

Sir Arnold Theiler †

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SIR ARNOLD THEILER †.

Among those present were :

Dr. A. Lätt, President of the "Auslandschweizer-Kommission der Neuen Helvetischen Gesellschaft" has addressed the following letter to the "Trauerfamilie":

Zollikon, den 25. Juli 1936.

Herrn Professor Dr. Alfred Theiler
und Trauerfamilie,
Frankenstrasse 18,
Luzern.

Ein wunderbares, gesegnetes Leben! Das waren die ersten Gedanken, die in meinem Bewusstsein Form annahmen, als ich mich von der Ueberraschung ob der unerwarteten Trauerkunde zu fassen begann. Ich habe Sir Arnold nie gesehen und doch sehr gut gekannt. Wie hatte ich gehofft, ihm schon in wenigen Tagen persönlich zu begegnen! Nun hat er die alte Heimat nicht mehr erreichen dürfen. Doch auch in London war er wie daheim. Britannia wird sein Andenken ehren, wie das ihrer eigenen, grössten Söhne.

Diese Gewissheit und das Bewusstsein, dass dem grossen Wohltäter Südafrikas ein langer Endkampf erspart blieb, möge Ihnen und Lady Theiler's Schmerz erklären und mildern. Empfangen Sie an seiner Statt den Ausdruck innigen Dankes der Auslandsschweizer Organisation, den ich ihm hätte überbringen wollen, ihm, dem grössten Auslandsschweizer unserer Tage.

Ulrico Hoeppli, Alfred Reinhart, Sir Arnold Theiler, alle drei sind uns in weniger als Jahresfrist entrissen worden. Unerstetlich alle drei. Aber welch ein ideales Dreigestirn von Eidgenossen, welche Vorbilder als Schweizer und als Weltbürger! An ihrem Ruhme haben wir alle Anteil, Schweizer daheim und in der Fremde; ihr Andenken ist uns heilig, ihr Beispiel verpflichtet uns.

An Sir Arnold's Bahre danken wir auch in herzlichster Anteilnahme der treuesten Mitarbeiterinnen des Heimgegangenen, Lady Theiler, und Ihnen, sehr geehrter Herr Kollege, sowie allen, die ihm im Leben am nächsten und liebsten waren.

In Trauer und Hochachtung
Ihr ergebener

Dr A. LATT.

The "Times" writes:

"His career was one of long struggle with, and eventual mastery over many diseases of animals which had thwarted the agricultural development of South Africa for a century.

It is given to few men of science to see in their own lifetime so much of the practical results of their researches. When Theiler went to the Transvaal in the nineties the most baffling diseases of horses, cattle, and sheep were endemic there to a greater extent even than in the rest of South Africa. When he retired in 1927 the Union could be pronounced "clean," and stock farming, both with native herds and with high-class imported animals, could be carried on with safety and profit. In a long and dogged fight science had won. Theiler was the pre-eminent pioneer in the investigation of diseases of animals in warm climates, and his work threw a flood of light on East Coast fever, horse sickness, heart-water, blue tongue, lamziekte, and biliary fever — plagues which had long inflicted heavy losses on farmers and prevented any serious agricultural development in South Africa.

Until his later years he was little known and appreciated except by those who had worked with him or had followed the wonderful results of his research. By these, however, he had long been acclaimed as one of the greatest veterinary scientists in the world; and to these Theiler's laboratory at Onderstepoort, a few miles north of Pretoria, was known as the largest and best veterinary research station in the world. He crowned his work by starting veterinary education in South Africa on a sound basis. Throughout his career he was disabled — little though that seemed to impair his dexterity — by the loss of his left hand, for which he substituted a wooden member cased in a brown leather glove.

Theiler was born in Switzerland on March 26th, 1867. Having obtained the degree of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine at Berne, he went to the Transvaal in 1891. To the Boers under Kruger it seemed merely presumptuous, if not indeed a blasphemous defiance of the Divine will, that a stranger and outsider could suggest the possibility of teaching them anything about the diseases to which their cattle and sheep so readily succumbed. But Theiler persevered in the face of every discouragement. It was during this period that he laid the foundations of that intimate knowledge and experience, not only of animal diseases but also of the Boer mind, which was of inestimable value to him later on his experimental work and in the administration of his Department. His patience was rewarded. Chances of demonstrating to the Republican Government that he might have something to teach were afforded first by a bad outbreak of glanders in Pretoria, and a little later by the disastrous rinderpest, the worst cattle plague that had ever swept South Africa. In 1896 President Kruger, a shrewd judge of a man and his work, appointed Theiler veterinary surgeon to the Republic.

Theiler's work was suddenly brought to a stop, however, by the South African War. As a burgher of the Republic — a necessary qualification for official employment in those days — he served for a time in the field with the Boer forces. He had, however, returned to Pretoria and was working there when Lord Roberts occupied the capital. The British Army staffs themselves had very soon to cope with serious problems of animal disease, and they were quick to recognize Theiler's exceptional knowledge and ability. He was given fairly adequate laboratory facilities — at Daspoort, on the outskirts of Pretoria — and a sufficient staff; the knowledge which he had built up could at last be fully utilized, and it was not long before his published work was attracting the attention of veterinary workers throughout the world. In a few years he had outgrown the old laboratory at Daspoort, and plans were prepared for a greatly enlarged experimental station at Onderstepoort, some miles to the north of Pretoria. Theiler had gained the complete confidence of Lord Milner, of Sir Arthur Lawley, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Transvaal, and of Mr. Patrick Duncan, the new Colony's vigilant Treasurer. Moreover, he was steadily backed by his Departmental "Chief" of those days, the Director of Agriculture, Mr. F. B. Smith, C.M.G., later of the Cambridge School of Agriculture, who had recommended Theiler's appointment as Government veterinary bacteriologist. It was typical of the Boer attitude at this period that the farmers in one of the best stock-raising districts actually petitioned the Government that the veterinary surgeons be dismissed.

Happily the assumption of office by the first Botha Government, under the grant of responsible institutions, put no check on Theiler's work. The confidence of the Boers was being gained, and Botha and Smuts were fully convinced of the immense value of Theiler's research in promoting the prosperity of the country. Their staunch support was invaluable. In 1907 he was elected C.M.G., and in the year following he was elected an Honorary Associate of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons of England, an honour rarely accorded. Theiler's position in tropical veterinary science was by now fully recognized on the Continent and in the United States.

His original contributions to veterinary science were many and varied. In connexion with the protozoa and allied forms, which occur in the blood of domestic animals, he described various more or less harmful parasites, and established their exact degree of importance. In particular his work on *B. mutans*, which brought him into conflict with Koch, was of the utmost importance, and had results of great and immediate value in the diagnosis and eradication of East Coast fever. As far as pathogenic forms are concerned, his separation of anaplasma from *B. bigemina*, and his work on the tick transmission of East Coast fever and other piroplasmoses, are among the most valuable of his contributions. Of diseases due to filterable viruses he made close and successful studies, particularly of horse sickness, an annually recurrent pest which made many parts of the country practically inaccessible during the rainy season, and of blue tongue in sheep. In both cases he devised methods of immunization which have proved of great practical value. Much of his later work was concerned with various obscure forms of plant poisoning — a great bane to cattle — and some of his publications on forms of chronic plant intoxication with a latent period are of great interest both theoretical and practical.

His last great effort was to unravel the tangled skein of conflicting evidence relating to lamziekte, a disease of cattle (showing itself in a crippling stiffness of the limbs), which was affecting a large proportion of the country, ruining many farmers, and, throughout large areas, threatening all. The investigations into this disease, which were carried on for years by members of his staff under his direction, as well as by other workers, led at last to the point where his natural genius seized on the hidden truth, and the reasons for all the former inconsistencies and difficulties became clear.

In his work Theiler combined to a remarkable degree a bold imagination with a dogged perseverance, and an almost infinite capacity for taking pains and observing detail. He was able always to inspire confidence in others, and he had an uncanny knack of getting what he wanted, even money from a reluctant Government. With his strong common sense and knowledge of human nature, he was careful to provide the Government and the farming community with enough in the way of tangible and immediate results to gain for himself the facilities for continuing and developing the more purely scientific side of research. South Africa, and hot countries generally, owe him an immense debt of gratitude, and in a larger sense his work must prove of far-reaching benefit to mankind, for it tended to vindicate research in general by showing that liberal support of scientific investigation is a business proposition.

After the Union of the four South African Colonies in 1910, Theiler became the first Director

of the new division of Veterinary Research, and in 1914 he was made K.C.M.G. In 1920 he organized the new South African Veterinary College, as the Veterinary Faculty of the University of South Africa, and was himself inevitably the faculty's first Dean. To cope with the new requirements at Onderstepoort, extensive and very fine buildings were erected and equipped on most generous lines, and the staff was greatly augmented.

Though modest, charming, and genial, Theiler had a strong compelling personality. The band of assistants who worked for him, small at first but numerous in the last few years before his retirement in 1927, found him a most inspiring teacher. Among those of his staff who attained distinction were Dr. D. Kehoe, Professor of Veterinary Pathology in Dublin, and Dr. W. Horner Andrews, Director of Veterinary Research in the Ministry of Agriculture in this country. Sir Arnold, who was a Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa, was the first recipient of the grant and medal awarded by the South African Association for the Advancement of Science, and he was also the first recipient of the Scott Medal of the South African Biological Society. He was hon. D.Sc. of the Cape and Syracuse Universities, and D.Phil. of Berne. He married in 1893 Miss Emma Jegge, and they had a family of two sons and two daughters. —

1st OF AUGUST.

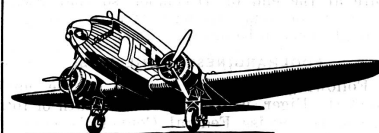
Programme of the "Beromünster" Broadcasting Station.

(Greenwich Time).

- 3.25 p.m. Uebertragung vom Alten Tonhallenplatz in Zürich:
Nationale Kundgebung zur Bundesfeier.
- 6.20 p.m. Die Kapelle "D'Appenzeller" spielt und jodelt.
- 7 p.m. Geläute der Zürcher Kirchen.
- 7.20 p.m. Konzert des Radio-Orchesters.
- 7.40 p.m. Zum 1. August, Ansprache von Dr. Gustav Steiner.
- 9.30 p.m. Gemeinschaftssendung. Studio Genf:
Bilder aus der Schweizergeschichte.

PHOTOS ON SALE.

Mounted copies of the two photographs which were taken at the Swiss Legation on Wednesday, July 15th, when the presentation was made to Mr. Vincent Paravicini, may be obtained at the offices of the Swiss Observer, 23, Leonard Street, E.C.2. (Price 1/9 each.)



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