

HOW BABY WAS SAVED.

BY PHILLIS BROWNE, AUTHOR OF "COMMON-SENSE HOUSEKEEPING," &C.



OUR first baby was a most wonderful child. He was a very large boy, to begin with; and he had such a quantity of hair—golden hair it was, and it lay in rings all over his head. Certainly he was rather red, and he puckered up his face so that we could not see his eyes, but when we did get a peep, we found that they were a glorious dark blue. He had an unfortunate habit of twisting his face as if he were in pain, so that we were rather alarmed

for a little time; but nurse said it was nothing, "they always did so." It would be impossible to say how much we thought of this baby; and we were quite justified in doing so, for really he was a most unusual infant. He knew his father the day but one after he was born, and at first proved it by screaming the moment he entered the house, though afterwards he showed it more agreeably by giving up screaming the moment his father took him in his arms. He would be fed every time we sat down to a meal, and when once he took an idea into his head, there was no quiet until he got what he wanted. He used to sleep all day as soundly as possible, and wake up in the evening; so that we never could go out together, and never could have friends. Our leisure was taken up with him entirely. Before he came, Jack used to read aloud in the evening while I worked, but that was all over now. I used to look at fathers and mothers who had brought up large families of children, and think to myself, "Poor creatures! what must you have gone through!" And I wondered that they looked as well as they did.

Our baby slept so much in the daytime that he was often wakeful at night, and then Jack and I took it in turns to walk about the room with him, a quarter of an hour at a time. I am afraid I must confess that the discomfort arose from my not knowing how to manage him. Yet he throve through it all. After all, I did the best I could for him, and soon learnt wisdom by experience. Things looked brighter in a little while, and even baby settled down into his right place.

And now we came to a point in baby's life when we were in doubt as to what was the right course to pursue. Our little one was nearly three months old, and the time came for him to be vaccinated. A neighbour of ours, named Mrs. Gregory, had had a baby about the same time that I had, and her husband was very strongly opposed to vaccination. He declared that it was unnecessary and also injurious;

that though intended to prevent one disease, it led to others which were as bad, if not worse.

Mr. Gregory was a very honest, well-meaning man, though perhaps not over well educated. There was no doubt about one thing: he believed that he was right, and he was very much in earnest. He said that healthy children frequently had their blood poisoned by having lymph put into their arms which had been taken from babies who were diseased in their bones, having inherited disease from their parents; and he said also that, no matter what he might have to endure, he would never allow a child of his to be vaccinated.

It was not to be wondered at that, feeling so strongly as he did on the subject, Mr. Gregory should try to persuade others to act as he was determined to do, and he was particularly anxious that my husband should see the matter in the same light that he did. He used to come to our house evening after evening, and bring anti-vaccination tracts for us to read, and tell us of cases in which mischief had followed vaccination, until we were quite miserable. I saw that Jack was most unhappy on the subject. He said that if he really were convinced that vaccination was injurious, he would cheerfully endure any penalty—pay fines, be imprisoned, and endure more than imprisonment—rather than that our dear little boy should be exposed to any danger.

Of course I thought he was right, and I loved him for caring so for baby. The question was, how should we best show our love and care for him—by letting him be vaccinated, or by refusing to do so? We had already received a notice saying that baby must be vaccinated before he was three months old, or we should be liable to a fine; and while we were talking the matter over, small-pox broke out in the neighbourhood, and our doctor urged us very strongly to lose no time, but to let baby be vaccinated at once. So we had to make up our minds, one way or the other, and very difficult work we found it.

One evening Jack came home with a very determined look on his face, and I could see he had made up his mind what he would do. I said nothing to him, however, but waited until he had had something to eat and had rested for awhile. He always told me everything, and I knew I should hear what he was thinking about when the right time came; and I was not disappointed.

We had not quite finished tea when Mr. Gregory came in. "Well," he said, "I have come to know if you have made up your mind about this matter. Are you going to submit to be tyrannised over, and let your child be injured, in order that doctors may make money, or are you going to be a man, and stand up for your rights and your baby?"

"I have made up my mind what to do," said Jack quietly. "I don't understand the right and the wrong

in this case, and I hear so many different opinions that I don't know what to think. You tell me that baby will be injured if he is vaccinated. I believe you are an honest man, and that you are saying what you believe to be true. But I believe that Mr. Edwards, on the other side of the way, is an honest man also, and that he says what he believes to be true; and he tells me that if baby is successfully vaccinated he will be safe from small-pox. Which of you is right? Which am I to believe?"

"Which are you going to believe?" said Mr. Gregory.

"I am going to believe neither," said Jack. "I am going to lay the matter before some one whom I trust, and who understands the subject, and that is my old friend Dr. Thornton."

"A medical man! Was ever such absurdity?" said Mr. Gregory, rising from his seat in his excitement. "Why, don't you know that doctors make money out of getting people vaccinated? They are the last people to ask, because it is their interest to keep it up."

"If they make money out of it, it is because it is their business," said Jack, "and I don't see that a man is less likely to know about a thing because he has made it his business. If I wanted my watch mended I should go to a man whose business it is to mend watches, and he would make money out of me; but I should get my watch set going in return."

"Yes, but that is different," said Mr. Gregory.

"I don't see that it is," said Jack. "Neither do I see why I should suspect a man's honesty because he wants paying for his work. We all have to make a living, and we generally suppose that people make their living out of something they understand. Besides, there are honest men in every trade, and I know Dr. Thornton is an honest man. If my wife or my baby were ill, I should go to him first thing, and I should place them in his hands, knowing that he would do the very best he knew. Why should I not consult him on this subject, which I know he has specially studied and thought over?"

"I consider the thing is lost," said Mr. Gregory, turning away. "Of course, if you go to a doctor he will talk you into obeying the law and having the child vaccinated. Doctors can always talk."

"I shall not have baby vaccinated because he talks only, or because the law orders it," said Jack. "I am going to tell him my difficulty, and ask him *why* he recommends vaccination. I think, seeing that he has studied the subject, he is better able to speak about it than people would be who had devoted themselves to carpentering and watchmaking. That is all. What I *do* will be determined by what I think best for baby."

"Well, of course you will do what you think best," said Mr. Gregory. "By the way, are you going now to see the doctor? You would not like me to go with you, I suppose?"

"Certainly I would, with all my heart," said Jack. "I should like you to do so."

"And I shall go, too," said I. "I also want to understand what is best for baby."

"Fortunately, we found Dr. Thornton at home and disengaged. Jack at once laid the case before him. He told him of the different opinions he had heard, and how some people had told him that vaccination was a good thing and others that it was a bad thing. He wanted to know which was right.

Dr. Thornton listened very gravely. When Jack had finished, he said, "I am very glad you have acted as you have done, and determined to inquire into the subject before you allow your child to be vaccinated. I know that there has been a great deal of agitation lately as to the beneficial effects or otherwise of vaccination. As you say, some people say one thing and other people say the opposite, until simple-hearted folk do not know what to believe nor what to think."

"That is just it," said Jack. "We hear so many different opinions, we don't know what to believe nor what to think."

"To my mind," said Dr. Thornton, "it is not wise to follow other people's opinions about anything. If you do so you will constantly go zigzag, because you will follow the last speaker. There is no reliance to be placed on popular opinion: it changes with every wind. But there is a better guide than opinion."

"And what is that?" said Jack.

"It is *fact*. My advice to you is, acquaint yourself with the facts of the case, form your own opinion from them, and act upon that, and your way will be straight before you."

"And what are the facts?" said Jack.

"I will tell you what I believe them to be, from the returns published by the Registrar-General," said Dr. Thornton. "You must remember that these returns have been quoted by those opposed to vaccination as well as those in favour of it, and their correctness has not been questioned. Of course you know that, years ago, the deaths from small-pox were far more numerous than they are now, and that the disease was a perfect scourge in the land."

"I believe that to have been the case," said Jack.

"Well, then, for the facts. The Compulsory Vaccination Act was passed in 1854. The deaths from small-pox were less by one-half *after* this Act was enforced than they were before. In certain places where vaccination has been efficiently carried out, small-pox has not appeared for years. Small-pox has been felt most severely in places where vaccination has *not* been efficiently carried out. During recent epidemics, out of every five people who have died of small-pox, four have been set down as unvaccinated to one as vaccinated."

"Oh, then you see that some even of the vaccinated die of small-pox?" said Mr. Gregory.

"Wait a minute," said Dr. Thornton. "I am now going to give you some facts supplied by a gentleman who was for forty-one years resident medical officer of the old Small-Pox Hospital."

"He ought to have known something about it," said Jack.

"He did know something," said Dr. Thornton. "He said that although the deaths from small-pox among persons who were supposed to be vaccinated averaged over 8 per cent., yet even among these the

mortality varied. It was less than one per cent. among those who had distinctly-marked scars of vaccination; ten per cent. among those who had defective arm-marks, and twenty per cent. among people who only *said* they had been vaccinated."

"You think, then," said Jack, "that deep scars on the arm show that vaccination has been effectual?"

"I cannot say that is the only point of importance," said Dr. Thornton, "for the size and character of the scars have also to be taken into consideration. I am quite convinced, however, that the reason why we have small-pox amongst us is that people are contented with being vaccinated when babies, and do not get re-vaccinated when they are grown up."

"Get re-vaccinated!" said Jack. "I never thought of such a thing. Then my wife and I need to be vaccinated as well as the baby?"

"Certainly you do," said Dr. Thornton. "There is no doubt that after a time the good effects of vaccination die out, and the business needs to be done over again. When vaccination takes successfully, the patient is safe for some years, but not for life. *Remember that it is only recent successful vaccination which secures absolute immunity from small-pox.*"

"Oh! Well, after all, that is only opinion," said Mr. Gregory; "I thought we were to have fact."

"True. When I spoke I gave you my opinion. I will now give you the facts which led me to form it. Mr. Marson, the surgeon of whom I spoke just now, says that the nurses and attendants at the Small-Pox Hospital who have been successfully re-vaccinated enjoyed absolute immunity from small-pox, although they were exposed to infection in its severest form. Further, that *no death from small-pox has been recorded* of a patient who had been efficiently re-vaccinated."

"In the face of facts like that it seems criminal to neglect vaccination," said Jack.

"Don't go so fast," said Mr. Gregory. "I admit that Dr. Thornton's facts prove that vaccination prevents small-pox; they do not prove that a child may not, through vaccination, get some other disease which will be almost as bad."

"Quite true, quite true," said Dr. Thornton; "I believe that in an infinitesimally small number of cases, owing to carelessness or the ignorance of the practitioner, disease has been transmitted through vaccination. It has happened that the child from whom the lymph was taken was diseased, or the operation has not been properly performed, and the result of vaccination has been harmful."

"Ah! I am glad we have come to this. This is my point," said Mr. Gregory.

"Very well," said Dr. Thornton. "Then I say to you, if you are uneasy on that account, you can be vaccinated straight from the calf."

"Do you think—is it your opinion—that this is really necessary, Dr. Thornton?" said I.

"No, I do not. If I were a private individual, and were going to be vaccinated myself, I should go to the public vaccinator. These men understand their work thoroughly; they know what lymph to avoid,

and have the best opportunities of giving such vaccination as will protect. I know you will be surprised to hear me say it, but I believe that there is no vaccination so likely to be efficient as public vaccination, and chiefly because it is done directly from one baby's arm to another."

"Well, doctor, I am very much obliged to you," said Jack. "I am thoroughly convinced. I will have baby vaccinated by the public vaccinator to-morrow. Now I want to know about re-vaccination. How often ought grown-up people to be re-vaccinated?"

"All those who have not been vaccinated since they were infants ought to be re-vaccinated at once," said Dr. Thornton. "If the re-vaccination is successful, or 'takes well,' as the saying is, they may be satisfied so long as the marks remain distinct. If the re-vaccination does not take, they should be vaccinated again every two or three years, especially if there is an epidemic of small-pox."

"And what about the re-vaccination of children, doctor?" said I.

"Children who have been successfully vaccinated when infants should be re-vaccinated when they are about fourteen. Then they may be considered safe for life, if the marks remain distinct. Children whose vaccination is not successful should be vaccinated again and again at intervals of from two to three years. They cannot be considered safe until vaccination has been effectual."

"You take plenty of trouble about the matter," said Mr. Gregory, as we rose to take our leave.

"Trouble! Of course we take trouble," said Dr. Thornton; "and it is well worth it. Take the word of an old man, my friend: the longer you live, the more you will find that you never get anything in this world that is worth having without paying its price in one way if not in another. Very often you pay most heavily when you think you have got a thing for nothing; and you are very fortunate if all that you have to pay for a great benefit is a little trouble."

As we were walking home, Jack said, "Well, shall you have it done, Gregory?"

"Yes," said Mr. Gregory, "I shall. But I shall have to pay more than the trouble of the thing; I shall have to give up a prejudice, and that is not easy work."

"You are right, it is not easy," said Jack; "but we can do more than that to save our babies."

So we were all vaccinated; and in a little while how thankful we were for it! Small-pox, which had been talked about for a long time, at length broke out in our neighbourhood. Little children and grown-up men and women were attacked by it, and some died, and others were disfigured for life, so that they were glad to hide their faces from their friends. People fled from those who were smitten by the dread disorder, and did not dare to give help and show sympathy, for fear they also should be stricken. In the midst of it all our little ones were safe. The evil was there, but the remedy had been found. We had been persuaded to accept the teaching of fact, and so our babies walked securely in the midst of danger.