases there were 790 deaths;** of the latter no fewer than 743 deaths were of infants in their first year. The mortality among both the vaccinated and the unvaccinated is always excessive for infancy. Feeble health, as well as non-vaccination, is a factor in the very excessive smallpox mortality at that tender age.."[---Dr. Charles Creighton M.A., M.D.](#) *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published in **1888**

"The returns from special smallpox hospitals **make out a very small death-rate (6 per cent.) among the vaccinated** and a very large death-rate (40 to 60 per cent.) among the unvaccinated. **The result is doubtful qua vaccination, for the reason that in pre-vaccination times the death-rate (18.8 per cent.) was almost the same as it is now in the vaccinated and unvaccinated together (18.5).** At the Homerton Hospital from 1871 to 1878 there were admitted 793 cases in which "vaccination is stated to have been performed, but without any evidence of its performance"; the deaths in that important contingent were 216, or 27.2 per cent., but they are not permitted to swell the mortality among the "vaccinated." (*Parliamentary Return*, 24th February 1880.). Again, the explanatory remarks of the medical officer for Birkenhead in 1877 reveal to us the rather surprising fact that **his column of "unvaccinated" contained, not only cases that were admittedly not vaccinated, but also those that were "without the faintest mark"; of the 72 cases in that column no fewer than 53 died. His column of "unknown" contained 80 per cent, of patients who protested that they had been vaccinated (28 deaths in 220 cases or 127 per cent.).** Those who passed muster as veritably vaccinated were 233, of whom 12 died (51 per cent.)."[---Dr. Charles Creighton M.A., M.D.](#) *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published in **1888**

"Notwithstanding the fact that Prussia was the **best re-vaccinated country in Europe, its mortality from smallpox in the epidemic of 1871 was higher (59,839)**

than in any other northern state. "[---Dr. Charles Creighton M.A., M.D. Encyclopedia Britannica, published in 1888](#)

The most famous series of ulcerated cowpox arms happened among a rather poor and querulous set of people in Thunderbolt Alley, Clapham, in the fall of the year 1800 ;⁴ the parents of the poxed children were "much prejudiced, full of invective, and refused to converse reasonably." The lymph was of correct pedigree, and had been taken from the arm of a gentleman's child ; only it had been taken after the crust began to form on the vesicle, and it therefore represented a late type or a full cycle of cowpox, coming near to that of cowpox on the cow herself or on the milker. The effects were erysipelas, rapidly spreading ulceration, and sloughing ; a woman, aged thirty-five, had a large, irregular, oval sore, with elevated edges of a livid colour. We now know that such effects can be produced at will by systematically using lymph from a late period of the pox, or, in other words, by using the infective matter in a state fully representative of the cow's ulcerous affection.

But let us observe how such an untoward incident was explained away. Blair, the editor of the *Medical Review*, said that it arose from "this spurious sort, or from a violent matter derived from the cow." Dr. Lettsom, a leading physician, and a fussy or influential person among the charitable, rushed to the help of the endangered cowpox project with a letter¹ dated 25th November, 1800 : "The disease," he assured the public, "was not cowpock, but morbid ulceration, originating from the purulent matter formed under the scab or dried pustule of the cowpock." Lettsom, whose writings prove him to have been something of a windbag, did not know what he was talking about.² If the subject had been a suitable one for conundrums, Lettsom and such as he would have been in their element. When is the cowpox not the cowpox? Answer : (1) When it fails to protect from smallpox ; (2) When it produces "morbid ulceration."

Besides the apologetic plea of spurious lymph, the excuse was sometimes put forward that the smallpox ensuing was not smallpox but something else. Thus, Bevan of Stoke-on-Trent sends two cases of children who had been vaccinated on the 12th of January because their mother had confluent smallpox, and had themselves sickened for that disease on the 23rd and 24th respectively, the one having sixty pustules on the 28th, and the other, twenty on the 29th, "exactly like smallpox in every respect." To this perfectly credible recital the editor of the medical journal coolly appends a note : "We think this eruption was not variolous."¹ The common explanation of an eruption of the milder sort was that it was really chickenpox, even if the circumstances of infection should have suggested smallpox.² At a later period that excuse grew into the doctrine of varioloid or "modified" smallpox, especially in connexion with the epidemic in Scotland in 1818, described by Thomson.³ In the Vienna school the same

mode of reasoning was carried so far that varicella, the learned name of chickenpox, actually came to be used as the equivalent of discrete smallpox or varioloid, or "modified " smallpox (e.g., in Hebra's writings), and continued to be so used down to recent times.⁴

Other and more subtle excuses for failure were made in Germany (see chapter 9.); but the two stock English pleas were, either that the lymph was spurious, or that the ensuing disease was not smallpox. The nearest approach to the refinements of the Germans occurs in a case in which Sir Joseph Banks played a part. Being personally interested in a child in the country who had caught smallpox six months after vaccination, he wrote to the medical attendant, Dr. Harrison, of Horncastle, and received the following explanation : The child had been vaccinated successfully, and others in the house had in turn been vaccinated from her. Now these latter did *not* intake smallpox on the occasion when their vaccinifer did, although they were in the same house ; "hence it appears that Fanny communicated a security against the smallpox to others, although she herself remained liable to its influence." With this mystical reasoning the good president of the Royal Society would appear to have been well content, for he allowed the letter which his inquiry had elicited to be published in the Medical Journal.¹

Such, then, was the programme of excuses which came to be generally adopted for the failure of cowpox.

WE have thus far seen what kind of evidence the profession had before them, on the protective power of cowpox, and what kind of apologies they were prepared to make for failures and disasters. They never went deep enough into the anatomy and pathology to realize what sort of pox the cowpox actually was, and they had none of the milkers' experience to teach them in the most forcible of all ways. Their behaviour over the variolous test was incredibly stupid and careless. Their chief apologetic plea of spuriousness was wholly alien to the spirit of logical investigation, and a flagrant example of the art of circumventing the unwelcome teachings of experience.

It is hard to believe that the many educated and conscientious men, who belonged to the medical profession of Britain in those years, had given their reasoned assent to a doctrine and practice so full of frauds and fallacies that a later generation will hardly bear to have the naked facts exhibited to the public gaze.

Writers of the Cornwall Lewis school show a confidence in scientific and medical authority which no one can share who has made it his business to study the history of scientific and medical developments.