

ficial view of the matter. In reality it is a victory of the greatest importance, for it is a victory which almost for the first time definitely and formally extends the area within which conscience is recognised as king. * * * * *

The latest concession to the sovereignty of the individual conscience was due to the same readiness on the part of individuals to go to prison rather than obey a law which they believed to be unjust. This concession, forced from the Government under threat of imminent defeat, extends the same principle to another sphere. By the clause introduced by Mr. Balfour into the Vaccination Act, and accepted by the House of Commons, any parent who satisfies the Justices of the Peace that he has conscientious scruples which forbid him to assent to the vaccination of his children is to be exempt from compulsion. This concession, bitterly assailed by the medical police, who as always are dominated by the fixed idea that the health of the community can only be secured by the sacrifice of the liberties of the subject, marks a great advance, the full significance of which is yet but dimly appreciated. This clause will be fiercely assailed in years to come. But if the advocates of liberty or conscience in matters of medicine as well as matters of theology are up to their work, they will succeed in making it the starting point for a whole series of similar concessions.'

The reference to the "medical police" is somewhat undeserved.

With regard to scruples, conscientious or otherwise, whatever relation they may bear to matters of theology, they cannot be considered in medical matters. Such are not questions of conscience or even opinion, but are matters of fact. The value of systematic vaccination as a preventative of small-pox or as a means of mitigating the attack one would have thought would have been set at rest by the report of the recent British Commission on the subject. To all fair minds this was conclusive in favour of vaccination. The principle is also endorsed by both the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Surgeons, so that the medical profession of England is overwhelmingly in its favour, to say nothing of that in other civilized countries. The resolution of the former body is as follows :

"The Royal College of Physicians having learnt that certain changes are likely to be made in the laws relating to vaccination, think it their duty to reiterate their conviction that vaccination, properly performed and duly repeated, is the only known preventive of small-pox."

In view of this testimony the Marquis of Ailesbury might well say that they objected to abrogating the work of Jenner at the bidding of a few faddists when all the nations of the world were following his teaching.