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IS VACCINATION AS IMPORTANT A PREVENTIVE OF SMALL-
POX AS IT IS COMMONLY BELIEVED TO BE?

BY THE EDITOR, EDWARD PLAYTER, M.D.

At the present time there is no question pertaining to the prevention of disease of more importance, or receiving more attention, than that of vaccination. The recent experiments of Basteur have increased the interest taken in it. The whole question is one of the utmost importance in relation to the public health. To what extent will vaccination prevent small-pox, and are the advantages of the practice sufficiently great to outweigh the disadvantages, are questions asked by those who feel the deepest interest in the subject. That there are disadvantages, in the form of serious consequences following vaccination, is unquestionable. Of late these serious consequences seem to have been of more frequent occurrence, or to have attracted more attention than formerly, and wide-spread opposition to the operation, and especially to the principle of compulsory vaccination, has been thereby created. If the practice has, of itself, been so far instrumental in preventing small-pox, as its strongest advocates assert that it has been, it is probable that the serious consequences referred to which have followed it on occasions, have not been of such importance as to warrant its discontinuance. The cases in which death has seemingly directly followed, or been caused through, or by means of the operation, on the whole, have been numerous. I will only here allude to the possible evil consequences, other than death, consequences upon future generations,—upon the race, which may be vastly more far-reaching than death itself, which, even though we have no direct evidence of it, it is not difficult to conceive, may follow the introduction into the human body of the vaccine poison.

I desire not to be regarded as one opposed to the practice of