

in relation to age ; while it is certainly met with as a specific character sometimes, and then it is limited to that species or its near allies.

It is, perhaps, not prudent to omit here a caution to the effect that in the suggested provisional definition inferences or conclusions should not be confused with and placed as facts ; that, for example, because no distinct evidence has as yet been found of the existence and etiological activity of any parasitic irritant in a "cancer" therefore it is not right to assert that such a factor is never present and cannot be operative. The care to avoid a definite negation on this point is the more important seeing that some authoritative pathologists, even some of those who deny parasitism in "cancer," do see in it proofs that some sort of irritation is concerned with its etiology. On similar general grounds the use of such an expression as "cancer" cell should be avoided as it does not signify a proven fact but an opinion.

The presumption which may well be imputed to me for making this suggestion I am not blind to, and in defence can but say that the confident hopes I have, that were it acted upon, good would follow are an excuse though not a justification.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Nottingham, Jan. 11th, 1907.

W. H. RANSOM.

### "PRODROMATA."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In your columns of November last Sir William Gowers animadverted on the prevalent error of taking "prodroma" as a nominative singular, and hence not a few writers had derived the queer plural of *prodromata*. Sir William Gowers was so good as to invite my opinion as to the alternative of "prodromas." I could not admit that "prodromas" was a tolerable alternative and I have suggested the familiar word "precursors" as equally expressive and quite grammatical.

However, my point to-day is not to labour this question but to show on the authority of a recent paper by Professor Ridgway<sup>1</sup> that we are far from being the only sinners in this kind. In the name Ancona the Romans took the Greek accusative Ἀγκωνα for a nominative singular. Again, the names of the Attic months ending in -ων—no doubt a genitive of the construction, "the month of (understood) Βοηδρομιών"—imposed themselves gradually as nominatives, and the Athenians actually declined them as such, altering the accent. The Latin *sestertium* affords a good parallel. Once more, Professor Ridgway tells us that the city name "Philippi"—declined by the Romans *Philippi -orum*—arose from accepting the primitive genitive Φιλιπποι πόλις as a plural nominative. So the solecists who have invented *prodromata* are in no bad company.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Cambridge, Feb. 10th, 1907.

T. CLIFFORD ALLBUTT.

## HUMAN AND BOVINE TUBERCULOSIS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The report just issued by the Royal Commission is a splendid example of true scientific research and a lasting monument to the untiring patience and industry of the researchers. The two chief facts which have been established are : (1) the difference (whatever the degree may be) between bacilli of the *typus humanus* and the *typus bovinus* ; and (2) that bacilli of the *typus bovinus* on entering the human body may set up active and fatal tuberculosis.

My researches during the last nine years, coupled with an exceptional clinical experience, led me to come to the same conclusion, and in 1903 I published a paper based on bacteriological work in which I succeeded in isolating *bovine* bacilli from the mesenteric glands of a child suffering from primary abdominal tuberculosis. So far as I know, this was the first occasion in this country in which such bacilli were isolated and demonstrated as corresponding with the bacilli found in *Perlsucht*. The conclusions come to by me in 1903 correspond very closely with those arrived at by the Commission and I have for the last four years published papers in THE LANCET urging the necessity of stamping out tuberculosis in dairy cattle as a means of preventing the disease in children. I believe that practically all surgical tuberculosis is the result of ingestion of *bovine* bacilli in food, and more especially milk in children.

There is only one point in the report on which I disagree,

and that is in reference to the question of the identity of human and *bovine* bacilli. They say :—

It is well known that in the case of many diseases caused like tuberculosis by a micro-organism, immunity against the disease may be secured by introducing into the body the micro-organism causing the disease in such a way and in such a small dose that the disease thereby set up is slight and transient. The results obtained in this way have been so striking as to lead to a general acceptance of the view that a micro-organism which can thus be used to produce immunity against a particular disease may be regarded as identical with the micro-organism causing that disease. Hence, if the bacillus of human tuberculosis can be used to confer immunity against *bovine* tuberculosis or *vice versa* we are supplied with a further proof of the identity of the two diseases.

I venture to submit that tuberculosis cannot be classed with the ordinary diseases caused by pathogenic organisms, either in its mode of onset or the course which it takes. It is now established that cattle can only be rendered immune from *bovine* tuberculosis by injecting small and repeated doses of *human* tubercle, and that all efforts to immunise them by injections of *bovine* tubercle have signally failed. This clearly shows to my mind a difference (whatever it may be) between human and *bovine* bacilli, supported in a great measure by the fairly uniform cultural appearances observed between the two bacilli.

I believe Koch to be right in asserting that *bovine* bacilli cannot set up *human* tuberculosis, but it can set up serious and fatal *bovine* tuberculosis in man, for the simple reason that the human body is susceptible to attack by both human and *bovine* bacilli, as proved by the Commission ; hence the enormous importance of safeguarding our milk- and meat-supply. I sincerely hope that this excellent report will be immediately followed by legislative measures which will insure so far as possible the purity of milk.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Liverpool, Feb. 11th, 1907.

NATHAN RAW.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Article 15 of the Dairies, Cowsheds, and Milkshops Order of 1885 provides that the milk of a cow suffering from certain diseases—of which tuberculosis is not one—(a) shall not be mixed with other milk ; (b) shall not be sold or used for human food ; (c) shall not be sold or used for food of swine or other animals, unless and until it has been boiled. The D.C. and M. Order of 1899 extends the above, so that for the purposes of paragraphs (a) and (b) thereof "disease" shall include tubercular disease of the cow's udder. By the exclusion of paragraph (c) from the operations of the order it is no offence to feed milch cows, or animals used for human food, upon unboiled tuberculous milk. Is it not time the Local Government Board amended this order ?

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

R. BRUCE FERGUSON, M.D. Cantab., D.P.H., &c.

Feb. 11th, 1907.

## THE SURGEON'S POWER OF LIFE AND DEATH.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In what way I am responsible if an article, entitled as above, in the *Independent Review*, which is a London monthly, did stir into enthusiasm the *gobe-mouches* of the local press in the district in which I reside, as asserted by the Editor of THE LANCET, is quite incomprehensible to me. However, to let that pass : in addition to the enthusiasm of the *gobe-mouches* in my district, the article has also evoked widespread interest throughout the country ; it has been the subject of a leader in the *British Medical Journal*, in one of the chief London, and also in one of the leading provincial daily papers. What the Editor of THE LANCET elegantly calls an extraordinary farrago is a precise and accurate statement of what is daily happening under the present condition of affairs. It is undeniably true that, as soon as a man has obtained any medical qualification, he is at once given the power of deciding whether a person consulting him shall be submitted to an operation which may cost him his life ; it is quite true that this terrible power of life and death is placed in the hands of an inexperienced youth practically without any safeguard ; it is also quite true that when an operation has been performed, if the patient die and a medical certificate is given by the operator there is an end of the matter, no inquiry is instituted, nothing whatever is done by the State. Stigmatising these facts as an extraordinary farrago is a cheap but most ineffective way of getting out of replying to them.

<sup>1</sup> Cambridge Philosophical Society, Jan. 24th, 1907.