

Doctor Therne

By

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Some months since the leaders of the Government dismayed their supporters and astonished the world by a sudden surrender to the clamour of the anti-vaccinationists. In the space of a single evening, with a marvellous versatility, they threw to the agitators the ascertained results of generations of the medical faculty, the report of a Royal Commission, what are understood to be their own convictions, and the President of the Local Government Board. After one ineffectual fight the House of Lords answered to the whip, and, under the guise of a "graceful concession," the health of the country was given without appeal into the hand of the "Conscientious Objector."

In his perplexity it has occurred to an observer of these events--as a person who in other lands has seen and learned something of the ravages of smallpox among the unvaccinated--to try to forecast their natural and, in the view of many, their almost certain end. Hence these pages from the life history of the pitiable, but unfortunate Dr. Therne.[*] Absit omen! May the prophecy be falsified! But, on the other hand, it may not. Some who are very competent to judge say that it will not; that, on the contrary, this strange paralysis of "the most powerful ministry of the generation" must result hereafter in much terror, and in the sacrifice of innocent lives.

[*] It need hardly be explained that Dr. Therne himself is a character convenient to the dramatic purpose of the story,

and in no way intended to be taken as a type of anti-vaccinationist medical men, who are, the author believes, as conscientious in principle as they are select in number.

The importance of the issue to those helpless children from whom the State has thus withdrawn its shield, is this writer's excuse for inviting the public to interest itself in a medical tale. As for the moral, each reader can fashion it to his fancy.