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EDITORIAL

THE EPIDEMIC OF SMALLPOX.

The people of Toronto are now reaping what for years they have been sowing. There is only one way of preventing smallpox, and that way is by vaccination. It may be that this epidemic is mild; but smallpox has not always been mild, and will not always be mild. Grip came to be a sort of joke, and people would say "he has the grip", and smile; but a year ago grip slew its hundreds of thousands. So with smallpox, it will come along some day with the fury of the tornado and sweep away its thousands.

It will be a sorry day for the people if the present mild form of disease lulls them to sleep and vaccination becomes generally neglected. When a severe form of the disease does come, it will then be too late, and before the protective power of vaccination could be invoked, many would perish. So it was in the State of Pennsylvania many years ago. There was an unvaccinated community, and there were 5,000 deaths. Montreal, because of this same folly, had in 1885, 3,164 deaths.

Those who tell us that sanitation is the means of controlling the disease, either do not know, or are wilfully misleading the public. The most perfect system of sanitation is perfectly helpless in the presense of an epidemic of smallpox. It will strike down the cleanest as readily as the filthiest, and enter the home of the millionaire as readily as the poorest hovel. There is only one shield of defence; and that is the scar on the arm. When the disease meets this sign, it bows and retires.

In days gone by the only way of arresting an epidemic was arrived at when a sufficient number had recovered so as to wait on the new cases. Not till then could there be any stay in the disease. All the talk about natural immunity is downright nonsense. There are very few, indeed, who will not contract smallpox, if exposed. But perfect immunity can