

The Smell of Small Pox

By J. W. Henson

One time, long ago my grandfather was walking downtown. Back then that section of town was known for its Pawn Shops. One was called Alper's Pawn Shop. That is the only name that I can remember. They had the habit of attaching a loud buzzer to the window of their shops to attract people's attention and to get them to come into the store. As he walked past one of these stores the owner, who was standing out on the sidewalk, caught the old man by the arm and took him into the store. Inside were tables aligned into rows and piled high with used clothes that were being offered for sale.

Grandpa assumed the attitude of one looking through the clothes. Leaning over he said in a low voice to a lady who was also shopping, "I can smell Small Pox on these clothes! I have often smelled it in the past." Of course he couldn't, it was just his way of getting even with the storekeeper for hustling him into the shop under escort. Small Pox was not correctly understood in those days so it was feared. He immediately left the premises, and as he glanced back others could be seen emerging onto the sidewalk. A little later he was returning down the sidewalk past the store and the police were there padlocking the door. Such was the mania associated with Small Pox back then.