Nachlass Robert Koch
Signatur: as/b1/215
DOI: 10.25646/11050

41, Geisberg Strasse,
Berlin, W.
June 16, 1904

Dear Sir, I beg to enclose the report of the interview which you were kind enough to give me last Tuesday. Should you desire to make any further communication I shall be most happy to act ~~as you~~ for you.

Faithfully yours
Michael A. Morrison

Anlage: Zeitungsartikel

41, GEISBERG STRASSE,
BERLIN, W.

June 16. 1904.

Dear Sir,

I beg to enclose the report of the interview which you were kind enough to give me last Tuesday. Should you desire to make any further communication I shall be most happy to act ~~as your~~ for you.

Faithfully yours
Michael A. Morrison

ad: 61/25 7

Daily Chronicle 15/6/04

ONICLE, WEDNESDA

TUBERCULOSIS.

DR. KOCH STICKS TO HIS GUNS.

NOT CONTAGIOUS.

THE MILK THEORY IS BESIDE THE MARK.

Professor Koch, the celebrated bacteriologist, still adheres to his opinion, propounded two years ago, that tuberculosis is not communicable from oxen or cows to man, notwithstanding the conclusions of the Royal Commission. Three questions were set before the Commission for determination, namely:—

(1) Whether the disease in animals and man is one and the same.

(2) Whether animals and man can be reciprocally infected with it.

(3) Under what conditions, if at all, the transmission of the disease from animals to man takes place, and what are the circumstances favourable or unfavourable to such transmission.

In their interim report the Commission have decided that the disease is one and the same in animals and man. The other questions remain for solution.

[From Our Correspondent.]

BERLIN, Tuesday.

I saw Professor Koch to-day after his eighteen months' absence in South Africa, where he has been investigating questions connected with the cattle plague. He informed me that he had a copy of the report of the Royal Commission on Tuberculosis, but had no time yet carefully to study it. When the time comes, he hinted, he will have something to say in reply.

Meanwhile he would prefer waiting until he can study the narration of the details of experiments as well as the discussions of the Commission before he passes a final judgment on their work. The Commission have been busy experimenting, but the question for Professor Koch is what were these experiments, and how were they conducted. This is vital.

The report does not impress Dr. Koch. He sees in it nothing to cause him to alter the opinion he expressed two years ago in London. He is surprised to see that men of the high rank of Professor Macfadyen have signed it in its present shape.

What were the questions referred to the Commission? First, whether tuberculosis in men and animals is one and the same. This the Commission, the professor agreed, may have succeeded in answering, but he would wait for their proofs. Second, whether animals and men can be reciprocally infected by it. The Commission have proved probably that the bovine animal can be infected by material of the human origin. This, however, has been generally known, said Dr. Koch, but they have not proved that men can be infected by material of bovine origin. This is the supreme question which the Commission has not decided.

NO EVIDENCE.

With increasing emphasis, Dr. Koch continued: "I see absolutely no reason to change my view, arrived at after years of careful experiment, that there is no evidence to prove that men can be infected by animal tuberculosis in any than the very slightest degree. The Commission has only treated half the question, and that the less important half.

"I remain," he again repeated, "where I was. Show me," he added earnestly, "one single man who has been so infected. Prove to me that he has been so infected before you ask me to change my point of view. Of all the millions of men, women and children who eat bovine flesh and drink milk, how is it that no

case is known where tuberculosis has been set up by partaking of infected beef and milk?

"Of course, calves may be infected, doubtless they are, by sucking in tuberculous milk, but prove to me that babies are infected. For combating tuberculosis all this cry made about milk is of minor importance, and misses the mark. It is a 'Nebensache,' for too much stress is laid on it, and far too little on the chief causes of the disease—viz., spittle of persons diseased, insanitary and incommodious dwellings, where people sleep in confined spaces.

"It is on the removal of these great causes of disease that I would spend the large sums now available for battling against tuberculosis. Not one penny would I spend on the 'Nebensachen.'"

Professor Koch promises to give the complete report of the Commission his careful attention, and he will certainly take an early opportunity of making his conclusions public.

THE PROFESSOR CRITICISED.

[By a Medical Expert.]

Professor Koch's attitude, as revealed in the interview, is perfectly natural and strictly scientific. It has been already pointed out in our columns that the interim report is by no means conclusive on the whole of the questions at issue. To show that the bovine species is susceptible to infection by human tuberculosis is one thing; to prove that the human species is susceptible to bovine tuberculosis is another and a very different thing.

This much is admitted; but when it is further shown that human and bovine tuberculosis are, so far as any known or conceivable tests are concerned, in every respect identical, then it becomes, to say the least of it, highly probable that human beings are liable to infection by a germ which is indistinguishable from that which admittedly works such havoc in their lungs and other organs.

Professor Koch is well within his rights in declining to criticise the work of the Commissioners, until their full report is available, and if he had persisted in this attitude no one could legitimately have criticised him. But he does not. He anticipates their findings by asserting that all this cry about milk is a "Nebensache." That, of course, is the whole question which awaits decision. If human beings are immune to bovine tubercle, then the fear of infection through milk is certainly a "Nebensache"; but if they are not immune then the whole matter of the responsibility of milk in disseminating the disease becomes a "Hauptsache," beside which everything else pales into insignificance.

The importance of general hygienic measures, such as sanitary dwellings, good food, and an abundance of fresh air, upon which Dr. Koch rightly lays stress, are conceded as being essential in any campaign not only against the bacillus of tuberculosis, but against every other bacillus or microbe which tends to multiply itself in our bodies. As a rule, these bacilli visit us, if not as simple spies, then certainly in small detachments; it is only when they become big battalions that they are formidable to the ordinary normal individual, and as milk presents the very best medium for the introduction of these big battalions into our own and our children's bodies, it is not unreasonable in us to demand that the assertion that the condition of the milk as to bovine germs is a "Nebensache" should be proved up to the hilt before we embark upon the policy of "laissez faire" to which Dr. Koch would seem to invite us. After all, the *onus probandi* is with the learned professor.