

It is so frequently said that the disappearance of smallpox is due not to vaccination, but to improved general hygiene, that we must look into this criticism with some care. In the first place, a large diminution in the mortality from smallpox occurred before there was any great change in the unsanitary conditions of the English towns, before there was any enforcing of the isolation of patients either in hospitals or in their own homes. Since the introduction of vaccination, measles and whooping cough still remain in the status quo ante, while smallpox has been exterminated in all fully vaccinated communities, these two diseases of children are as prevalent as ever in England even although the general sanitary conditions have been immensely improved in that country. Of course the effects of vaccination wear out in time, and that is why it is well to be revaccinated once or twice. Now there has been a remarkable progressive change in the age-incidence of smallpox "which can only be explained," says Dr. Newsholme, "on the assumption that vaccination protects children from smallpox and that the protection diminishes, though it never entirely disappears, as age advances."

The "conscience clause" should be immediately removed from the act in which it was inserted on the grounds that it is weak and reactionary in principle, not in the interests of the development of the legislative aspect of the science of public health, and that it permits in certain unintelligent communities quite a considerable number of unvaccinated children to grow up as a permanent menace to their town and district.

When the history of medicine becomes more widely known, when the principles of prophylactic inoculation are more generally understood, when respect for science is the rule rather than the exception, when great achievements in the saving rather than the destroying of life are objects of national veneration, then we may hope to see the day when it will be unhesitatingly admitted that the discovery by Dr. Edward Jenner, the Englishman, was one of the most momentous in the history of the human race, and that his life was one of the noblest, most unselfish and, in its far-reaching effects, most important that has ever been lived on this planet.