

Selections.

The Relation of Bovine to Human Tuberculosis.

An unusual flutter has been caused in the medical profession, as well as in scientific circles generally and among the laity, by the declaration of Professor Koch at the London Congress of Tuberculosis, that it is impossible to transmit bovine tuberculosis to the human subject. This idea, which is by no means original with Professor Koch, is based on certain researches he has recently conducted, in which he found it impossible to infect cattle with the sputa or the bacilli from cases of tuberculosis in man. The lay press, with characteristic eagerness to create a sensation when news is scarce, have accepted the learned Professor's opinions as absolute statements of fact, and, in consequence, have drawn hasty conclusions and have indulged in much absurd comment wholly unwarranted by the data brought forward by the observer. It is always unsafe to accept the dictum of any investigator, no matter how eminent, unless substantiated by positive evidence. While any opinion expressed by so competent an authority as Dr. Koch is worthy of all respect and of careful investigation, it would be exceedingly unwise to accept it as oracular. The medical world cannot forget the unpleasant reaction and the discredit to medicine that followed his premature announcement of a cure for tuberculosis a few years ago. Moreover, since the tuberculin *fiasco*, Koch's contributions to medical science have not been such as to re-establish him in the full confidence of the profession, and many regret that he did not allow his fame to rest on the sure foundation of his splendid achievements earlier in his career.

In his investigations into malaria and Texas fever, he showed a tendency to arrogate to himself credit for discoveries in which others had preceded him many years, and this disinclination to give due credit to fellow-workers in the field of Science has been particularly resented on this side of the Atlantic. Besides, what is now heralded in the secular press as an epoch-making discovery—that man is insusceptible to bovine tuberculosis, was suggested by Theobald Smith and others some years ago, but in the guarded and dignified manner of careful investigators. From the impossibility of using human subjects for experimental purposes, there is no direct proof forthcoming that man cannot be infected by the organisms of bovine tuberculosis. Because he found it impossible to produce the disease in animals by inoculating them with the germs of human tuberculosis, Koch concludes that the diseases in man and cattle are entirely different, and, therefore, reasons apparently by analogy, that man is not susceptible to bovine tuberculosis. Such