



**Poetry as a Device to Convince
Antivaccinationists: *Good Tidings; Or, News
From the Farm* by Robert Bloomfield**



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Özet

The Covid-19 originated pandemic that people throughout the world have been exposed to since 2019 arouses curiosity about the situations experienced in epidemic cases throughout human history. When one is in search of such cases, one may encounter that the scientists or physicians dealing with contagious diseases had difficulties not only in finding the treatment but also during the phase of the eradication of the disease by means of vaccination. Edward Jenner, who became the father of immunology owing to his invention of the vaccination against smallpox, was one of those physicians who had difficulties in persuading local people to get vaccinated. Jenner, aspired to eradicate smallpox, asked for help from Robert Bloomfield, a labouring-class poet. As a poet, Bloomfield's only means was his poetry. Thus he penned *Good Tidings; or News from the Farm* in 1804 to save people from prevalent absurd rumours and superstitions about the vaccine and to convince people to get vaccinated against smallpox; and thus, he contributed to protect them from the deadly disease. The purpose of this study is to analyze Bloomfield's poem in question in respect of its content in order to demonstrate how powerful a device a literary work could be to lead people to the scientific ways, and that a poem may be an appropriate means to be used in the annihilation of an epidemic.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Good Tidings; or News from the Farm*, Robert Bloomfield, Edward Jenner, smallpox, vaccination, antivaccinationists

**Aşı Karşıtlarını İkna Etme Aracı Olarak Şiir: Robert
Bloomfield'in *Müjde; Veya, Çiftlikten Haber* Başlıklı Şiiri**

Abstract

2019 yılından bu yana tüm dünyada insanların maruz kaldığı Covid-19 kaynaklı pandemi, insanlık tarihi boyunca salgın vakalarında yaşanan durumlar hakkında merak uyandırmaktadır. Bu tür vakalar araştırıldığında, bulaşıcı hastalıklarla uğraşan bilim adamlarının veya hekimlerin sadece tedavi bulmakta değil, hastalığın aşı yoluyla yok edilmesi aşamasında da zorluklarla karşılaştıkları görülmektedir. Çiçek aşısını icat etmesiyle immünolojinin babası olan Edward Jenner, yöre halkını aşı olmaya ikna etmekte zorlanan doktorlardan biriydi. Çiçek hastalığını ortadan kaldırmak isteyen Jenner, emekçi sınıf şairi olan Robert Bloomfield'den yardım istemiştir. Bir şair olarak Bloomfield'in tek gücü şiiriydi. Böylece Bloomfield 1804'te insanları aşıyla ilgili yaygın saçma dedikodu ve hurafelerden kurtarmak ve onları çiçek hastalığına karşı aşılınmaya ikna etmek için *Good Tidings; or, News from the Farm* şiirini kaleme aldı. Dolayısıyla, Bloomfield insanları ölümcül hastalıktan korumaya katkıda bulunmuştur. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Bloomfield'in söz konusu şiirini içerik açısından inceleyerek edebi bir eserin insanları bilimsel yollara yönlendirmede ne kadar etkili bir araç olabileceğini ve bir şiirin bir epideminin yok edilmesinde yararlanılan uygun bir araç olabileceğini ortaya koymaktır.

Key Words: *Good Tidings; or News from the Farm*, Robert Bloomfield, Edward Jenner, çiçek hastalığı, aşı, aşı karşıtları.

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*“The doctor paid off an old pox
By borrowing a new one from an ox.”
(Lord Byron, Don Juan, (1819))*

*A mother I know,
whose baby, on a cold winter day, was buried,
shouted wailing, “it's so cold there now”
embracing the soil,
couldn't leave his grave.
(Me)*

1.Giriş

The pandemic that people all over the world have been exposed to since the beginning of 2019 due to a type of corona virus called Covid-19, an infectious and communicable disease like other types of corona virus such as SARS-CoV-1 and MERS, makes one wonder if there had been such pandemics or epidemics previously in the world's history; and if so, how people managed to overcome such troubles and what scientific and medical solutions to the disease(s) they found. In the exploration of the contagious diseases that caused epidemics, one encounters not only scientists and physicians who attempted to eradicate the disease(s) but also civil folk who tried to help them either by sharing their experiences or by providing succour to the scientists by some other means. Robert Bloomfield (1766-1823), who is credited as a “laboring-class poet” (Scrivener, 2011: 237), is one of those people who was an advocate of Edward Jenner (1749-1823). He helped Jenner in his struggle to eradicate smallpox – a contagious disease especially in the 18th century England as well as in Europe and all the other countries of the world. Edward Jenner is an English physician, naturalist and medical researcher who pioneered the use of inoculation for smallpox. He is deservedly introduced in a praiseworthy way by various authors: “Edward Jenner, the Englishman of Berkeley in Gloucestershire, was the first person to think scientifically on the fact that cowpox protected from smallpox” (Harris, 1915: 71). “The man who put this new method into practice, vaccination, was a modest English physician. His name was Edward Jenner” (Bazin, 2000: 18). Jenner was a country physician when he started the initial struggle against smallpox and became the father of immunology with his invention of the vaccination against smallpox². Edward Jenner's prominence lies not only in his invention of the smallpox vaccine in 1796 but also in the fact that the smallpox vaccine is “the world's first vaccine against any disease”. “The dramatic decrease in smallpox deaths at the turn of the 19th century can be credited to his invention” (Ochmann and Ritchie, 2018: no pagination). Jenner is also known to have “spent much of the rest of his life supplying cowpox matter to doctors around the world, at one time joking that he had become “the Vaccine Clerk to the World” (Kotar and Gessler, 2013: 51). Jenner's discovery of the virus³ which protected

² In an early work about Jenner's invention of vaccination against smallpox, D. Fraser Harris gives an extended history of smallpox and presents the reader with the details of the medical history of smallpox including historic origins of immunization through inoculation and the attacks that Edward Jenner faced with after his invention of the vaccine against smallpox. See his essay entitled “Edward Jenner and Vaccination”. (*The Scientific Monthly*, Oct., 1915, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Oct., 1915), pp. 66-85). See also *Vaccinated: One Man's Quest to Defeat the World's Deadliest Diseases*. (New York: Harper Collins Publisher, pp. 32-34) by Paul A. Offit, who gives Jenner's story of inventing the vaccine in a narrative-like style.

³ The phases of Jenner's study on smallpox are given in detail in the part called “the Father of Immunology” in Kotar and Gessler's book entitled *Smallpox: A History*. (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers., 2013).

human beings against smallpox infections provided mainly the decrease in the mortality rates due to smallpox and more importantly the successive eradication of smallpox in all continents over years.

In spite of his great invention, Jenner faced many antivaccinationists who spread some absurd rumours about the vaccination. It was that time when Jenner needed Bloomfield's help. The doctor asked Bloomfield to write a poem in order to convince people of the benefits of the vaccination. Upon this, Bloomfield wrote his 386-line poem *Good Tidings; or News from the Farm*⁴ (1804) accompanied by an advertisement. The original title for the poem was "The Vaccine Rose" and the poem was "dedicated to Dr. Edward Jenner, as the discoverer, and to the members of the Royal Jennerian Society, as the promoters of vaccine inoculation" as it is stated in the foreword of the book (Bloomfield, 1805). The poem is the help Bloomfield gave Jenner "in his attempt to gain acceptance for vaccination against smallpox" (Barrell, 2006: xviii).

If we take a brief look at the nature of smallpox, we can say that it has an epidemic character. It used to kill millions of people every year. Smallpox is defined as "an infectious disease caused by the variola virus which infects exclusively humans. No treatment existed so once you caught smallpox nothing could be done but let the infection run its course" (Ochmann and Ritchie, 2018: no pagination). The virus of smallpox is known to be "very resistant and it can be carried through the air for considerable distances; it clings for long periods to clothes, books, furniture, etc." (Harris, 1915: 67). Paul A. Offit pinpoints significant characteristics of smallpox:

Easily spread by tiny droplets of saliva containing millions of virus particles, smallpox was a common, severe, debilitating infection. The virus caused high fever and a permanently disfiguring, pus-filled rash with a smell reminiscent of rotting flesh. Smallpox killed one of every three of its victims and blinded many survivors (2008: 31).

In the 18th and 19th centuries, many people were seized with smallpox; millions of people either died or disfigured by it. It is estimated that one out of every ten people (some say one out of every seven and Harris writes one out of every three in the above extract) died of smallpox. During the epidemic in Europe it is known that smallpox infected more than half of the whole population. Particularly young children were attacked by smallpox. It is also known that it caused blindness. It had almost a one-in-five mortality and people especially women were scared of this disease as it caused facial disfigurement and skin unsightliness especially on the face; it was also widely feared as a cause of body disorders and demise. Briefly, smallpox created horror among people. Ochmann and Ritchie's chart shows that "in London in the 18th century 1 in every 13 deaths was caused by smallpox, the majority of which were young children" (2018: no pagination).

In order to answer the question of why the vaccination is necessary in virus-transmitted diseases, we can quote Harris's explanation: "Now it is characteristic of a microorganic disease that a person who has recovered from an attack of it is immune from that disease for a longer or shorter time, in some cases for the remainder of life" (1915: 68).

Jenner's story of inventing the vaccination against smallpox, which is a contagious disease with high fatality rate and which caused epidemics in all corners of the world especially during the 18th century, has naturally become the subject matter of any study relevant to the

⁴ The title of the poem would be abbreviated as *Good Tidings* when it is referred to throughout the work.

smallpox vaccine. Considering that it would bulk large in this study to give the history and the details of Jenner's experiments and observations on smallpox and in order to prevent the study from being an unnecessarily lengthy one, we are not going to give these details. We will suffice to say that Jenner's point of departure was his observation that people who have in some ways had cowpox became immune from smallpox. "Survivors of Small Pox were exempt from the disease" naturally "during subsequent epidemics" (Smith, 2011: 1). That Jenner based his studies on this idea is confirmed in a way by John Baron, who wrote Jenner's life story along with his doctrines and selections from his correspondence. Baron states that

he [Jenner] always considered small-pox and cow-pox as modifications of the same distemper; and that, in employing vaccine lymph, we only made use of means to impregnate the constitution with the disease in its mildest, instead of propagating it in its virulent and contagious form, as is done when small-pox is inoculated (1827: 162).

Now it will be appropriate to focus on the antivaccinationism that Jenner faced with after he published the findings of his researches. Despite his great endeavour and devotion throughout 18 years from 1780, during which time Jenner devoted himself to the study of vaccination against smallpox, till 1798, and then, he published the positive findings of his study in the form of a pamphlet⁵. Jenner's invention of the vaccination against smallpox was not acclaimed fully either by the public or his colleagues. As Stefan Riedel notes "The publication of the *Inquiry* was met with a mixed reaction in the medical community" (2005: 24). Jenner's invention was treated with suspicion and even it was rejected by some. So for the first time an antivaccinationist attack occurred in the medical history of man.

It may be claimed that the fear of the unknown and new case caused the first anti-vaccine movement in the world; people thought that the vaccinated would be half-human-half-cow with horns and hooves. It is likely that people had made connections between cows and the vaccinated people because they knew that in order to be immune from smallpox, they had to be inoculated by cowpox taken from the cows infected with the disease. They believed that vaccinated persons would cough like cows, bellow like bulls and their faces would grow like that of an ox and their bodies would be hairy like beasts. Harris thinks that this objection stemmed from people's "sentimental repugnance to the idea of being given one of the diseases of the lower animals" (1915: 80-1). Kotar and Gessler also point out "men of the day denounced the vaccine on religious grounds, stating they would not be treated 'with substances originating from God's lowlier creatures'" (2013: 52).

Controversies and vigorous denunciations about Jenner's invention did not take part only in the public; similar debates took part in the medical sphere as well. Jenner is known to have been sneered at even by his colleagues. Bazin notes that though Jenner "managed to rally

⁵ In 1797, upon the Royal Society's rejection of his work explaining his experiments and observations and including the findings of his work on smallpox on the pretext that the study was not carried on with enough number of cases and "the amount of evidence was not strong enough to warrant its publication", Jenner himself published a booklet entitled *An Inquiry into the Causes and Effects of the Variolae Vaccinae, a Disease Discovered in Some of the Western Counties of England, Particularly Gloucestershire and Known by the Name of Cow Pox* in 1798. Jenner's study which was republished in 1802 can be accessed on <https://collections.nlm.nih.gov/catalog/nlm:nlmuid-2559001R-bk>. See both Harris's "Edward Jenner and Vaccination" in *The Scientific Monthly*, Oct., 1915, Vol. 1, No. 1; 66-85), p. 73, and Riedel's "Edward Jenner and the History of Smallpox and Vaccination" in *(Baylor University Medical Center Proceedings*. 2005: 21-25), p. 24.

sincere and loyal supporters, those who opposed his method and those who were envious were equally determined” (2000: 70) as was Jenner in his cause. He also states that during the period, in which he published his work with a lengthy title and he made his work on smallpox known by the public, “Jenner became a famous man”. But unfortunately, “this fame brought with it its share of jealous and envious people who harassed him, tormented him and tried to ridicule him by saying his theories were complete rubbish” (Bazin, 2000: 40). One of the reasons for such objections to Jenner’s vaccination was that the new promising situation did not comply with the financial interests of some doctors of the time. The social medical context of the time related to physicians who were against the smallpox vaccination is given briefly by Kendall A. Smith as follows:

Not everyone immediately embraced the idea, especially the physicians who had lucrative Small Pox inoculation infirmaries and practices. Thus, as time progressed, the UK became divided into those who ascribed to vaccination and those who were skeptical and thought that only Small Pox inoculation would confer true protection against Small Pox (2011: 3).

It is also known that “the sect of anti-vaccinators had arisen, and was to some extent organized” and “[c]aricatures, lampoons, scurrilities, vulgarities and misrepresentations, the mean, were scattered on all sides” (Harris, 1915: 76). Harris gives us some examples of such unbelievably absurd views about Jennerian way of vaccination as follows:

A Dr. Rowley, evidently imagining himself honored by a special participation in the Divine counsels, declared that “small-pox is a visitation from God, but cowpox is produced by presumptuous man. The former was what Heaven had ordained, the latter is a daring violation of our holy religion.” It was rather hard to blame Dr. Jenner for the origin of cowpox. It took much forbearance to endure this sort of thing; but Jenner’s was a first-class mind and he evidently dealt leniently even with fools. It was not for the first time in the world’s history that a lover of mankind had been spurned with the words – “He hath a devil and is mad” (1915: 76).

The propaganda even gave opportunity to some artists like James Gillray (1756-1815), who drew a caricature⁶ in which people are depicted as grotesque figures. Gillray’s burlesque on the vaccination bears the name “The Cow-Pock or the wonderful effects of the new inoculation. Edward Jenner among patients in the Smallpox and Inoculation Hospital at St. Pancras”, and it “ridicules rumors promulgated by vaccination opponents, circulated in a series of pamphlets [...] and depicts the inoculation of a series of individuals at London’s Smallpox and Inoculation Hospital” (Pearlson, 2017: no pagination). The physician wearing a brown coat represents Jenner and around him there are patients deformed in different ways. In the cartoon, as Pearlson notes, “Gillray simultaneously portrays the anxieties of the opponents of vaccination while ridiculing their ill-informed and histrionic ideas” (2017: no pagination).

In effect, before Bloomfield wrote *Good Tidings*, Bloomfield and Jenner knew each other. Bloomfield knew that his father died of smallpox when he was a baby. Bloomfield was

⁶ The caricature is a famous one that depicts a crowd of people getting the smallpox vaccine and its outcomes illustrated in a grotesque form. See Godfrey Pearlson’s “Smallpox Vaccination in the Satirical Work of James Gillray” in *Hektoen International; A Journal of Medical Humanities*. Chicago: The Hektoen Institute of Medicine, 2017. on <https://hekint.org/2017/02/01/smallpox-vaccination-in-the-satirical-work-of-james-gillray/>

interested in the developments in the treatment of smallpox when his brother Nathaniel's third child died of smallpox in 1802, and then he decided to have his family inoculated (Matthew and Harrison, 2004: 281).

Good Tidings is a poem which was written under these circumstances and it "spread the gospel of vaccination from the country to the town-based public" (Fulford and Lee, 2006: 150). So "Good Tidings" in the title of the poem clearly refers to the miracle of vaccination. Bloomfield himself describes his poem as a dedication to Dr. Edward Jenner and "a cordial attestation" of Jenner's cause on the inner cover page of the book⁷. The poem may be defined as a lyric dealing with a communitarian subject matter, vaccination against an epidemic disease. It is also a didactic poem because it reveals the poet's personal experiences concerning smallpox and its bad effects. Besides, it is implied in the poem, every nation owes much to Jenner and everyone must show gratitude toward Jenner. The poem also offers its readers a poetic unity of a scientific issue and feelings. Although the subject matter dealt with in the poem is promising little for poetry and "peculiarly unfit indeed for poetry" as Bloomfield himself expressed in the "Advertisement"⁸, he skillfully dealt with, in his poem, a scientific subject matter such as vaccination, and combined it with human sentiments.

The alternative title of the poem, i.e. "News from the Farm" should be attributed to the fact that Jennerian way of protection from smallpox is based on the idea that anyone who had cowpox, which is a cow disease, becomes immune to smallpox. The story of Jenner's starting point for his invention of the smallpox vaccine can be found in the following excerpt taken from Harris's work.⁹ In effect, the fact that the way of prevention of smallpox lied in the cattle living in farms may be thought to have been source of inspiration for Bloomfield as a rural poet. Nature herself and elements of nature are generally reflected in his poetry as the source of life – one of the approaches to Nature in Romanticism – as it is so in the poetry of the other nature poets writing in the Romantic tradition. As it is known the Romantic poets emphasized the purity, beauty and glory in Nature; Nature is seen, by them, as the source of

⁷ Robert Bloomfield. *Good Tidings; or, News From the Farm*. (Philadelphia: Hugh Maxwell, 1805). <https://collections.nlm.nih.gov/ext/mhl/2543069R/PDF/2543069R.pdf> Accessed on 11.11.2021. (All further references are to this edition of the poem, with line numbers provided parenthetically in the text.)

⁸ See Robert Bloomfield (*Selected Poems: Robert Bloomfield, Revised and Enlarged Edition*. John Goodridge & John Lucas (eds.). Nottingham: Trent Editions), p. 76.

⁹ "persons who had acquired cowpox by handling cattle, but especially by milking cows, were immune from smallpox [...] Cowpox, or vaccinia, though infectious for cows, is not transmissible among human beings, in other words, as a disease of man it is not infectious. Edward Jenner [...] was the first person to think scientifically on the fact that cowpox protected from smallpox [...] Cowpox had broken out on a farm near Berkeley and a dairy maid called Sarah Neames contracted the disease. On May 14, 1796, Dr. Jenner took some fluid from a sore on this woman's hand and inoculated it by slight scratching into the arm of a healthy boy eight years old, by name James Phipps. The boy had the usual "reaction" or attack of vaccinia, a disorder indistinguishable from the mildest form of small-pox. After an interval of six weeks, on July 1, Jenner made the most momentous but justifiable experiment, for he inoculated James Phipps with smallpox by lymph taken from a sore on a case of genuine, well-marked, human smallpox, and the boy did not take the disease at all. Jenner waited till the nineteenth of the month, and finding that the boy had still not developed variola, he could hardly write for joy. "Listen," he wrote to Gardner, "to the most delightful part of my story. The boy has since been inoculated for the smallpox which, as I ventured to predict, produced no effect. I shall now pursue my experiments with redoubled ardor." Fraser Harris, ("Edward Jenner and Vaccination". *The Scientific Monthly*, Oct., 1915, Vol. 1, No. 1, Oct., 1915), pp. 71-73.

all knowledge and glory. Natural world and rural life are appreciated by the Romanticists because they believe that the industrialized world and urban life corrupt human beings.

Good Tidings was written as a whole in rhyming lines coming after one another not separated as stanzas. It begins with a pastoral scene in which the reader sees a plain and pure child playing in nature:

Where's the Blind Child, so admirably fair,
With guileless dimples, and with flaxen hair
That waves in ev'ry breeze? he's often seen
Beside yon cottage wall, or on the green,
With others match'd in spirit and in size,
Health on their cheeks, and rapture in their eyes;
That full expanse of voice, to childhood dear,
Soul of their sports, is duly cherish'd here:
And, hark! that laugh is his, that jovial cry;
He hears the ball and trundling hoop brush by,
And runs the giddy course with all his might,

(1-11)

The scene also reveals a serious and painful consequence of smallpox: *blindness*. Unfortunately, the boy at play has been exposed to a bad consequence of smallpox: he is blind. Such a bad consequence's being given by means of the reflection of a young innocent child who is at play in nature makes the situation more pathetic. The line "A very child in every thing but sight;" (12) reveals the idea that he is playing innocently like the other children who do not have any bad effect of the disease, but smallpox has made him blind. What is also given in these lines is that blindness caused by smallpox is not rare. The fact that the poet wrote the "Blind Child" with capital initials can be considered as an indication that the phrase represents not a single blind child but all other children blinded by smallpox. The reader is told that the blind child may be seen everywhere either beside "the cottage wall or on the green" (4). Thus the image of the "Blind Child" evokes, in the reader, the extent of seriousness of smallpox. On the whole it was known that in the 18th century smallpox was a dreadful disease, as Smith notes, "accounting for about 10% of all deaths. It was especially virulent in infants and children, and when it swept through a village, from 20 to 50% of those infected died as a consequence. Moreover, those who survived were often disfigured by pockmarks, and smallpox led to blindness when it spread to the eyes" (2011: 1). Capitalisation in the phrase may also be considered to serve to attract the attention to the disease. The image of the "Blind Child", whether taken in its specific meaning implying just one particular blind child or in its general meaning implying the plurality of blind children, it is obvious that what Bloomfield does in the above lines is to reflect, in a poetic and sentimental way, a genuine situation caused by smallpox.

In the following lines of the poem, the poet continues to describe the blind boy in action through the detailed descriptions, by means of which the poet aims to create a mental picture in the reader's mind. By this way, the reader sympathizes with the blind child. Without seeing anything in his surrounding, the boy "Creeps on the warm green turf for many an hour" (29), plucks some flowers, smooths their stems and rests on his knees; and finally, he goes home feeling the way because he lost his eyes. The child's recalling the time before he lost his sight is a touching one, which is given by means of such a natural element as sky. The poet says: " — he remembers, too, / When he could gaze on heav'n's ethereal blue," (37-8).

Good Tidings can also be identified as a poem on the miseries wrought by smallpox. The parts where people are reflected to suffer from smallpox are worthy of remarking. These parts of the poem attract the reader's attention in respect of their inclusion of the combination of both realistic elements which serve the reader's eye and emotional elements which serve the reader's sentiments. In other words, the poem appeals to both the mind and the inner world of the reader. In order to exemplify this argument, the lines in which we are given the sad state of a mother can be examined. In the lines from 47 to 64, the reader hears a mother's voice. The mother of the smallpox-blinded child – the child is actually the blind child that appears at the beginning of the poem and is described at play, – is asked in the previous lines, probably by the persona of the poem, "When was this work of bitterness begun? / How came the blindness of your only son?" (41-2). Upon this, she recalls in grief that terrible day when her once healthy son was seized by smallpox. She begins to narrate the story of her son's blindness in tears.

Thus pity prompts full many a tongue to say,
But never, till she slowly wipes away
Th' obtruding tear, that trembles in her eye,
This dagger of a question meets reply:—
(43-6)

She says that the disease came to their village from the town before the harvest:

"My boy was healthy, and my rest was sound,
"When last year's corn was green upon the ground:
"From yonder town infection found its way;
(47- 9)

In line 49 and the expression in the 52nd line "he breath'd the tainted air;" it is implied that the disease is an airborne one. The woman is also telling that there were people who died of smallpox then; for this reason, she was extremely worried about her son: "Around me putrid dead and dying lay. / I trembled for his fate: but all my care" (50-1). The woman continues her narration with the description of those horrific days during which her son was blighted by smallpox. In her narration she combines the realities about smallpox and her feelings and emotions towards her sick son. She recalls that her son's skin was all covered with blisters and she was anxious and in pain because she did not know what would become of her son – he might die or might be disfigured or blinded due to the disease. The mother tells that she realized, probably through the end of the different phases of the disease, that her son had become blind. The following lines reveal the horrible effect of smallpox on her child:

Watching with such anxiety and pain
Till he might smile and look on me again;
But that was not to be—ask me no more:
(61-3)

The woman ends her words with her prayer "God keep small-pox and blindness from your door!" (64). This wish may be taken as a warning to people who oppose or tend to oppose vaccination. This prayer once again reminds people of how terrible smallpox is.

In the above lines, the reader has sympathy for the small-pox blinded boy's mother. It is likely that in order to protect children from the awful effects of smallpox, Bloomfield wanted to arouse the same feelings of terror, anxiety, pain and grief in the reader – the feelings that

the mother had and has while narrating the story of blindness of her son. In other words, the poet's conveying the facts about the disease and his revealing the intense feelings of the mother indicate that Bloomfield wanted people to understand that they could protect themselves and their children against smallpox by means of the vaccine. In these lines, Bloomfield champions Jenner and recommends indirectly the public the smallpox vaccine invented by Jenner. His sincerity about Jenner's invention is also felt by the reader. As a conclusion, Bloomfield can definitely be said to have wanted people to receive the blessing offered to them by the benevolent scientist.

In the next lines, Bloomfield sees smallpox as "demon" and vaccine as the blessing that will cause demon to lose his power (67-8). The following lines confirm that *Good Tidings* is a poem in praise of the smallpox vaccine. The reader is provided with an imaginary future situation when the vaccine is administered everywhere in the world and when everyone is protected from smallpox.

To spread a saving conquest round the earth,
Till ev'ry land shall bow the grateful knee,
Would it not be a glorious day to see?—
That day is come! my soul, in strength arise,
(70-3)

In the first line of the above quotation, vaccination is praised and the reader is told when smallpox prevention is provided by vaccine throughout the world, it will look like a "saving conquest". According to the poet, that day will be the day when everyone in every country will be saved and grateful, and will genuflect in front of the inventor; i.e. it will be a glorious day. In effect, that day has already come as Edward Jenner invented the vaccine, through which everyone would be in fine fettle. It is known that in Jenner's own time, he was appreciated and honoured by many nations. For instance:

In Germany, Jenner's birthday (May 17) was celebrated as a holiday. Within six years, Jenner's gift to humanity had been accepted with that readiness with which the drowning clutch at straws. The most diverse climes, races, tongues and religions were united in blessing vaccination and its discoverer. The North American Indians forwarded to Dr. Jenner a quaintly worded address full of the deepest gratitude for what he had saved them from: "We shall not fail," said these simple people, "to teach our children to speak the name of Jenner, and to thank the Great Spirit for bestowing upon him so much wisdom and so much benevolence" (Harris, 1915: 75).

So when Bloomfield's poem is put in its historical context, it is seen that it carries the impacts of some historical and social facts such as celebrations and Jenner's appreciation by many countries for his invention of the smallpox vaccine.

Throughout the poem, smallpox is called "scourge of the world" (139), "momentous triumph fiend" (127) and "a visitant with pow'r to kill" (104). The words "the serpent" (240), "a foe" (245) and "the pest" (247) imply smallpox. The name of the disease denotes "destruction" and its "breath" brings death to man (129-30). The infectious character of the disease is told in the lines "And foul contagion spread on ev'ry side;" (176) and "Contagion, a foul serpent lurking near," (237). The only remedy for the protection from smallpox is vaccine invented by means of the power of mind. Bloomfield's complete confidence on human reason is clearly seen in the related lines of the poem. The poet praises human mind and intelligence in

his poem because it is human mind which paved the way for the invention of the vaccine. In relation to this idea, there is an appreciation of science and scientific method, which may be exemplified by the following lines:

Dear must that moment be when first the mind,
Ranging the paths of science unconfin'd,
Strikes a new light; when, obvious to the sense,
Springs the fresh spark of bright intelligence.
(95-8)

The lines between 112 and 120 contain the praise of Jenner. Jenner's act of inventing the vaccine is reflected as a triumph, as an outcome of Jenner's never-ending hope and his "conscious power of doing good" (116). It is his will and wish to embrace "Th' emancipation of the human race;" (118), which makes him a victor against smallpox; and his triumph, according to the poet, should be praised by all people. The feeling of joy that people have thanks to Jenner's victory is so precious that it is "a wealth that grateful nations cannot give" (120). In the lines, "Forth sped the truth immediate from his hand, /And confirmations sprung in ev'ry land;" (121-22), Jenner's generosity is emphasized. The reader is told that Jenner did not hold it in his hand, that is, he did not use the vaccine just for his own nation. Rather, he bestowed it on all humanity. The vaccine is regarded, in the poem, as a "magic charm" (124) that ends the fiend's reign and the "glorious prize" setting "life and health" (249-50) in front of man.

In another part of the poem the reader hears the speaking persona in the poem asking to himself what the impetus lying behind his lines is. In other words, he asks what motivated the poet to write these lines or in a more general sense, this poem. The aim of the rhymed lines below seems to put forth the impetus lying behind Bloomfield's writing such a poem urging people to get vaccination.

'Why tell us tales of woe, thou who didst give
Thy soul to rural themes, and bade them live?
What means this zeal of thine, this kindling fire?
The rescu'd infant and the dying sire?
(201-4)

The poet reveals that he has written this poem containing "tales of woe" and dealing with the rural themes in order to protect people from the implied disease, that is, smallpox and thus to bid them life. It can also be inferred that the poet has written this poem with enthusiasm probably because it has a noble aim in it.

In the following lines, knowing Bloomfield's father died of smallpox when he was only one year old and Bloomfield's brother Nathaniel lost two children due to smallpox, the reader understands that Bloomfield wrote this poem to show the bitter reality caused by smallpox. It is death. It is probable that his feeling of a deep pain owing to these deaths in the family gave Bloomfield impetus to give a hand to Jenner in his battle to eradicate the disease by writing *Good Tidings*. Thus it may be thought that *Good Tidings* is a poem focusing on the effects of smallpox on the people in rural areas and taking images from the poet's own life. Bloomfield made use of his painful experiences and put them in his poem in order to arise sentimentality in the reader. Bloomfield informed his reader about his poem's being based on the realistic elements and reliance on his personal experiences concerning smallpox in the part "Advertisement", which precedes the poem:

[Good Tidings] indulges in domestic anecdote. The account given of my infancy, and of my father's burial, is not only poetically, but strictly true, and with me it has its weight accordingly. I have witnessed the destruction described in my brother's family; and I have, in my own, insured the lives of four children by Vaccine Inoculation, who, I trust, are destined to look back upon the Small-pox as the scourge of days gone by (Bloomfield, 2007: 10).

Good Tidings may also be called a call to all people as well as the objectors of vaccination. Appealing to the sentimental side of man, the poet encourages people to get vaccinated. The poet urges people to get vaccinated by talking about children, who appeal to the most sensitive side of many people, and asking them a question that no parent can reply as 'no'; he asks "Love ye your children?" (239). The poem continues:

— let that love arise,
Pronounce the sentence, and the serpent dies;
Bid welcome a mild stranger at your door,
Distress shall cease, those terrors reign no more.
(239-42)

It is clearly indicated that if people allow their children to get vaccinated, the "distress" and "terror" caused by smallpox will cease. The poet continues to persuade the people to get vaccinated in the following lines:

Love ye your neighbours?—let that love be shown;
Risk not their children while you guard your own;
Give not a foe dominion o'er your blood,
Plant not a poison, e'en to bring forth good;
For, woo the pest discreetly as you will,
Deadly infection must attend him still.
Then, let the serpent die! this glorious prize
Sets more than life and health before our eyes,
For beauty triumphs too! Beauty! sweet name,
(243-51)

According to the poet, one must think of one's neighbour as well as one's own child(ren). It is an ethical obligation. In order to gain victory over smallpox, everyone should do his best, should do his part. Everyone should take part in the battle of the annihilation of the disease. It is everybody's responsibility to stand against this common enemy. This can only be achieved by everyone's approach to the case with the feeling of brotherly love. To act together is the only way of defeating the disease.

A similar call appears towards the end of the poem in order to indicate the ultimate benefits of vaccination. The poet addresses mothers and fathers implying the idea that it is in their hands to protect their children from smallpox. When smallpox prevention is realized, mothers will not sigh over their children stricken with or disfigured by or die of smallpox; rather they will sigh with relief. If fathers recalling the reason for grief at home (because most of the people had experiences of smallpox's deadly effects) allow their children to be vaccinated, they will defeat the enemy, smallpox. For this reason they are advised to make up their mind to have their children vaccinated:

Mothers! the pledges of your loves caress,
And heave no sighs but sighs of tenderness.

Fathers, be firm! keep down the fallen foe,
And on the mem'ry of domestic woe
Build resolution. — Victory shall increase
Th' incalculable wealth of private peace;
And such a victory, unstain'd with gore,
(361-67)

The praise of Jenner and the vaccination is a recurrent approach throughout the poem. The following lines are the revelations of this approach; but this time, Bloomfield embellishes his lines with his national feelings:

Yes, we have conquer'd! and the thought should raise
A spirit in our prayers as well as praise,
For who will say, in Nature's wide domain
There lurk not remedies for every pain;
Who will assert, where Turkish banners fly,
Woe still shall reign—the plague shall never die?
Or who predict, with bosom all unblest,
An everlasting fever in the West?
Forbid it, Heav'n!—Hope cheers us with a smile,
The sun of Mercy's risen on our isle:
Its beams already, o'er th' Atlantic wave,
(279-89)

Here Bloomfield enthusiastically states that Jenner is worthy of both prayers and praise. He tells how the despair of those who are hopeless in the face of smallpox is in vain because Jenner has already invented the way of protection from the disease. He also states, with the feeling of nationalism, that it is someone from his own country who has destroyed this hopelessness stemmed from the epidemic. According to the poet, this great achievement of England means conquering the world. Being a poem of praise, *Good Tidings* continues with a eulogy to England in the following lines:

The sword of commerce, nations bought and sold,
They owe to England more than mines of gold;
England has sent a balm for private woe;
England strikes down the nation's bitterest foe.
Europe, amidst the clangor of her arms,
While life was threaten'd with a thousand harms,
And Charity was freezing to its source,
Still saw fair Science keep her steady course;
(309-16)

In the above lines, it is stated that Jenner and his country did not benefit from the vaccine materially and that they did not gain any profit by selling it to other countries. Vaccine was not made a commercial property, it was not used as a means of gaining profit in the capitalistic system neither by Jenner nor by his country, England. Rather, it was used for the good of all humanity. This is a noble act. The poet elaborates his ideas stating that the vaccine is more valuable than gold mines, and in effect, no country can pay for it. The vaccine, which is referred to as “a balm” (311), has been sent to other countries by England “while life was threaten'd with a thousand harms” (314). So England “strikes down the

nation's bitterest foe" (312). Being an Englishman, Jenner deserves, for his invention, not only national but also international veneration.

The appreciative tone of the poem is toward not only Jenner and his country and the vaccine but also the rural world. By means of this approach, Bloomfield emphasizes the idea that the source of the vaccine is the rural life or nature. As we have mentioned earlier, the source material of the smallpox vaccine is the lymph of cowpox. In relation to this, Bloomfield's rural vision can be observed in the following lines:

And such a victory, unstain'd with gore,
That strews its laurels at the cottage door,
Sprung from the farm, and from the yellow mead,
Should be the glory of the pastoral reed.

(367-70)

On the whole in the romantic tradition Nature is seen as the great teacher from which man can learn many things by means of observation and the Romantics accept the idea that Nature is inherently harmonious in herself. Jenner is known to have developed the vaccine by means of cowpox lymph extracted from cows in order to vaccinate people against smallpox, and the first cow that was used for this purpose was the one called Blossom. Bazin introduces Blossom as "the cow who initiated the eradication of the smallpox" (2000: 54). Asserting the idea that it is Nature that provides remedy for smallpox, Bloomfield gives a highly positive valence to Nature and develops a romantic vision in his poem.

Then the poet draws an image of village on whose paths one cannot encounter any young man disfigured or any child blinded by smallpox. In the poet's imagination, there is no milkmaid whose beautiful face is scarred by smallpox. Thanks to the vaccine, people will not have to experience such grief any more; everyone will be in good fettle. And life then will be like "an uncontaminated spring" (371-80). Bloomfield ends his poem with the idea that everyone should be scrupulous enough to feel responsibility and perform his duty towards the other people; everyone should be respectful towards the others' feelings and Nature. Only by protection by vaccine can man "hail" the "pleasurable hours", which implies leading a delightful life with an absence of smallpox. In the last line of the poem, "And, at the foot of Science, strew thy flow'rs!" (386), Bloomfield repeats his advice that people should rely on science.

As can be observed throughout the poem, Bloomfield's all endeavours in it are for the acceptance of Jenner's vaccine. It is clear that due to the oppositions of Jenner's vaccination, Bloomfield wrote this poem. If we recall the social and historical context related to the vaccination issue, we can say that although Jenner's idea of vaccination was novel and promising and also a certain way of protection from smallpox, it was faced with disagreements. The rationale behind the disagreements were several including sanitary, religious, scientific and political objections. It is stated, in "History of Anti-vaccination Movements", that "for some parents, the smallpox vaccination itself induced fear and protest. It included scoring the flesh on a child's arm, and inserting lymph from the blister of a person who had been vaccinated about a week earlier" ("History of Anti-vaccination Movements", 2018: no pagination). Besides, the objection had a religious base: "Some objectors, including the local clergy, believed that the vaccine was "unchristian" because it came from an animal". Objections also came from those who did not understand science or had no or little medical knowledge. "For other anti-vaccinators, their discontent with the smallpox vaccine reflected their general distrust in medicine and in Jenner's ideas about disease spread. Suspicious of the vaccine's efficacy, some skeptics alleged that smallpox

resulted from decaying matter in the atmosphere”. Another group of anti-vaccinationism was constituted by those who “believed it violated their personal liberty, a tension that worsened as the government developed mandatory vaccine policies” (“History of Anti-vaccination Movements”, 2018: no pagination). So the objections had also a seemingly human rights base.

The conclusion of this study would be a little bit personal and relevant with the current issues. Unfortunately, anti vaccinators are still with us in spite of various and bitter lessons the history has taught human kind. Nowadays, at least in Turkey, it has been observed that many of the patients who have suffered from Covid-19 severely and those who have died of Covid-19 are the ones who had not been vaccinated because either they were antivaccinationists or they did not believe in the scientific methods. Antivaccinators’ rejecting the power of protection of the vaccine is not something that could be acceptable in today’s world when we compare the situations with the antivaccination movement against the smallpox vaccine in the 18th century because there was no such a thing as vaccination till Jenner's invention. People did not know anything about the protection from diseases through vaccination. But today, though knowing that such diseases as smallpox, typhoid, rabies, mumps, measles, tuberculosis, tetanus, polio and many others are vaccine preventable diseases, some people reject to be vaccinated or to get their children vaccinated, seeing vaccination as violation of human freedom. As not being vaccinated, they actually take away the other people’s freedom of leading a healthy life or freedom of life altogether. Even if we think that unvaccinated people cannot be a threat to the others as long as the others are vaccinated and so they will constitute a threat just to themselves, we should not forget that in the society, there would be unvaccinated people such as babies and children under a certain age. This situation, that is, the existence of unvaccinated people in the society, perturbs many people. It leads us to sadness that today some people in Turkey have a way of thinking similar to that of people living two centuries and two decades ago. Today, people do not say that we will look like cows or our horns will grow when we get vaccinated; however, the urban myths produced are in line with those produced by the antivaccinators of the past in respect of absurdity. Just the causes of objections are different; just the stories are different; today’s myths are relevant to today’s technology: The statements that ‘everyone will be chipped by vaccination’, ‘they will put chips in our brains and watch us at any moment’ show that people have not changed much since Jenner’s time, which is leading many of us to hopelessness. It has to be taught people that vaccines are safe, effective and are built to save lives and people are just injected, as in some cases of vaccination, attenuated virus so that the body would develop a protection against disease when people are infected with the natural virus. The only sensible thing to be desired in these days is more faith and respect to science. I want to hope that the awareness about the vaccine will increase among people and vaccine will help to end the pandemic. I’m not in charge of urging people to get vaccinated; yet I believe that the scientists who invented and developed vaccination against Covid-19 deserve respect and veneration because obviously, they are leading an unselfish life; their lives are the noblest and the most devoted ones as was Jenner’s about two and a quarter centuries ago. In order to show veneration to Uğur Şahin and Özlem Türeci and the other scientists who discovered and contributed to the development of the Covid-19 vaccine, each of us need to have enough common sense to appreciate the greatness of the work they did for mankind. People should receive the blessing offered to them by the benevolent humble and devoted scientists in order to contribute to the annihilation of Covid-19 throughout the world.

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