

THE VITAL VACCINE:

To a house in Stoke Pages, once the home of musical hall star Vesta Tilly, Glaxo chairman Sir Harry Jephcott welcomes the Minister of Health, Mr. Dennis Vesper. The Minister has come to inspect the production of Polivirin, British anti-polio vaccine which has already given 200,000 children a powerful defence against this dreadful disease. This department produces the liquid medium in which the culture is to be prepared.

Tissue of monkey kidneys is cut up to receive the virus; there are three types of polio virus; a strain of each is prepared separately - the blending will come later, to make a vaccine which will give protection against all three forms. One hundred per cent cleanliness, and the most rigid precautions, are enforced - for the infected culture is deadly, at this stage.

An incubator room brings the culture to maturity; this process takes four days, during which the culture is kept in motion. The final vaccine, of course, contains only dead virus; formalin treatment will kill off all live virus, and a foolproof system of checking and double-checking will ensure that it has done so.

This British vaccine is a modification of the Salk vaccine which has had such great success in the United States. Britain has learned from America's mistakes, and has taken stringent measures to ensure that there will be no repetition of the American accident, in which a faultily-tested batch caused a local outbreak of the very disease it was intended to prevent. It will not happen here.

When the three different strains of vaccine are ready, they are blended in the right proportions to give maximum immunity. There's enough vaccine to give 100,000 anti-polio inoculations in each of these giant vessels - and the contents of each vessel is worth £20,000. A lot of money - but a small price for safeguarding the future of a hundred thousand children!