

Medical Men and Vaccination

by [Dr. Allinson](#)

MR. AND MRS. BEURLE hold a monthly Conference at their residence, Linden House, Victoria-park, and on the last occasion, January 10, Dr. Allinson opened the proceedings with an address from which we select the following passages ([Vaccination Inquirer 1883](#)):

THE MEDICAL TRADE UNION.

My subject is "Medical Men and Vaccination." I shall not attempt to entertain you with statistics, but try and inform you concerning the attitude of the medical fraternity toward this question of vaccination. In the first place, you must recollect that the medical profession is a great trade union. There are 25,000 of us in the United Kingdom, and we stick together more closely than any other profession. You may take the Law or the Church, and you will find in neither the same intense devotion to corporate interests. If one makes a mistake, the others are ready to hide it. Many coroners are medical men, and when a case occurs that is not favourable to the profession, it is more or less dexterously slurred over. By means of this trade unionism we have acquired immense power, which is yearly increasing. Law and Church will soon be accounted second and third. People cannot be born without us; they cannot die without us; and it will come to pass that they cannot be married or take a situation without us. All this tends to make the medical profession pretty unanimous on a question which is supposed to be one of its Articles of Faith.

And then the money we make out of it! There is 1s. or 1s. 6d. for each vaccination, and a bonus for good work. Then private cases—anything from say sixpence to a five-pound note. Seeing how it pays, you certainly must not go to the parties paid for disinterested advice. If you want the truth on vaccination you must to those who are not making anything out of it. If doctors shot at the moon every time it was full as a preventive of measles *and got a shilling for it*, they would bring statistics to prove it was a most efficient practice, and that the population would be decimated if it were stopped.

DOCTORS ARE BRED IN THE FAITH.

Jenner introduced vaccination nearly a hundred years ago. He said, or others said for him, that people who contracted cow-pox could never contract small-pox. In spite of innumerable proofs that small-pox *does* follow cow-pox, we find the statement

repeated as if it had never suffered contradiction. If a person be vaccinated and does not take small-pox, it is held that he has been saved from small-pox by his vaccination; but if he does take small-pox, then it is said there must have been something wrong with the virus, or some defect in its administration. In short, whatever is wrong, vaccination must be right, and there is no possible failure which, on such terms cannot be explained away. Medical men, as a rule, believe in vaccination from want of knowledge.

They are bred in the faith that vaccination is a preventive of small-pox, and go on to practise it and to live by it. Be fair, therefore, to the doctors, and ask yourselves whether you would not believe as they do, and act as they do, if your training and interest coincided with theirs. We believe our teachers. I never heard of anti-vaccinators except as fools and fanatics, whose existence was marvellous. The only knowledge of vaccination I had was from a medical lecture explaining the nature of the process and the usual effects that follow it. Yet so firmly was I persuaded of its efficacy that having a healthy child, the antecedents of which I knew, I took the opportunity of protecting myself; but as I was busy and fearing inconvenience from my arm, I vaccinated myself on the leg; but it laid me up. I had cold shivers and was thoroughly upset, and had to give up work for a time. I afterwards suffered from swollen glands. It took nearly a year before the "marks" became the colour of the natural skin, and even now, if I am at all out of sorts they feel irritated. I have become an opponent of vaccination out of my own experience.

During the epidemic of 1871, visiting the hospitals and seeing in private practice that nine-tenths of the small-pox cases were vaccinated, and noticing the class of people among whom the disease is most fatal, I was led to the conclusion that the cause in most cases was dirt, and that vaccination was powerless to prevent it. I found that where there was most overcrowding there small-pox was most prevalent. The worst case I have ever seen occurred three weeks after re-vaccination. On the other hand, I have known cases of unvaccinated persons sleeping with those suffering from the disease and not contracting it.

COMMON DEFENCES OF VACCINATION.

We are asked, "How is it that we do not now see the faces of the people pitted with small-pox, as we used to do?" The like remark was made in 1821 by the grandfathers of those now using this argument. The cessation of the practice of inoculation, which is now punishable by a month's imprisonment, and the improved methods of treatment, will easily account for a real improvement in this matter of pock-pits.

Another favourite argument is the diminution of the number of deaths from small-pox, owing, as urged, to the extension of the practice of vaccination. This, again, was

asserted before vaccination was compulsory, and before it had been sufficiently practiced to possibly bring about any such result. Small-pox had begun to fall off last century before vaccination was heard of; and what caused it to fall off? Small-pox was commoner last century than in the preceding century, the seventeenth; and what made it commoner? Forms of disease prevail and disappear, replaced by other forms. What has become of the black death? 'What has become of the sweating sickness? Improved sanitation has done away with them; and the same agency may be credited with any reduction that may have taken place in the mortality from small-pox. A common fallacy which doctors as well as the general public fall into is what is called *post hoc propter hoc*, or reasoning from the event; that is to say, "He was vaccinated; he did not take small-pox; therefore he was protected by vaccination." Where a community is well vaccinated they have little small-pox; *therefore* their vaccination saved them. It is forgotten that they do not possess the means of comparing the vaccinated community with an unvaccinated one. When there is no epidemic there is no small-pox, and vaccination is credited with the exemption; but 'when an epidemic occurs, then we discover that the vaccination previously accounted protective, is either grossly defective, or is not equal to resist 'small-pox of a specially virulent type.

VACCINIA A DISEASE AND AN EXCITANT DISEASE.

During the small-pox scare of 1871, I was assistant to a surgeon of police. All the police were ordered to be re-vaccinated. I had a good opportunity of seeing the evil effects of the operation. We had many on the sick-list, and some of the men were twelve months before they got well. Of diseases that may be transmitted by vaccination, Dr. Cory has demonstrated in his own person the possibility of the transmission of the worst. Of cases of eczema after vaccination I have seen, not one, but a great many. Another disease caused by vaccination is erysipelas, which should accompany effective vaccination according to the teaching of Jenner. The areola which surrounds the vaccine vesicle is true erysipelas. But sometimes the erysipelas does not stop there. It passes on to what we call cellulitis, in which the deeper tissues are involved. I have seen a very bad case of this sort, and the poor child's arm did not get better for six months. The commonest form of cellulitis commences in the vaccinated arm, then goes down to the elbow, then passes across the body to the other arm and then down the back, then taking one 'leg and then the other, and usually ending with an abscess on the foot. To see a child come through vaccination without some trouble is, in my experience, exceptional. There have been great disputes in the medical world, whether the number of marks should be one, two, three, four, or five. Some manfully go in for five, but, since the public have been making an outcry, the vaccinators have most of them come down to three; which, I believe, is now the fashionable number. There is another point to which I wish to draw your attention—it

is this. Inoculation is now a punishable offence, yet much that passes current for vaccination is nothing else. Small-pox matter is put into a calf, and gives rise to what is called cow-pox. This, in turn, is used for vaccination, and on the principle of the alternation of diseases can only reproduce small-pox. Thus the vaccinated often become true *foci* for the spread of the very disease they have been operated upon to check.

CONCLUSION

My aim has been to show that you have a powerful body to fight in the medical profession. We cannot be stirred without great effort. We are a kind of Juggernaut; we have to be dragged; we will not go. Let each one take his doctor, or, if he be so fortunate as not to need one, the doctor who lives nearest to him, and try and instruct him. Send him the literature of the subject; he may not read it, but he *may*. Every little helps. - Instruct the people by means of public lectures and meetings. Show them as plainly as you can the uselessness and dangers of vaccination. Teach them that they must not go to the medical profession for counsel on the matter. If cases of small-pox were isolated and the clothes of the sufferers disinfected, the disease would not spread. If you wish to avoid smallpox, you must live pure and simple lives. If we crowd together we must expect disease; if we keep our skins closed, the impurities of the body are retained, and these impurities are the food upon which small-pox thrives. If your constitution is in a bad, state and you come in contact 'with small-pox, you will probably have it.

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