

Certain epidemics have seemingly disappeared by the improvements of modern modes of living. The plague which spread over Europe some two hundred years ago decimating whole communities has apparently been shut out by sanitary barriers of modern times although it is a disease still known to the inhabitants of the East, and is still as fatal and as contagious as of old. In the matter of small-pox, it has been remarked that this disease occurs in the epidemic form very frequently, every four or five years. From 1837 to 1842 small-pox was prevalent in a very virulent form throughout Europe and indeed extended to our own side of the Atlantic. The mortality from small-pox during this epidemic was considerably higher in the United Kingdom than in continental countries. Vaccination had been voluntarily submitted to, and very generally practiced up to this period in Britain, but in consequence of the virulence and general prevalence of this epidemic, a reaction occurred and persons were numerous who absolutely refused to submit their children to the protective influence of vaccine. This led to legislative interference and by a succession of Acts, compulsory vaccination was at length introduced into the United Kingdom.

Previous to the introduction of these laws three fourths of the cases of death from small-pox occurred amongst children under five years of age. In the epidemic of 1870, less than one third of the deaths from small pox in England and considerably under one fourth of the deaths from this cause in Scotland and Ireland were observed in children under that age. Let it be stated furthermore that when the epidemic of 1870 occurred a large proportion of the children under five years of age were unprotected by vaccination. Another significant fact has been established in respect to the recent epidemic of small-pox. During previous epidemics continental Europe suffered less in proportion than Great Britain; in the epidemic of 1870 the proportion of deaths from small-pox in some of the large towns on the continent was in many instances six to one