"Isolation and contagious disease"

To,

Sir Ian G. Simpson Bart.

[Signature]
The importance of the object aimed at by Sir James Simpson in his little pamphlet lately brought out; on the possibility of removing from among us so fierce and fatal a disease as Smallpox, can hardly be overesti-
matcd. He states it as his opinion that a properly conducted system of Complete Isolation, would stamp out the disease in the short period of six months, and considering that no less than five hundred-
and persons are estimated annually to fall victims to it; savages in Great-
Britain alone, surely no amount of diffi-
culty should be pleaded as an excuse for not endeavouring by every means at our
disposal, to gain an end so very desirable.
Already the idea of checking the spread of a Contagious disease has been taken up by the government of this country, and
with the best possible results. By the cen-
tration in exact proportion to the situa-
tion, with which the regulation of the
act have been enforced, it is obvious, have be-
come the advantages of applying rules for
the extermination of this one disease in
those places in which the law has not for a short time been in operation, that time is already a fair prospect of all the large cities and towns, not only in this country, but in the whole of her immense dominions being brought under its influence. If then it be worth while by state restrictions to shield a portion of the community, from the ravages of a self-imposed climate, like typhus, how much more desirable must it be to guard the whole from one like smallpox, which attacks all alike and which none of us can certainly voluntarily avoid. During the late vacation I have had an opportunity of witnessing on a small scale, an outbreak of smallpox confined to a limited area, and stamped out by a rigorous system of isolation, and in the same town and at the same time, an epidemic of scarlet fever raging and from a disregard on the part of the public of the proper means for preventing its spread. The two cases occurred in a small country town in the centre of an agricultural district in the north of England. In each
instance the disease was introduced from a dis-
tance into a district previously quite free from either
smallpox, or scarlet fever, and by a single indi-
vidual. I will first give the particulars of the case
of smallpox.

Last March, a family consisting of a married
wife who were in good health, and two children
one of whom was suffering from smallpox,
came from Wrexham, and took up their quarters
in a common registered lodging house in
the town of Oswestry. The authorities at Wrex-
ham wished these people to go into the Union
hospital there, but they refused. On the third
of March Henry Hill a professional tramp
came to reside in the same house at Oswestry
with the sick family, but after remaining
there three days, left in consequence of the
disagreeable smell from the child, and went
to Wrexham "where the disease seems to have
been raging." Here he remained four days,
then returned to Oswestry remaining one night,
but not in the same house, though he took
his meals there and was in daily commu-
nication with the parents of the diseased child.
The next six days were spent wandering
about the Country. He was quite well all this time, and for the last three nights he had shared the same bed with a companion. I should state that Hill never saw either of his children, and also that the second child subsequently took the disease and died. Seven days after Hill left, overtesting the second time, and eight days after the last night he spent in Whitecham, he was taken ill with shivering, pain in his back, and other symptoms of fever. At this time he was living in a common registered lodging house in Whitecham, Talbot. He continued unwell and confined to the house, all the while however sleeping with his companion, and on the fourth day after the shivering, a rash came out upon his face which induced him to apply for medical advice. The Dr. my friend Mr. J. Broomfield recognized his disease as a small pox, and had him patient at once removed to a small Hospital, which he had induced the Guardians to build in connection with the Union House. He Hill remained nine weeks, and had a
pretty severe attack of smallpox. He had been vaccinated when a child, and there is one large and well-marked cicatrix on his arm. Whilst Hill was in Oswestry, that is to say during time night, a man Dobson and his wife, slept in the same room with the sick children, but neither of them took smallpox. The only explanation that I can offer for their immunity is that not by any means improbable one, that the disease had not at that time reached its zenith, and the view seems to be strengthened that Hill himself was not taken ill till twelve days after the last day of his first exposure, whereas his attack commenced on its last exposure. I think we may pretty safely infer that he contracted his disease just at the time when he and his Dobson were both exposed to influence, but at his second visit to Oswestry, when the Dobsons had left the neighbourhood. I succeeded in tracing the Dobsons one month after their leaving, and they were, and had been all the time well. No other case of smallpox occurred in the town of Whitchurch, and
there can be no doubt that this was owing to
Hills having been removed from the same
wholly inhabited district in which he
was residing, before the period at which the
poison of smallpox is most powerfully trans-
mitted. In the same building, however, in
which Hill was placed, a woman was lying
sick of Typhus fever and with her a baby about
a year old who did not take fever. There was no
communication between the male and fe-
male side of the hospital except through the
nurse, who had been inoculated when a girl and
the doctor who had been vaccinated. The woman
"ward" had been also vaccinated when young,
and had two good cicatrices on her arm,
nevertheless the first look smallpox, and
subsequently the child who had likewise been
vaccinated. Both cases were very mild, and the
patient made good recovery. The main build-
ing contained some seventy people, a major-
ity of whom were children, and all of whom
had been vaccinated. Among the ordinary
inmates was a woman Jones, much re-
duced in health by a recent confinement, and
subsequent mammary abscesses. The nurse-
was in daily contact with all the inmates, and the Doctor saw them and particularly Jones often. Jones took small pox, was removed and had a very mild attack. The nurse would seem to have been the means of conveying the disease in these two instances, for no other cases occurred in the Doctor's practice. No other cases were met with in Whitechapel, and there can be no doubt that the removal and isolation of the man still was the means of preventing an epidemic of the disease. It was fortunate that the being a pauper could be removed at once "notens volens" to a place of safety, by the doctor, had he been in better circumstances, only a step beyond a pauper, his removal according to existing law could not have been insisted upon, and he might have remained in a licensed lodging house even, spreading the disease in all directions. In the case of the scarlet fever patient—a very different result took place—the first case was not isolated. The two cases taken together illustrate an important principleviz. that the removal or not of any person suffering from an infectious disease should be made at
The direction of the medical man, were thus rendered imperative a great step would be gained and the if it is I can not see how the spread of such diseases is to be checked or the diseases themselves stamped out.

In the month of January 18...a fast young man, aged 24 years, the son of an hotel keeper in Whitchurch, came home ill. He had a good deal of fever and delirium, and was treated for delirium tremens, by his ordinary medical attendant. Being very ill my friend Mr. Browfild was called in to see him, and gave it as his opinion that his case was one of scarlet fever with suppressed rash, and not delirium tremens. The result fully bore out the correctness of this diagnosis, and though his case was never a well marked one, in an illness as the rash was very slight and partial, he had all the other signs of the disease, and conveyed to those around him, ordinary scarlet fever.

Mr. B. aunt to his above, came to nurse him not thinking him suffering from any infectious disease. She had never had scarlet fever, but in a few days, was obliged to give
In her post and returned to her home, some miles distant in the country, where she not only had scarlet fever herself, but spread the disease to her children, and neighbours.

S. P., a sister of J. P. came from a distance to succeed her aunt as nurse to her father, took scarlet fever and died.

Mrs. N. living some few miles out of town in an opposite direction to Mrs. P., came like her last patient, took scarlet fever and only recovered after a protracted illness of six weeks.

T. H. a servant lad living in the same house as last-mentioned patient, also took scarlet fever and nearly lost his life. This lad lived some few miles from his master's house and his friends were anxious to remove him home. The Doctor refused his sanction to such a proceeding, and explained the ground of doing so to the lad's parents and master. They however both wished his removal, and there being no power to prevent it, took him home, and so spread the disease to several other poor families in his immediate neighbourhood, which fortunately was not a densely inhabited one.
All these cases occurred in the practice of one medical man, but as there are several others in the town, no doubt many others were met with. The case is quite typical of what is every day taking place, and it illustrates remarkably well the want of some controlling power to prevent it. In the first place I should never have been brought into the neighborhood, and in the second being there and the disease diagnosed, his isolation should have been able to have been enforced, but what was the result; many persons unprotected by previous attacks, had access to him directly and indirectly, and the disease was carried from this one focus into several other districts, so that not only was the life of one member of his own family sacrificed, but the lives of many others put in jeopardy, and scarlet fever spread far and wide to such an extent, that after four months, the disease was only just dying out from his place. What might have happened had the case occurred in a densely inhabited city, instead of an agricultural town?

The history of the recent epidemic among cattle has demonstrated that a highly contagious disease may
be stamped out, by a rigorous system of quarantine, and though there are insuperable objections to the application of the same rule for the extinction of disease among men, the same principle should be aimed at — isolation. I don't consider the idea of getting rid of smallpox, at any rate, as altogether hopeless. The disease has been driven from a neighborhood, and prevented becoming endemic in a new country (Australia), and evidences of it have been so often being crushed and avoided. Why should it not be as entirely stamped out of this country, as it has been from Australia, and from districts at various times, in Great Britain? Much of the machinery for enforcing an inland quarantine already exists. The port law arrangement, though not sufficient at present, to enforce the compulsory detention of any one suffering from contagion, disease, could, with very little extension, be made to do so, with those who come within its jurisdiction, but this department will never bear nor should it, reach any other than actual steamers. To insure proper isolation of those not steamers, some other power must be brought to bear. One efficient means would be to strengthen the hands of the medical profession.
to make it member, as it were, guardian of
his public health. If medical men were required
to regulate the removal of infected persons, a great
step would be gained, and this be without in-
any way interfering with the liberty of the subject.
To secure it, all that is necessary is to make it crim-
nal to remove patients without the written con-
sent of a licensed practitioner, and equally crim-
nal to receive such a one into any inn or house
without such authority, or conceal the fact of
his presence by not giving due notice of the cir-
cumstance. Certificates might be issued in a
formal way, like those of vaccination, and
if the persons receiving them were compelled
to lodge them with a registrar, not only could
peculiar attention be directed to infected districts,
but the certificates themselves would form
valuable records of the history and spread of
epidemics. No doubt the difficulties of an in-
land quarantine would be very great, but there
are difficulties to be overcome in every important
scheme. Expense can not be pleaded for if it
be in a pecuniary point of view; with the
country's while it protects even its so-called fa
c and more irregular inhabitants, from the ra-
sage of Syphilis, how much more would it pay to protect not only them, but the whole community from disease, more fatal to life, and which are so much less avoidable. Surely the lives of the best and bravest men of society who derive none of their means directly from the state, are as valuable as the lives of soldiers and sailors, maintained by them, for their own protection. And this being so, should not they be assisted, by state enactments too, to avoid diseases which will otherwise attack them, without any fault of theirs. Sooner or later, something must be done to solve the question of how to prevent the spread of contagion and the medical profession in the medium through which it must be answered. No better or another question can occupy its attention from the days of Hippocrates, we have tried to cure, and I think every one must acknowledge we have miserably failed. To such an extent have we been disillusioned that few men now claim the power or indeed endeavor to cure— we watch—we do what even Helen, but rather hand as it were at the head of a boat—drifted by an irrational tide.
endeavouring to bend itself from rocks and shards, but with very little of any influence to regulate its pace or determine its destination, and if now and then we are apparently able, even in the least degree to accomplish either, we congratulate ourselves as having done the very most we are in capable of accomplishing. Let us then no longer try to meet an enemy who only serves us by proving how utterly impotent we are to grapple with him, but like wise men seek some more efficient means of avoiding instead of contending with disease, and thus save human life by judicious flight rather than by opposition.

Frederick Page.

Since writing this I have seen a case of small pox introduced into a ward containing some dozen persons all suffering from typhus. The case came in before any eruption was out. The man was isolated completely in this instance not by removal but by every other person being vaccinated. No one look