

## Editorial

### The Final Report of the Royal Commission on Tuberculosis.

The British Royal Commission on Tuberculosis has now issued its final report. Ten years ago, in August, 1901, this Commission was called together at the initiative of Mr. Walter Long, the then President of the Local Government Board, and as a result of Dr. Robert Koch's pronouncement, at the International Congress on Tuberculosis of the preceding year, against the transmissibility of Bovine Tuberculosis to human beings.

Three problems were placed before the Commission for solution: First—Is Tuberculosis in man and animals one and the same disease? Second—Could man contract Tuberculosis from animals and vice versa? And, third—Under what conditions, if at all, the transmission of the disease from animals to man takes place; and what are the circumstances, favorable or unfavorable, of such transmission? And the Commission's findings are that in many cases human Tuberculosis is identical with the Bovine disease, and that Tuberculosis may be communicated to man by infected cow's milk and by tubercular meat.

In order to arrive at these conclusions farms and laboratories were equipped at Stansted, in Essex, and placed under the control of resident investigators, working, of course, under the direct supervision of the Commissioners, although a few independent investigations were taken into consideration.

During the past ten years the Commission issued four reports, including the present report. In the first report published by the Commission three years after its inception, summing up the results of preliminary investigations, it was shown that the germ found in certain cases of Tuberculosis produced in cattle a disease which could not be distinguished from the Bovine type. Three years later the second interim report was published, which went to confirm the view that Bovine Tuberculosis was dangerous and the possible source of infection in man. This is the report

that the late Professor Koch took exception to at the Washington Congress on Tuberculosis in 1908. The third interim report published two years ago dealt with certain conditions of Tuberculous cows which rendered milk infectious to human beings, and the final report now under notice contains the results of the entire inquiry into Tuberculosis and definitely states that this disease can be transmitted from animals to man. The whole of Dr. Koch's theory is thus upset, and after much disputation we are back at the standpoint of 20 years ago.

It is interesting to note the striking differences in the results pointed out by the Commissioners among calves of about the same age and weight which were experimented upon. Bacilli derived in some cases from bovine sources and in some cases from human sources were injected into different calves and yet, while some calves succumbed and died of general progressive tuberculosis, others apparently remained in good health and showed on examination only a very retrogressive infection. The Commissioners therefore recognized the fact of inherent conditions in the susceptibilities of different individuals and were led to the conclusion that in the case of the calves described, while the pathogenic bacilli injected were the same, the powers of resistance of the calves were different. This important point demonstrates that external conditions are not everything and that a great deal in the preservation of health depends upon the innate power of resistance of the individual.

Without hesitation, the Commissioners report: "First, that man must be added to the list of those notably susceptible to tubercle bacilli; second, that mammals and man can be reciprocally infected with the disease; third, that the disease may be communicated from different mammals to man from infected cows' milk, it having been clearly shown that a large portion of the tuberculosis of childhood is due to infection from this source and from tubercular meat."