

BROWN, Thomas .

Letter concerning the present
state of vaccination.

Edinburgh, 1823.

Medical

1723

From the Author

1723

A

LETTER

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE EARL OF LIVERPOOL,

&c. &c.



A

LETTER

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE EARL OF LIVERPOOL,

CONCERNING THE PRESENT STATE OF

VACCINATION;

AND

POINTING OUT THE URGENT NECESSITY OF AN
IMMEDIATE INVESTIGATION, IN ORDER TO
SECURE THE SAFETY AND COMFORT
OF THE PUBLIC.

BY THOMAS BROWN, SURGEON,
MUSSELBURGH.

Magna est veritas et prevalebit.

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED FOR BELL & BRADFUTE,
AND T. & G. UNDERWOOD, LONDON.

1823.

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

BY

JOHN BURNET

OF

SCOTLAND

IN

SEVEN VOLUMES

THE SECOND

VOLUME

AND

THE SECOND PART

OF

THE SECOND

VOLUME

OF

THE SECOND

VOLUME

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE EARL OF LIVERPOOL.

MY LORD,

FEELING that the practice of Vaccination now stands convicted, in the most decisive manner, of being destitute of that character for which it was recommended and adopted, and that the public safety and comfort will be grossly committed, if the practice shall be any longer followed, without an immediate, and most minute inquiry, into the present state of its pretensions to public confidence, it has naturally occurred to me to address your Lordship, being fully persuaded I could not possibly address any one, in whose integrity and judgment, the nation would feel more completely satisfied, that every thing would be attended to, which the importance of the subject demanded.

It is perhaps possible, my Lord, you may have heard before of my sentiments concerning Vaccination, and it is also more than probable, care has been taken to make and maintain an impression upon your Lordship's mind, highly favourable to the Jennerian discovery, and inimical to

those who ventured to suggest any thing adverse to its character. I must, however, my Lord, take the liberty of observing, that no one could feel more deeply than I did, the disappointment of Vaccination being inadequate to give perfect security against small-pox. I believe I was the third medical practitioner in Scotland who adopted Vaccination, and in less than two months after, small-pox inoculation was entirely superseded in my practice; and before I considered it my duty to lay my doubts of the efficacy of the practice before the public, I had vaccinated upwards of twelve hundred cases,—a number, certainly sufficient to prove my motives could not possibly be selfish or interested, when I was declaring, that the practice I had recommended and followed for nine years, and for which I had received remuneration, was wholly useless.

A few months after I had begun the practice of Vaccination, I had occasion to meet the late Dr. Alexander Monro; and upon my informing him of my having adopted the new practice, he declared, “that his apprehensions were so strong
“ of the future mischief, and confusion, which
“ were likely to ensue, that it ought to be pro-
“ hibited by act of parliament.” I however paid no attention to this declaration, being aware, it had no foundation whatever, and was merely an opinion prematurely formed, and totally destitute, at the time, of the support of experiment and experience; and I persevered steadily, without the smallest change in my favourable opinion of the Jennerian discovery, until the year

1808, when such a variety of proof occurred in my practice, which it was impossible for me to resist; and I considered it my duty, to lay that proof, and the conclusions which it naturally suggested, before the public.

When I determined, my Lord, to publish my sentiments, I was fully aware of the contemptible state of those who had hitherto opposed Vaccination, and shuddered at the danger of being classed amongst them; but the proof appeared to me so clear, and decisive, I determined to risk every species of detraction; and I think, my Lord, after having undergone so severe an ordeal, you will readily allow, I have a full claim to whatever credit or reputation can now be obtained, from every opinion I then took the liberty of offering for their consideration, being confirmed to the very letter, and that twelve years have nearly elapsed, before my professional opponents saw and confessed their errors. I am now however ready, my Lord, to consign to oblivion the conduct of Vaccinists and Anti-Vaccinists; and I trust, that as truth and the public safety, ought to be our only aim, the whole medical profession will now cheerfully come forward, and assist in obtaining an inquiry, the result of which shall satisfy all concerned.

It is not my intention to harass your Lordship, with any thing like a medical inquiry, or to tease you with a minute description of the merits of Vaccination, but to offer for your Lordship's most serious consideration, certain important defects which now attach to the Jennerian discove-

ry, which I aver can be fully substantiated with the most satisfactory evidence, if drawn from the proper source, and the inquiry conducted by a court properly constituted.

When the Jennerian discovery, my Lord, was first introduced, it was considered so very extraordinary and doubtful an expedient, no medical man, of any eminence in his profession, would give it his sanction, without the most positive proof of its efficacy ; and the proof which put to rest all apprehension, was supposed to be found in the experiments, that those who had undergone the Vaccine disease, were found completely to resist the variolous contagion, whether applied in the form of contagion, or inoculation ; and upon these tests being found perfect in hundreds of thousands of instances, the most entire confidence was placed by the profession and the public, in the complete preventive powers of the discovery, and the encouragement given to the practice was universal. Upon this seeming satisfactory result, the medical profession announced, that the complete extinction of the dreadful disease of small-pox would be the consequence of the adoption of Vaccination, and steps were taken, and arrangements were made, to obtain so desirable a result. But, my Lord, three or four years hardly elapsed, before some suspicious circumstances made their appearance ; and although these were laid asleep by the assertions, of what was considered superior authority, still they gradually increased, and a degree of suspicion was, at the distance of six or eight

years from the period of its adoption, introduced into the minds both of the public and the profession. Still, however, the declarations issued by Vaccine establishments, colleges of physicians and surgeons, and other associations, maintained the character of the discovery, and all adverse facts were supposed to be satisfactorily accounted for, by mistakes and errors of every description, either as applicable to the Vaccine process itself, or to the eruptive disease which 'now succeeded Vaccination, and was supposed to have been small-pox. Year after year, however, notwithstanding every precaution had been taken to prevent their recurrence, these adverse facts have continued steadily to increase; and within the last three years, have assumed a character and extent, to be mistaken by no one, whose mind is not enveloped in prejudice and scepticism. The experiment is now, my Lord, distinctly allowed to be defective, and the greatest advocates contend for its possessing a power, *capable of only modifying but not preventing the operation of the small-pox contagion.*

Did matters rest here, my Lord, all might still be well; but, alas! numerous instances of severe disease, and a considerable number of deaths, have now been known to succeed the application of small-pox contagion, to cases where Vaccination was supposed to have been properly conducted; and strong grounds are afforded for exciting the dreadful apprehension, that the Vaccine disease only exerts a *temporary* influence over the human body. If this should prove, my

Lord, to be the fact, how disastrous and distressing must the consequences be to all who have placed their hopes of safety in this expedient. Society must be thrown into universal consternation,—the parent, the husband, and the child must be exposed to the most dreadful anxiety, distress, and danger,—their intercourse with the world must be timid, limited, and vexatious, and every comfort blasted by the most distressing apprehension.

I make no doubt, my Lord, you will be equally astonished and alarmed at the representation now made, after his majesty's government having formed an institution, for the express purpose of watching over the interests of the public as connected with Vaccination. The directors of such an establishment, ought, above all other men, to have kept their minds unbiassed, and unprejudiced. They ought not to have considered themselves, as they seem to have done, the guardians and defenders of the practice of Vaccination, but the impartial umpires, who were to scrutinize the evidence for and against it, and deduce from the whole such conclusions, as the facts brought forward seemed to warrant. They ought not to have thrown, as their secretary Mr. Moore declared, the mass of evidence forwarded to them at their own invitation upon their shelves, as devoid of use, and undeserving of notice. Year after year, my Lord, their report has been handed over to parliament, strongly asserting the value of the practice, and the entire confidence which the public might repose in its effi-

cacy ; though they must at the same time have been aware, they were at the moment in possession of contrary evidence, neither easy to be answered, or invalidated.

From this view it is evident, that this source of public information, whatever might have been reasonably expected from it, has been very far from answering its laudable purpose ; and that the authority of the National Vaccine Establishment ought not to be considered as unquestionable, far less conclusive. It is scarcely indeed reasonable to suppose, that the directors of an institution, possessed of so many peculiar advantages, would voluntarily step forward and declare, that the Jennerian discovery was wholly useless, and that the institution over which they presided should be broken up.

I must, my Lord, be allowed to express my conviction, that the framers of these parliamentary reports, and generally speaking the medical gentlemen connected with these institutions, are strongly prejudiced in favour of the Jennerian practice ; and that their conclusions have been drawn, much less from a survey of the actual practice, than from balancing the comparative merit of publications connected with the subject. Had the whole of the evidence, for and against Vaccination, been regularly published, their deductions must have assumed some weight, but when one side is left wholly in the shade, we remain in fallacy and doubt.

I may be allowed farther to observe, my Lord, that it unfortunately happens, that those gentle-

men who in other respects deservedly rank at the head of their profession, have little experience in the practice of Vaccination, and almost no opportunities of attending to cases of small-pox succeeding to this process, except such as may be casually pointed out to them, by practitioners who attend in opposite circumstances, but whose authority on this point, is, from their more extensive experience, certainly entitled to much greater weight and attention. I must also caution you, my Lord, from allowing your judgment to be directed by those members of the profession, who reside in the different capitals of the empire; for independently of the drawbacks against their authority already pointed out, they are accustomed to assume the situation of umpires upon medical questions, although their knowledge of the subject of dispute can only be acquired from books. Indeed, as far as regards the present inquiry, it may be affirmed, that the great majority of them, never saw small-pox, before their attention was called to them by the question now at issue. Opinions have now again been advanced, which were long since given up as absurd and untenable, and theories dragged into light, which were exploded centuries ago. Diseases which were perfectly understood and defined, are now questioned, doubted, and rejected, and all for the purpose of saving the credit of a practice, which if deserving, should stand in need of no such support, and which if undeserving, must fall in despite of it. I trust that no medical practitioner of experience, will allow his

complaisance for the opinions of his professional brethren to silence his own, however opposite they may be, nor allow his judgment to be guided and overpowered, by what he is too apt to consider as superior authority. His own actual observation must be his polar star, and he must not sacrifice the dictates of experience, for the conceits of fancy. As for myself, I have no hesitation in declaring, that after nearly forty years full observation of the diseases of children, these opinions appear to me quite outré and utterly destitute of sound foundation.

I have felt it my duty, my Lord, to go thus far, in order to assist your Lordship in forming some judgment what weight should attach to some of those authorities, which his majesty's government might naturally consult upon this subject. In these observations, my Lord, I do not mean to charge the advocates of Vaccination with wilful misrepresentation, but I do mean to assert, that these circumstances clearly show, a strong partiality in favour of Vaccination, and a blindness and enmity to every fact which can militate against it. I assure you, my Lord, the consistency of parliament, of Vaccine establishments, of medical colleges, and private practitioners, all must be abandoned, and a proper plan adopted for satisfying the public upon what footing their dearest interests are placed. If Vaccination really possesses the power of being rendered a safe antidote against the small-pox contagion, it must not be given up from clamour, prejudice, or erroneous opinions; but if it shall be

proved to be only a feeble, partial, and *temporary* antidote, it is evident, the sooner we renounce the practice, the better.—Neither the character of Dr. Jenner,* nor that of the legislature, or of the profession, could be hurt by the conclusion, as every one possessed of the smallest candour must allow, that Vaccination possesses very surprising powers in enabling the human body, to resist the small-pox contagion; that the phenomena which attended the discovery were sufficient to encourage the most flattering prospect, and that Dr. Jenner was fully entitled to the honour and remuneration he obtained.

Fortunately, my Lord, it is not now necessary to trouble your Lordship at much length upon this subject. Every disgusting defence and frivolous excuse, is now abandoned by the warmest advocates of the practice; and although the national Vaccine establishment is still inclined to insinuate, that those Vaccinations, which were conducted on the plan recommended by their establishment, have not been succeeded with an attack of small-pox, still it is what they have not the smallest pretensions to; for no private practitioner has been so guilty in changing so frequently their plan of conducting the Vaccine disease; and of course your Lordship will at

* Although the date which is affixed to this letter is posterior to the announcement of the death of the deservedly illustrious Dr. Jenner, still as the whole letter was concluded before the event, I did not consider it necessary to make any alteration.

once perceive by this mode of procedure, the last method which the establishment shall recommend must always appear the least faulty. Besides, it is what none of the medical profession, of the smallest pretensions to experience and candour, will give his consent to, and which I challenge the establishment to come forward, and seriously put in their plea for. All then, my Lord, that can now be contended for is, that those who shall undergo the process of Vaccination, will *acquire a diminished susceptibility for the disease of small-pox ; a general mildness of the disease if it should occur, and an almost universal security from danger.*

I shall now, my Lord, proceed to examine, how far these claims are entitled to public confidence ; and I must first observe, it is certainly the duty of parents, to do whatever appears most conducive to the safety of their child ; but I apprehend, it is also evident, it is not their duty, to consult either their own immediate ease, or that of their child ;—their object certainly ought to be, to place their child in such a state, as shall enable him to move in every situation and sphere of life, without being exposed to danger, anxiety, and distress, from the constant apprehension of an attack of small-pox. Certainly, my Lord, when the Jennerian practice was recommended and adopted, it was expressly understood, that it was a complete antidote against the disease of small-pox, and that those who submitted to it, might go wherever they pleased, without any dread of being exposed to the ravages of that

dreadful disease. But now, my Lord, how different is the character now contended for even by its professed admirers? For granting it the qualities just now quoted, we are still left to conclude, we must, in all human probability, suffer an attack of small-pox, at some future period of our lives, and this attack may not only be severe, but dangerous. Therefore, if they still continue to select the Vaccine inoculation, notwithstanding its evident and great imperfections, I should conceive, they are acting very improperly, with a view to the comfort of the individual, who is most interested. I cannot, my Lord, conceive it possible, if we still pretend to retain the faculties of reason, to persevere in recommending without reserve, a practice, whose source is involved in confusion and mystery; where the facts which gave origin to the practice, are in the most direct contradiction; which is incapable of influencing the system in a regular, or positive manner; where many of the phenomena resemble those produced from matter possessing no specific influence; where no one certain criterion exists of the attainment of the effect of the process; where we have been obliged to make a total renunciation of every principle which was introduced at the commencement of the practice, and considered as matters of fact, and to replace them with others, which while they assisted in removing some vexatious and disastrous facts, were totally discordant with the proof which the subject admitted of; where we have been compelled to make use of the frivolous and foolish distinctions,

of local and constitutional affections; perfect, imperfect, spurious, and genuine vesicles; and reduced to the disgusting necessity of using tests for ascertaining the existence of the disease; and to the contemptible evasions of flea-bites, chicken-pox, &c. &c. And still, my Lord, this frightful chaos, is to combat an enemy, the source of which we are wholly ignorant of, and is also the most active, severe, and fatal in its nature to which mankind is exposed.

But I apprehend, my Lord, if we shall examine the results which experience now affords, we shall find the most decisive evidence for abandoning any hope which might be entertained from this quarter, and reject the reasons now offered as a sufficient encouragement for persevering in placing our confidence in this discovery.

It may be first observed, my Lord, that in the certainty of variolous contagion exerting its effects upon the human body, and the extent of its consequences, every thing depends upon the accumulation of contagious matter, and its original character for severity or mildness, and the extent, duration, and mode of its application. There is not a member of the medical profession of experience and observation, but must have remarked, that these circumstances distinctly exert their influence, in the propagation of every contagious disease, and must also have met with many instances, where contagion was resisted at one period, even although placed in circumstances favourable for the operation of the epidemic,

and have afterwards been subjected to the disease, in its most severe and fatal form; and the truth of this I have had frequent opportunities of observing as applicable to our present subject. I can assure you, my Lord, from examining my own practice, few or none escaped at the distance of six years after Vaccination, that were placed in circumstances favourable for the operation of the contagion; not one-half even at four years; and those who in general resisted the contagion, were either within this period, or not exposed to a severe epidemic, and extensive application of the contagion.

But, my Lord, the mere recurrence of small-pox after Vaccination, would form but little objection to the practice, if this attack could always be depended upon as being perfectly easy and safe. Experience, however, has on the contrary distinctly shewn, that we cannot depend upon the safety and mildness of the attack of small-pox; for every successive year has proved, that the susceptibility for small-pox contagion, has not only increased, but also the tendency to a severe and even fatal disease; and these instances, from the length of time which has now elapsed since the introduction of Vaccination, have assumed the most alarming and decisive character. Indeed, this was naturally to be expected; for it was not possible to suppose, that whatever should be the cause of giving an increased facility to the operation of the small-pox epidemic, should not also diminish the chances of a favourable result.

From an attentive examination too of many, or all of the late publications upon this subject, by its professed admirers, you will find, my Lord, these consequences attach to the practice of medical practitioners in general, extending to from two, to four children in one family, whether vaccinated by the same, or by different practitioners, at the interval of years. Indeed I will venture to affirm, if proper steps are taken to secure the application of an active contagion, three vaccinated cases out of four will be found to yield to the influence of the epidemic, if the period from Vaccination exceeds six years; and in some families, I have seen the whole vaccinated cases yield to the influence of small-pox, from four years and upwards, if I was allowed to regulate the application of the contagion. In fact, my Lord, it was from tracing the regular progress of the contagion, through the families of one or two villages, which were vaccinated by a great number of medical practitioners, in a great variety of ways, attended with an uniformity in the result, which it was impossible could be the effect of accident, that the change of my sentiments concerning the properties of the Vaccine practice was effected, and the conviction firmly established in my mind, that the Vaccine influence over the human body, as enabling it to resist small-pox contagion, *was feeble, partial, and temporary*; and I think it but justice to myself, my Lord, here to declare, I never perused a single publication belonging to those who were called Anti-Vaccinists, until I met with the

proof which I have noticed above; and all that I then knew of their facts and assertions, was entirely obtained from the works of their determined enemies, and the admirers and promoters of the practice; therefore, if my mind should be supposed to labour under any prejudices inimical to Vaccination, they must have been produced by causes, which ought to have had quite an opposite effect, as they were entirely derived from the statements of the Vaccinists themselves, and from my own experience and observation.

I must not here omit to notice a very important fact, which has been triumphantly, but in my opinion very injudiciously, and imprudently employed by the supporters of the Vaccine inoculation, to recommend the practice to public confidence.—What I allude to is, that cases of failure have been much more numerous among the lower than the higher classes of society.—Surely, my Lord, I need hardly observe, it would be madness itself to contend, we have vaccinated the rich perfectly, and the poor imperfectly; and consequently that our Vaccine establishments were worse than useless, as their practice is almost exclusively confined to the lower orders of the community. But, my Lord, this fact can be satisfactorily explained, and is, upon a little reflection, quite obvious. It is well known, the higher orders of society uniformly avail themselves either of inoculation or Vaccination; and whether in attending school, or in their amusements, are still amongst themselves, it is evident they cannot so readily be exposed to the small-

pox contagion; but experience has now fully shewn, wherever they have been exposed to the influence of the epidemic, they too have caught the small-pox; and in many of these instances, the disease existed in a very severe form. Indeed, my Lord, this fact, far from being employed by the friends of the Jennerian discovery, as a bait, and recommendation for putting confidence in the practice, ought to be considered, by the higher classes of society, as a strong argument against it; for those very individuals, who flatter themselves with this exemption, and reject with disdain, and even horror, every attempt to expose the imperfection of the Vaccine inoculation, will ultimately prove the principal sufferers, as they may avoid the influence of the small-pox contagion, while the power of Vaccination is capable of mitigating the subsequent attack of small-pox, and may afterwards be infected, when, as I shall endeavour to prove, the influence of the Vaccine process may be completely exhausted, and thus left without the smallest protection from the ravages of the epidemic.

Upon the whole, then, when we consider what has been already stated, together with the prodigious number of cases which have been attempted to be disproved, rejected, and thrown aside, upon the score of chicken-pox, horn-pock, flea and bug bites—slight feverish attacks; imperfect, spurious, and unconstitucional Vaccination; there cannot exist a shadow of doubt that the proportions of failure, which we have already stated, will be found to be correct; and that those

cases which have hitherto been supposed to resist the small-pox contagion, have either not been at all exposed to the influence of that epidemic—have not arrived at that distance from Vaccination which allows the constitution to be liable to the contagion—may be those instances who have already been subjected to its influence, but have passed unobserved—or those cases which, from peculiar circumstances either of the Vaccine process, or the nature and mode of being exposed to the epidemic, or the state of the body at the time, may resist the influence of small-pox at one time, and suffer from it at another; or they may be those instances, and many are to be met with, which are unsusceptible of small-pox at any time. Therefore, from all these circumstances, I apprehend it is quite apparent, that the diminished susceptibility for small-pox contagion, and the certainty of a consequently mild disease, are reduced to such trifling and uncertain advantages, that even did no other fault attach to the Vaccine practice, they would be sufficient to destroy all farther confidence, until an impartial inquiry had been adopted.

But, my Lord, were it even possible to proceed with the Jennerian discovery, under these circumstances, I apprehend all title to confidence must cease, when we consider there are the strongest grounds for concluding, that the power which it exerts over the human body, in enabling it to resist the small-pox contagion, is, at best, *temporary*; and in order to place this important part of the subject in the most distinct point of

view, I shall arrange the facts, which in my opinion are insurmountable, under so many separate heads.

1st, There being particular diseases which the experience of the medical profession, and the general consent of mankind concede in granting, only to occur once in our lives; such diseases are to be identified only, by the uniformity and distinctness of their characteristic symptoms; and when such are wanting, we entertain doubts, either of their existence altogether, or at least of their protecting power. Our experience has not afforded the smallest shadow of proof, that the protecting influence of such diseases, extends at all, beyond that of their own peculiar species.

2d, When the Jennerian practice was introduced to public notice, the whole medical profession, entertained great doubts of its powers in being able to confer, either immediate, or future security against small-pox, chiefly upon two grounds, viz. that of possessing no character resembling the disease it was meant to combat; and its exerting no sensible or distinct influence over the human body.—For, if we examine the phenomena produced by the Vaccine inoculation, we shall find, they consist in the appearances of the punctured point, in general accompanied only with a slight derangement of the system, and very rarely with any distinct febrile affection. That these phenomena admit of a prodigious variety, over

which the medical practitioner has no controul, and still exert a protecting influence, at the time, over the human body, against the small-pox contagion.

3d, It is also ascertained by experiment, if you introduce small-pox and cow-pock matter at the same time, by separate punctures, and the usual local phenomena proceed exactly together, still the disease produced will be small-pox.—If you introduce the cow-pock matter two, three, or even four days before that of small-pox, still the disease will be small-pox, but somewhat modified; and it requires the Vaccine inoculation, to be performed eight days before the introduction of that of small-pox, in order to anticipate completely its effects upon the system. Experience has also, in conformity with these experiments, shewn, that the eruption of small-pox has made its appearance, when the Vaccine vesicle actually existed at the time, surrounded with its areola of the most perfect kind, for more than two days, and not in the least modified, but in the highest degree confluent and followed by death,—small-pox pustules even existing within the very *areola* of the Vaccine puncture.

4th, Dr. Jenner, in stating his facts relating to the proof which experience afforded of the immunity conferred upon the human body by the effects of the casual disease, stated many facts of an opposite nature, could only collect a few cases where the security had extended twenty,

thirty, or forty years; and the general impression in the neighbourhood seemed to be, only, that those who had undergone the disease from the cow, *were hard to take the small-pox.*

5th, It was entirely from resisting the tests of inoculated and epidemic contagion, which were immediately applied to those who submitted to the Vaccine disease, the impression was produced upon the minds of the medical profession and the public, that the Vaccine process might be trusted to, as giving security against small-pox, and both these were had recourse to upon the introduction of the practice, to the extent already noticed, and all were uniformly found to resist their influence. But a few years hardly elapsed, before it was observed that a considerable number of cases, who had been vaccinated two and three years before, suffered an attack of what was considered small-pox, but in a very mild and modified form: these cases continued steadily increasing every successive year, in number and severity, until again the tests which had at first imparted universal satisfaction were tried, and a very different result followed. It was then and is now ascertained, if you expose cases, which were vaccinated some years before, to the entire satisfaction of all concerned, to the influence of the epidemic contagion, small-pox readily followed; and if the contagion was introduced in the way of inoculation, not only the perfect local phenomena could be obtained, but also fever and frequently eruption. And in the application of

these two tests, at this period, after Vaccination, they exactly exert the same comparative influence, which they would do, if they were applied to the human body, which had not previously undergone Vaccination.

6th, In conformity with the above observations, experience has also shewn, that for the first two or three years after the introduction of the Vaccine practice into Great Britain, scarcely a case of failure was heard of any where; but after that period, such cases of failure, both in number and severity, have been met with, exactly according with the early introduction of the practice; the extent of population; and the proportion of the lower classes of the community. The accounts, too, from all quarters of the world have assumed exactly the same aspect; and, at the present period, it cannot be disputed, the cases of failure have assumed a most alarming appearance from their extent, severity, and danger; and from an impartial examination, it will be found, where an active small-pox contagion has full access to operate upon vaccinated cases of six years standing, nearly the whole of such cases shall be found to yield to the influence of the small-pox contagion. Besides, it may be also particularly observed, that the comparative state of the two inoculations at present, is, that in five hundred cases of small-pox succeeding to Vaccination, fully more than one death will be found now to occur; and in conducting inoculation with small-pox, the num-

ber of deaths did not exceed that average; and if you examine the number of severe diseases which now succeed to Vaccination, and compare them with the symptoms which followed the general practice of inoculation, you will find them also nearly upon a par; but if you compare the two practices in the future security and comfort they conferred, small-pox inoculation claims the most decided superiority.

7th, It is now generally granted, that the vaccinated cases are not only more readily influenced by the small-pox contagion, but also in severity, according to the extent of the period from Vaccination; and these severe, dangerous, and even fatal cases, have, with very few exceptions, generally occurred at not less than ten years from the period of undergoing the Vaccine disease; and there seems an inclination among those only, who have been the professed advocates of Vaccination, to limit this period of increased facility and severity, to this distance from Vaccination; and that after that period, there seems no additional tendency to be more strongly influenced by the small-pox contagion. But how is it possible, my Lord, to come to such a conclusion? I would only ask these gentlemen, upon what possible grounds they can either suppose or contend, that if there are evidence of any influence, becoming weaker and weaker in the first ten years, so as not only to allow the small-pox contagion, with more and more facility, to exert its influence over the system, and, of

course, an increase in the extent of that influence, it should then stand still, and be no farther diminished? The idea is so fanciful, and I must say ridiculous, that it only requires to be mentioned in order to be exposed; and if these gentlemen who contend for such a singular peculiarity, will be so good as give us their reasons, they may be assured they shall receive the weight they deserve. The truth is, my Lord, the reason that the cases of failure do not assume an uniform appearance, will be found satisfactorily explained, either from the difference in the severity and mode of application of the small-pox contagion, or from the different extent of influence imparted to the constitution, by the variety in the Vaccine phenomena; for according to the severity and extent of the Vaccine phenomena, so is the extent of impression and security imparted to the system.

8th, The effects of the epidemic contagion, in producing a more severe disease, according to the distance of the period from Vaccination, is most strikingly exemplified, in those cases of small-pox, which have succeeded to Vaccination in the higher classes of society. And the gradual decay of the Vaccine influence is also distinctly exhibited, from the uniform progress, extent, and effects of small-pox contagion when it is introduced into those situations, where Vaccination had been almost universally practised.

9th, The history and phenomena of scarlet fe-

ver, malignant sore throat, plague, dysentery, yellow fever, and other diseases of climate, and, I believe, we may add, every fever produced from contagion, clearly shew, that they by no means recur whenever the individuals are again exposed to the contagion, but give in all cases a temporary security; and the phenomena and history of variola, rubeola, together with the influence of the vaccine virus, and the action of mercury upon the system, shew a specific action may not only exist minus in the system, but even in various degrees, and in proportion to the extent of their action, so may the permanence of their influence be estimated; and as the Vaccine process, only exerts a feeble influence over the human body, the extent and permanence of its effects are to be estimated accordingly.

10th, It admits of demonstration, and which, according to my apprehension, should be considered decisive of the question, that while we continue to maintain the anti-variolous power of Vaccination will remain permanent, nothing but contradiction, confusion, and obscurity exist; but the moment a partial, feeble, and *temporary* influence is admitted, there are no more opposition of facts, no longer Vaccinist and Anti-Vaccinist, but harmony pervades the whole subject.

It appears, then, my Lord, whether we consult analogy; or the history of the casual disease; or the phenomena of the Vaccine process itself; or its powers of subduing the small-pox contagion when directly opposed to each other in the way of in-

oculation, or when opposed to the epidemic ; or the perfect immunity conferred at one period, and subsequently imperfect at another ; or the different results upon having recourse to the tests at an earlier or later period after Vaccination ; or the rapid and steady increase in the number, severity and danger of cases of small-pox succeeding to Vaccination ; or the complete opposition in which all the circumstances are now placed, if we maintain the permanent power of the Vaccine process over the human body,—we must concede, there are the strongest grounds for concluding, that the anti-variolous power of Vaccination can be only temporary.

I have now, my Lord, presented you with a faithful picture of the present state of the Vaccine practice, and I trust you will agree with me in thinking, it is now high time an inquiry should be immediately commenced. It would have been well for this empire, and other quarters of the world, had this inquiry been granted twelve years ago. We have already treated the subject with criminal levity and neglect, and have accumulated, to an incalculable degree, the confusion and disaster that must ensue ; for, it does not admit of a shadow of doubt, that the facts which then existed, would have enabled us to arrive at the same conclusions ; and surely, my Lord, there is no merit in only yielding to the most glaring and disastrous facts. The period has now pretty nearly arrived, which was contemplated by the prophetic eye of the late Dr. Alexander Monro,

and the legislature must interfere to prevent the fatal effects which must follow, if the practice is farther persevered in without undergoing the most impartial investigation; for you must be aware, my Lord, that we are not to calculate the bad effects of not granting this inquiry, from the mere consequences which are yet found to follow the Vaccine practice itself, but that we are to put down against such conduct, all the ravages which the natural small-pox now produces; for these, I apprehend, would not occur, if proper steps had been taken to ascertain the pretensions of Vaccination to farther confidence, and to render the practice universal if deserving; but if not, to declare its abandonment, and to return entirely to the practice of inoculation.

Before, however, my Lord, concluding this letter, it may, perhaps, be proper to inquire, if there are any expedients, which can be proposed for remedying such a complicated scene of distress.

The first question that naturally occurs, is, Are there any alterations, or additions, which can be made on the Vaccine inoculation, which could afford any rational prospect of giving perfect and permanent protection against the small-pox contagion? I apprehend it is quite superfluous to enter minutely into this inquiry,—from what we have already seen, no medical practitioner now contends, nor I believe will the National Vaccine Establishment, if distinctly called upon to say so and produce its proof, that they either

know, or possess, any particular method, by which they can give the Vaccine disease a character which will permanently secure the individual against small-pox, nor has any one even proposed such a method. The disease, when conducted by Dr. Jenner, by public institutions, private practitioners, by ministers, midwives, and farriers, all have failed,—whether the disease has been communicated by one puncture, by two, or even by four; or whether it has been conducted by Mr. Bryce, and the eventful test found perfect, still all have fallen short of the desired effect; and even allowing that it was possible to have perfect immunity from small-pox, conferred, by receiving the disease from the cow, still, I apprehend no one will contend, that it is possible to proceed with the discovery, if we are under the necessity of becoming milkers in the county of Gloucester. Or if, in order to make an approach to the casual disease, attended with such an effectual character, we were to puncture the whole body over, in numerous places, with lancets infected with virus, still I am of opinion the practice could not be adopted. But when even from such severe and disagreeable methods permanent and perfect security could not be promised, it is not necessary to go farther; for it appears, even from Dr. Jenner's history of the casual disease, it often failed in affording perfect protection; and it is to be remembered, too, that as they continued exposed to the Vaccine virus, during perhaps the remainder of their lives, by continuing the office of a

milker, they might have the disease over and over again; and if the cow-pock was really capable of conferring security in any circumstances, these were precisely where it was to be expected, and which the public could not possibly follow.

The second question which occurs, is one of great importance to all who have placed their hopes of security in the Vaccine process, and have not yet had a subsequent attack of small-pox. They must certainly be placed in a most painful situation, and feel extremely anxious to know, what is the best plan for securing their ultimate safety.—I apprehend, my Lord, from the disastrous facts now pouring in from the cities, towns, and villages, not only of Great Britain, but of Europe, few practitioners will be so bold as to advise, and few individuals will be so blind as to place, an unlimited confidence in the effects of Vaccination. It is impossible, my Lord, that we can recommend a second Vaccination at the distance of six or eight years from the first, unless we are prepared for doing so at every such period during the whole of our lives,—a practice I should think wholly impossible. But supposing it even were practicable, still, as it is more than probable the regular and satisfactory phenomena would not be obtained when the first trial was made, a repetition of the attempt would be required again to be made, and the same consequences may follow, and much confusion would ensue; and after all it has been shewn, nothing at the best is obtained by this

expedient, but the power of only safely modifying the disease of small-pox, for eight or ten years, and to whose future influence we must still be exposed for the remainder of our lives. Nothing then remains for those unfortunate individuals, but to place themselves as speedily in a state of safety, as their distressing situation will permit. I would recommend all, who have never undergone small-pox inoculation, subsequent to Vaccination, immediately to submit to that means of protection; and if the inoculation is followed with a pustule surrounded with inflammation, attended with fever, and succeeded with pustules, however few in number, they may rest assured of complete protection against small-pox contagion. If, however, only the fever, and neither eruption or rash, should follow the pustules and inflammation on the arm, still, I apprehend, the individual is entitled to place perfect confidence in his state of protection, as he is surely entitled to expect much more perfect protection from a process, which has excited distinct fever and other symptoms characteristic of small-pox, than he could expect from one where no such constitutional symptoms existed; more especially, too, when he recollects, that these symptoms are produced from the very disease he means to resist. But if the inoculation shall only produce a pustule, or other local phenomena, I apprehend, they must not consider themselves in a much better predicament than they were before such inoculation was tried, although, certainly, they are entitled to consider

themselves fully as much protected as they were from the Vaccine phenomena in the first instance; for they consisted in nothing more, and still conferred a certain degree of immunity from small-pox contagion; whereas, when you have a small-pox pustule surrounded with inflammation, arising from the very disease itself which you mean to combat, you certainly are entitled to place fully as much, if not more, confidence in the exemption it may confer.

I have already stated, my Lord, that according to the perfection, extent, and even severity of the Vaccine phenomena, so is also the degree and extent of immunity conferred against small-pox; and also that, in general, it requires a period of from six to ten years after Vaccination, for the Vaccine influence to be so much worn out of the human body, as to allow the small-pox contagion, *in the form of inoculation*, to produce any certain constitutional effects. I would, therefore, advise, that these trials should never be made sooner than six years after Vaccination; and if the inoculation with small-pox, does not produce satisfactory phenomena, we should, upon the very first opportunity, expose the individual to the natural contagion, when we have every reason to expect they will be infected; and we have no reason to be afraid of any dangerous consequences; because having previously subjected them to the test of inoculation, which, if properly conducted, we may rest assured that a very mild disease from exposure to the epidemic will follow; because the previous inoculation with

small-pox, has clearly shewn, that the constitution is still considerably influenced by the Vaccine process, and that a mild disease will to a certainty follow exposure to the epidemic, if it should actually possess the power of influencing the system ; and it is highly probable that the epidemic contagion will really be able to do so, as contagion applied in that form, uniformly exerts more influence over the system, than when applied in the form of inoculation. The best proof of this, my Lord, is clearly exemplified, in the prodigious number of those cases of an attack of small-pox succeeding to Vaccination, which have occurred among the lower classes, where they have been universally mild, merely because they have in general occurred at an early period after Vaccination. It forms no objection to the general propriety of these directions, that cases have occurred which have been particularly severe, and even fatal, only at the distance of one, two, or three years from Vaccination ; or that they have been particularly mild, or altogether exempted from the influence of small-pox, at ten or twelve years. The reasons for this variety we have already noticed ; and wherever the appearance of the cicatrix is very small and superficial, whether the accounts of the parents correspond or not, these cases, as soon as they are detected, ought all to be subjected to the test of inoculation in the first instance, and if this fail, —to exposure to the epidemic ; it being always understood before having recourse to this last test, that every care has been taken to conduct

the test by inoculation, in a proper and satisfactory manner.

Is it possible then to go on with Vaccination under the circumstances, and defects it now stands convicted of? For my part, my Lord, if the Jennerian discovery only stood convicted of being an uncertain preventative of the dreadful scourge of small-pox, and of exerting an influence capable of modifying, in various degrees, the small-pox contagion, I cannot conceive it our duty to go on with the practice, as we have seen nothing, but the greatest apprehension, perplexity, and terror must be the consequence; but when we have also seen, there are the strongest reasons for concluding, the anti-variolous power which it possesses is only of a temporary nature, it would be downright madness to imagine it possible to go on with such an expedient. One thing, my Lord, at all events, is now perfectly set at rest, viz. the total extinction of small-pox whenever this practice should be rendered universal. I apprehend no one will now be found, who will contend, that you can possibly expect the extinction of a disease by having recourse to a mean, which cannot prevent the occurrence of the disease itself.

The only object then, my Lord, now can be, *to have an antidote which shall banish all apprehension of suffering an attack of small-pox, or this attack positively free from danger.* I apprehend, my Lord, you will not now meet with any

medical practitioner of experience and character, who will lay his hand on his heart, and declare, that the Jennerian discovery, as it is now practised, is that expedient; and I am afraid, that there are no circumstances by which it can be rendered effectual. It may, however, be worthy of consideration, whether or not we could render it effectual, by taking the assistance of some such means as are used in preventing the introduction and spread of the plague. Still I am afraid, as we are wholly ignorant of the sources and nature of the small-pox contagion; as it is now a disease so generally diffused over the whole world, and so severe and dangerous, we could not possibly guard ourselves, either as a nation, or as individuals abroad; and if it should once get amongst us, after an absence of thirty or forty years, the consequences would be dreadful. I must also observe, that the determined obstinacy of the National Vaccine Establishment in refusing and resisting all inquiry, has been productive of the most distressing consequences. It is, I think, evident to a demonstration, had they instituted an inquiry, when called upon, or when the Original Vaccine Establishment declared, "that cases of small-pox succeeding to
" Vaccination had increased progressively every
" successive year, and that the phenomena of
" Vaccination, after ten solid years, had been
" hitherto imperfectly understood and investi-
" gated;" had they attended to the proof which was poured upon them from all quarters; had they believed other medical men were as capable

of judging, and entitled to equal credit with themselves; and had they observed the steady and gradual increase of adverse facts, the rapid decrease of its warmest friends, and the total abandonment of those principles which only could insure its success; had they, I say, attended to these circumstances, and instituted a proper inquiry, the practice of Vaccination could not have suffered from it without just cause; but from such headstrong and determined zeal, those who could no longer place their confidence in Vaccination, were either driven to the practice of inoculation, or left their children exposed to the full operation of the epidemic small-pox, which we have already seen we can have now no hopes of subduing, and, of course, we must live under the constant dread of an attack of small-pox, as we may be daily exposed to the influence of its contagion; by which means, a very large proportion of children are left exposed to the ravages of the natural disease, and more alarm and distress is produced, than actually existed before Vaccination was known. This, my Lord, is the true reason why we meet with, and hear every day of these fatal cases of small-pox, and which these determined Vaccinists, improperly, and unjustly, ascribe to those who have ventured to promulgate any facts or opinions inimical to the perfection of the Jennerian discovery;—whereas had a candid investigation taken place, the just fear and apprehensions of the public would have been done away if they were false, or, if well founded,

the necessary steps would have been adopted either to render the practice of Vaccination effectual, or to abolish it entirely.

I have now, my Lord, brought to a conclusion, those observations which the present state of the Vaccine practice seem to me to authorize ; and from the view which I have offered to your Lordship's consideration, there seems to be no possibility of adopting any other expedient, to put a period to the confusion, distress, and disaster, that must ensue, but returning to the practice of inoculation, which afforded to all who chose to avail themselves of it, a complete antidote to the baneful effects of the epidemic contagion, imparted perfect satisfaction, and destroyed all future apprehensions. The extent to which inoculation had attained before the introduction of Vaccination, was, that the rational and intelligent part of society availed themselves of its advantages, and eagerly seized the opportunity of snatching their offspring from the desperate chance of one in five against their existence, at only the hazard of one in five hundred. It is evident, that any practice carrying with it the advantages already mentioned, and adopted by the intelligent part of mankind, must, in the course of nearly a century, have become universal, had every exertion been made, which the importance of the subject demanded. Unfortunately, however, the lower classes were allowed to retain their prejudices ; and those who adopted the practice, consoled themselves with their

private benefits. Neither the legislature, nor other public bodies, put themselves to any regular system of patronage, and the practice was left to work its way, with its own advantages. There cannot be the smallest doubt, had the necessary exertions been resorted to, the practice would have been rendered more safe and easy,—would have become universal,—and the existence of the epidemic disease, of course, combated by the only means which could produce its extinction.

Although, my Lord, I am distinctly of opinion, no other plan can extricate us from the distressing dilemma we are now placed in, still I am very far from wishing it should be followed without a most serious investigation; for, certainly, if any of the methods which have been suggested, or any other, could be trusted to as rendering the Vaccine practice safe and effectual, it should certainly be persevered with. All I now wish, and all that I have formerly requested, my Lord, is, merely an investigation, conducted on the most liberal principles; and, for this purpose, I can see no court so safe, effectual, and satisfactory, as a committee of both houses of parliament. They will at once perceive the propriety of rejecting the evidence of the National Vaccine Establishment, of all public bodies, and of all who have been the professed and determined advocates or enemies of the practice at all periods, and upon all occasions; they will request the *viva voce* evidence of medical practitioners, and more especially surgeons, in all situations of the island; also the free communication of every

opinion and fact connected with the subject, from all parts of Great Britain; at the same time publicly declaring, they wish all former prejudices and opinions, on both sides, to be laid aside, and simply to state the facts, whether they have occurred after their own Vaccination, or that of any other medical practitioner.

I have now only to request your Lordship's most serious attention to the view I have now presented, and to remember, that every thing I have stated on the subject, can be substantiated by the most satisfactory evidenee. I trust your Lordship and his majesty's ministers will no longer grant the annual vote to the Vaccine Establishment, until the practice is proved to be entitled to the public patronage; and I hope that means will be instantly adopted for obtaining a result, which shall satisfy all parties. I can assure you, my Lord, no man despises any interested motives more than I do. I have discharged what seemed to me an indispensable duty; and I trust it has fully appeared, I have been always anxious, in my different publications on this subject, rather to address the judgment than the feelings. While my own mind acquits me of any improper motives, I shall pay but little attention to the insinuations of others. I am only sorry, that the sentiments I entertain of the Vaccine practice, accord but little with the comfort and safety, which the public have been taught it conferred; but I can conscientiously declare, it will afford me the highest satisfaction, to find my apprehensions ground-

less; and it will confer the greatest pleasure, if what I have submitted for your Lordship's consideration, shall be the means of obtaining an investigation, which shall terminate in fixing Vaccination on an intelligible, efficacious, and practicable basis.

I am,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's

Most obedient humble servant,

THOMAS BROWN,

Surgeon, Musselburgh.

MUSSELBURGH, }
10th February 1823. }



PAMPHLET BINDER
PAT. NO.
877188

Manufactured by
GAYLORD BROS. Inc.
Syracuse, N. Y.
Stockton, Calif.

Accession no.

2631

Author

Brown, T.

A letter... con-
cerning... vaccina-
Call no. tion.

