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Bizarre Was the Fate of the Physician

The Conradi Affair

By AUGUST W. DERLETH and CARL W. GANZLIN

Excerpts from the diary of Professor R. H. Conradi, M. D., F. R. S., found in his room on the morning of October 30:

OCTOBER 17 . . . There can be no doubt that I have at last isolated the *Bacillus lepræ*. According to the theory I have advanced to a selected number of my colleagues, it will now be possible for me to develop this germ and cause its mass propagation. I suppose I shall encounter difficulty in feeding it at first, but after I have overcome this difficulty, I shall feed it in proportion to its growth.

Dr. Herrick has loaned me his large glass vat for the purpose of keeping the germ in its various stages.

October 19 . . . My success is imminent. The germ has multiplied, as I anticipated. It—or perhaps I

should say *they*, for it is no longer one, but a spongelike mass of millions of cells that threaten to outgrow the capacity of the vat—has increased to the diameter of one inch.

On the eighteenth I fed the germ a half-pound of beef and bone. The meat was consumed by this morning. There was nothing visible save a slimy coating at the bottom of the container, which I watched during the entire day. Toward evening the slimy coating had drawn together to form a globular mass of about one inch in diameter.

October 20 . . . Last night I threw five pounds of raw beef to the germ mass. This morning the meat was gone, and in its place I found a slimy layer with a bulbous center, which again drew together during the day. Tonight it is ten inches in diameter.

I am going to try fasting the germs, to watch their reaction.

October 21 . . . Today the diameter of the germ mass has decreased to five inches, and it is obvious that the individual germs have resorted to attacking one another for sustenance. I shall feed the germ mass ten pounds of beef and bone at once; there is no telling how swiftly these germs may annihilate themselves.

The mass immediately surrounded the food and devoured it. Tonight its diameter is twenty inches.

October 23 . . . For the past two days I have fed the germ mass; it has grown to approximately forty inches in diameter. I am very well satisfied with this result, and I am taking accurate observations, recording every available fact that may be useful in the ultimate extermination of the germ.

October 24 . . . Yesterday I fed the germs twenty pounds of meat. It was consumed with remarkable rapidity. This is quite natural, however; the rapid consumption I should say is due to the maturing of the individual germs.

The diameter of the germ mass has reached sixty inches. The vat will hold little more; consequently, I shall have to fast the germs for twenty-four hours.

October 25 . . . This morning there is a very perceptible movement within the germ mass itself. It is a sort of undulation prevalent in the entire mass. I watched it carefully, and it seemed almost as if the mass were making an effort to slither upward and out of the vat. There is a strong suggestion of an upward surge. At the same time the germ mass is decreasing; because of their period of fasting they (the individual germs) have again turned on themselves for sustenance.

The mass has reduced itself to thirty-five inches in diameter.

October 26 . . . Twenty pounds of meat today! It will not be long before they reach their former diameter, when I shall begin my experiments on the life of the individual mature germ.

Later . . . I am elated! The food has greatly rejuvenated my germs. There is again that undulating movement, but this time it is certainly not an individual germ movement but a mass movement. It is again sixty inches in diameter. I am certain that by tomorrow I shall be able to experiment with my new-found serum.

I am just a little nervous, worrying about the hugeness of the germ mass and the success of my experiment.

October 27 . . . Only a few hours until I can bring my experimentation to an end. What will Herrick say? The work is very tiring, but not monotonous.

I am horribly nervous. What if something should happen? If the germ mass should get out?

The following is an excerpt from the Chicago Times dated the thirtieth of October:

Disappearance of Professor Conradi

This morning at about 8 o'clock, two officers, led by Dr. E. C. Herrick, a neighbor, broke into the apartments and laboratory of Dr. R. H. Conradi at the Windermere Apartments here.

Dr. Herrick had expressed considerable anxiety during the past few days, when his friend and colleague, Dr. Conradi, failed to leave his room. Dr. Conradi, it seems, was engaged upon some research work, the secret of which he was carefully withholding from the public.

Nothing of Dr. Conradi was discovered. His effects were apparently all in his room. A thorough search was made, but no clue was found. A diary found open on the table was at once appropriated by Dr. Herrick, who refused police officers and reporters a sight of it. It is remarkable to note that on the floor of the room, near a large, broken glass vat, were found some of Dr. Conradi's personal belongings: his watch, his ring, and his belt buckle.