

# A Descriptive Article on Vaccination.

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The casual remark made by a farmer's daughter, in the hearing of a young medical student, upon being informed of an outbreak of smallpox in the district where she resided, "I cannot take that disease for I have had cowpox," was sufficient to impress the mind of Edward Jenner and lead him to devote years of patient study and careful experiment, which culminated in his being able to confidently state to the world that vaccination gave immunity from that loathsome, malignant, disfiguring and deadly disease, smallpox, of which, up to that time no means had been found to prevent its spread. A statement which more than a century of experience in the civilized countries of every continent has been established deeper and deeper with each passing decade; indeed, it may be said, the chief, if not the only opposition, of the practice has, strange to say, come from those who may be considered fellow-countrymen of this world's benefactor; a modern instance of a prophet not being without honor save in his own country and among his own kinsfolk.

As to the beneficial results of this discovery, which was freely given by Jenner to the world, the following outline of the effects of vaccination upon the ravages of smallpox will plainly show.

The information is collated from the writings and experiences of practical workers in this field of preventive medicine, those who have had special opportunities to personally treat large numbers of cases of smallpox and perform general vaccination, and carry out the work incident to outbreaks of the disease. None of them are scientific theorists, faddists, or juggling statisticians. With them it is a case of facts founded on experience, which together are stronger than fiction based on false theories.

## *Early History of Smallpox.*

Without referring to the early writings upon the subject of smallpox, from which, however, it is quite evident the disease prevailed in many parts of Asia and Africa long before the beginning of the Christian era, accompanied with miseries of the worst kind, we will pass on to the year 581 A.D., when the disease was epidemic in southern France and northern Italy, as described by Gregory, of Tours, whence it spread rapidly in all directions, invading Iceland in 1341 A.D. During the wars of the Crusades, epidemics of the disease in a malignant form were numerous.

## *Smallpox in the Eighteenth Century.*

It was, perhaps, most widely distributed and malignant in form in Europe during the eighteenth century, no country was free from the pestilence; at least a tenth of all the deaths occurring at that time were