

offered to vaccination: a man or a woman refuses to protect their child by vaccination against small-pox, in nine cases out of ten, upon some personal or family experience of injuries which they believe have been caused by vaccination. While in no way agreeing with those who urge that all sorts of diseases, such as consumption and syphilis, can be transmitted by means of humanised lymph, it was decided last year that only pure calf-lymph should be employed. It is now an offence against the law for any medical man to use other than the lymph supplied by the Government. This lymph is prepared under the most careful conditions, and recently arrangements have been made whereby all calves used for the purposes of vaccination are first tested by tuberculin by a competent officer in order to prevent the possibility of a tubercular animal being employed; not only this, but a large proportion of the calves are killed immediately after the lymph has been taken from the vesicles, and not until the *post-mortem* examination discloses the fact that the animal is quite well and healthy is the lymph allowed to be sent into circulation. I am very pleased to say that a revolution is taking place all over the colony in favour of vaccination. Special facilities have been given to parents, so that their children may be vaccinated free of charge and under conditions which insure not only purity of the lymph, but safety during the operation.

Last session, 1900, following the example of the Imperial Parliament, the House of Representatives introduced what is called the "conscience clause" into the Vaccination Act. While, as a sanitarian pure and simple, I consider this was a mistake, yet I would hesitate to recommend that this clause be deleted from the Act. Legislation too far ahead of public opinion must necessarily incur want of confidence, and, while it might be possible to enforce the provisions of any Act at the point of the bayonet, so to speak, there can be no doubt that such a course would be very inadvisable. The better plan, and the course which will make for the more lasting peace and satisfaction, is one whereby all and sundry can be convinced logically of the value of any measure which may be passed. It is in this direction that the Department has been working during the last year, and the results are very far from being disappointing. It would be advisable, however, that Parliament should see its way to empower the Governor in Council to declare any area which in the opinion of the Health Officers is more than usually open to the introduction of small-pox a vaccination area in which for the time being vaccination should be compulsory. The danger from small-pox is, as I have already said, very much greater than that to be anticipated from plague, and I sincerely hope that the movement which has already attracted a great many adherents will go on increasing in force until an unvaccinated child shall become almost as rare as the dodo. It is only fair to point out to those members of the House who, relying on the Commission appointed at Home to inquire into efficacy of vaccination against small-pox, have chosen to follow the Imperial example with regard to the conscience clause, that the introduction of this clause was a tentative experiment: it was in no sense a final judgment upon the matter; it was intended that the experiment should be finite, and a period of five years was suggested. The whole question will therefore be reopened in the Home Parliament in the course of another year.

Under "The Public Health Act, 1900," any Registrar of Vaccination was entitled to grant an exemption upon the parent of the child declaring that he or she had a conscientious objection to the child being vaccinated. Feeling certain that in the majority of cases these exemptions were asked for under the belief that there was little or no danger owing to the long absence of small-pox from the colony, and in not a few instances was due to a desire on the part of the parents to avoid any little trouble consequent upon vaccination, it was suggested that the right to grant these exemptions should be placed in the hands either of a Stipendiary Magistrate, or, as an alternative proposal, that the District Health Officer should exercise this right. My object in limiting the list of exempting officers was based upon the belief that, if the full facts with regard to the protective power of vaccination against small-pox could be put before every mother and father in the colony, not a tithe of the exemptions granted would be even asked for. There is no desire on the part of the Department to override the convictions of parents which have been arrived at after careful and judicious consideration of the whole data. What we ask for is simply that the right should not be left in the hands of men who have no special knowledge of the value of vaccination, and who possibly may undertake the duties with a prejudice against the operation. I would suggest, therefore, for the consideration of the House of Representatives, that the practice of granting exemptions by Registrars or Justices of the Peace should be entirely abolished. The District Health Officer, in the course of the prosecution of his duties, of necessity has to visit all the outlying parts, as well as those in the centre. It would be an easy matter for him to hold a Court, so to speak, where he would have an opportunity of laying before all those interested in the matter the results of all the latest experiences with regard to vaccination and small-pox. At the present time every facility is being offered by the appointment of numerous Public Vaccinators, the supply of pure calf-lymph free of charge by the Government, and the only thing wanting is an opportunity of speaking to and meeting those who at present object to avail themselves of this safeguard against one of the most infectious and deadly of modern diseases. There will be found in the appendix copies of several circulars which have been issued by the Department in reference to this matter, and also some photographs which were taken of patients attacked during the recent epidemic in London. If only those objecting could be brought face to face with a case of confluent small-pox, I feel perfectly certain no further arguments on my part would be necessary.

LEPROSY.

During the past year some forty or fifty cases of alleged leprosy among the Native population have been investigated by officers of this Department. It has been repeatedly urged by some of the older medical men in the colony that leprosy does exist to a considerable extent among our Native brethren. This, after careful investigation, has been proved to be in the main incorrect. So far as I am aware, there are only two cases of leprosy in the colony—that is, of course, excluding those