

benefit anyone except the doctors and undertakers.' This interesting individual must be something of a survival; and is evidently very imperfectly acquainted with the facts and history of the subject. For in the whole realm of medical science if there is one assertion safer than another it is the statement that the spread of vaccination and the decline of small pox have gone hand-in-hand; and that, as the Sydney authorities have declared, 'vaccination is the only sure method of checking the epidemic and the only sure road to safety is its universal application.'

*

Before proceeding to quote some of the facts which go to prove the undoubted protection afforded by vaccination it may be of interest to give some idea of the ravages of the hideous disease against which it is directed before that great discovery. Before the days of Jenner small pox raged to an extent that was simply appalling; and was at one time so common in England that Canning could say, in a famous *bon mot* of his, 'everybody must have it once.' It was estimated that half a million of deaths annually were due to small pox in Europe alone, and in London one fourteenth of the entire deaths were attributable to this cause. Mr. Simon, in a paper appended to the report of the Select Committee on Vaccination (1871), points out that a fourteenth of the total deaths meant much more, when the total, 'as compared with the population, represented perhaps double our present death-rate.' It was a pestilence doubly horrible because the seeds of it seemed capable of flourishing in any soil. It smote the wealthy living in palaces equally with the poor in their hovels, and proved as destructive to Indian tribes encamped upon the open prairie as to populations crowded in close cities. Mr. Simon, in the report above alluded to, says:—'For a popular notion of the disease it may be enough to cite what it did in royal families. In the circle of William the Third, for instance, his father and mother died of it, and, not least, his wife; and his uncle, the Duke of Gloucester; and his cousins, the eldest son and youngest daughter of James the Second; and he himself (like his friend Bentinck) had suffered from it most severely, barely surviving with a constitution damaged for life.' Or again in the Court of Austria, 'Joseph the First,' says Vehse, 'was carried off, when not more than thirty-three years of age, by small pox, to which, in the course of the eighteenth century, besides him, two empresses, six archdukes and archduchesses, an elector of Saxony, and the last elector of Bavaria, fell victims. To this list might have been added, no doubt, many other names; among them, for instance, a Dauphin (1711) and a King (1774) of France, a Queen (1741) of Sweden, and an Emperor (1727) of Russia.' It would be thought an awful epidemic nowadays that should strike like that in high places.

*

'Among the dairy-folks of Gloucestershire there was a curious tradition that a certain pustular eruption observed on the teats of cows, and supposed to be engendered in them by contagion from the "grease" of horses, might extend its infection to the human subject; and that persons who had suffered from this cow pox, as it was called, were by it rendered insusceptible to small pox.' This was the tradition which Edward Jenner had heard, and which he set himself to investigate, and which culminated in the great discovery of vaccination. The discovery was first made publicly known in 1798, and was first practised in London in 1799. As to the protective power of this treatment there is now hardly room for two opinions. 'There is one fact concerning vaccination,' says a physician in one of the great London hospitals, 'which, when taken alone, would almost be sufficient to prove the great boon it has been, and the real and undoubted protection that it is. It is this, that at the small pox hospital it is always the custom to vaccinate the nurses, whether they have been previously vaccinated or not, before they enter upon their duties; and it has resulted from this that no nurse employed in the small pox hospital has ever contracted small pox.' Before this remedy of Jenner's was made compulsory in England two per-

sons attacked by small pox in that country were confined by it for every one that succumbed in those Continental countries where it was obligatory by law. The compulsory Act of 1871 greatly reduced the death-rate from small pox. During the London epidemics of 1876-78 and 1881-82, according to Dr. Gayton, 'whereas there was no death amongst those of under five years who had "good" vaccination, the percentage was 56.5 among the unvaccinated; from five to ten years old the corresponding figures were .9 and 35.2 per cent., from thirty to forty 9.5 and 40.7 per cent., and over forty 12.5 and 43 per cent. In 1897 the British Royal Commission appointed eight years previously reported, in substance, that 'vaccination has a protective effect, greatest for nine or ten years, and then rapidly diminishing, but never vanishing entirely, and that re-vaccination restores the protective power.' The Annual Report of the Metropolitan Asylums' Board for 1902 gives an analysis of the cases treated during the London epidemic of that year, and supplies abundant evidence for the utility of vaccination.

*

A curious feature of the 1902 epidemic above referred to was the harvest gained by the insurance offices in connection with it. London's population flocked to insurance offices in order to get insured against the epidemic. In the history of Lloyd's no such plethora of insurance was ever recorded as arose on account of the scare. All classes took advantage of the underwriters' charges of 2s 6d per £100 for vaccinated risks, and 3s 4d per £100 for unvaccinated risks, though for the East End districts the premium was as high as 21s. Some financial men were insured for as much as £7000 against the risk of catching small pox, but the average policy was about £500. Firms usually making out two hundred policies daily were averaging six hundred, and the insurance brokers and clerks were working long after hours. Those who took out insurance policies were said to be curiously indifferent about re-vaccination—a negative but very significant tribute to the recognised efficacy of the treatment.

AN OFFENSIVE STORY

A week or two ago we felt it our duty to indulge in some plain speaking regarding the action of a well-known Christchurch weekly paper—the *Canterbury Times*—in respect to the appearance in its columns of a particularly outrageous story bearing the grandiloquent title, 'The Awakening of Alphonse Legrand.' The central character of the story was a drunken priest, who dishonored 'a half-witted village girl'; made her 'pay and pay and pay for absolution'; stabbed her to death in the confessional when she could pay no longer; and finally, when the 'truth' came out, committed suicide by putting a dose of poison in his wine. Our comments were brought under the notice of the *Lyttelton Times* management—at whose office and under whose control the *Canterbury Times* is published—by our Christchurch correspondent, through whom they have forwarded a frank and full apology. Our contemporary admits that 'the very dignified castigation' administered by the *Tablet* was entirely deserved; that there could be no excuse for the publication of this wretched story; and that the only explanation that could be offered was that the story, which was purchased along with others from a London agency, slipped in through sheer inadvertence. We are assured that for the future there will be a more direct personal supervision over the 'fiction' columns, and that the *Canterbury Times* will 'take no further stories from the author of this abomination under any circumstances.' That is as honorable and creditable to the *Canterbury Times* as it will be satisfactory and gratifying not only to the Catholic readers of that paper, but also to the Catholic body generally. We felt sure that an office with the high standing of the *Lyttelton Times* could not be guilty of wanton and deliberate offence to Catholic faith and feeling; and we are sincerely pleased to find that our confidence was not misplaced.

S. F. ABURN

PAINTER, PAPERHANGER, GLAZIER, ETC., 245 PRINCES ST., DUNEDIN.
Importer of Paints, Oils, Colors; Varnishes, Brushware, Paperhangings, Picture
and Room Mouldings, Sheet and Colored Glass, Etc. TELEPHONE 1320.