

SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

EDWARD JENNER¹

It is a hundred years since the remains of Edward Jenner were laid to rest in a vault in the chancel of Berkeley Church. He died on January 26, 1823, and was buried on February 3. He had been born in 1749 in the vicarage of Berkeley, and spent a large part of his professional life in his native village as a general practitioner—one of the most illustrious who has ever adorned the ranks of medicine. His great teacher and friend, John Hunter, wanted him to enter on a different career; but Jenner was a born naturalist, fond of a country life, so that even when, in the interests of vaccination, he was persuaded to take a house in London, he quickly repented, and later on returned to Berkeley.

The oft-told story of his great conception of preventing small-pox by means of cow-pox is classical in its simplicity and brevity. In his master's surgery at Sodbury he heard a countrywoman remark that she could not take small-pox because she had already had cow-pox. The little incident remained in the mind of the busy village doctor for many years, to be mused over, discussed with friends lay and medical, set aside and returned to with a curious mixture of perseverance and dilatoriness which was no doubt in his mind when he remarked in his *Inquiry* that people may not be aware "how often men engaged in professional pursuits are liable to interruptions which disappoint them almost at the instant of their being accomplished. Ultimately, however, in 1796, he put the matter to the touch—he inoculated with cow-pox, tested the effect by inoculation with small-pox, and found that immunity had been achieved. The rest of his life was devoted mainly to the promotion of vaccination. . . .

The centenary of Jenner's death follows close on that of Pasteur's birth. Their lives overlapped by a month, Pasteur having been born thirty days before Jenner died. Their life's labors were closely related. Apart from variolation with its serious disadvantages, vaccination was the first example of the operation of the principle of individual immunization. For the greater part of a century it remained

an oasis in a desert, and for long there seemed no prospect of its further application. Now, however, since Pasteur brought into existence the science of bacteriology, the sphere of immunization by different methods has been wonderfully extended, and the armamentarium of preventive medicine correspondingly strengthened. In a remarkable passage in one of his books Sir John Simon wrote that "if departed great benefactors of our race could now and then look down on the harvest fields where mankind age after age is gladdened by the fruits of their labor, they would in general find themselves less remembered than perhaps their terrestrial ambitions had desired"; but, he adds, "let the noble compensation be noted that often the thoroughness of a reformer's victory is that which most makes silence of the reformer's fame. For how can men be adequately thankful for redemptions, when they have no present easy standard, no contrast between yesterday and to-day by which to measure the greatness of them?" That question applies specially to the case of Jenner, but neither Jenner nor Pasteur can ever be forgotten. It was, if we recollect aright, in an address at the centenary of the death of Robert Burns that Lord Rosebery, speculating about the duration of personal fame, prophesied that if there were every hundred years a roll call of the famous departed, the "Adsum" of Burns would sound clear and strong all down the coming time. In the much more prosaic sphere of preventive medicine and the benefactions of science, so it will be with Edward Jenner and Louis Pasteur.

THE LONDON ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS¹

IN consequence of the retirement on pension of Mr. R. I. Pocock, F.R.S., who attains the age of sixty in March after having been superintendent of the Zoological Gardens and curator of mammals since 1904, the council has rearranged the staff at the gardens. Dr. G. M. Vevers, at present a Beit Research Fellow and on the staff of the London School of Tropical Medicine, has been appointed superintendent, and, under the direction of the secretary, will be the principal officer there. Mr. D. Seth Smith, at present curator of birds and inspector of works, has been promoted to be curator of

¹ *The British Medical Journal*.

¹ From the *London Times*.