Life of Robert Koch is perhaps the most inspiring of any in this series. He was educated at the University of Gottingen and graduated in medicine in 1866.

While practising medicine at Wollstein near Hanover, he studied the Anthrax bacillus. In 1876, while in the midst of his country practice, he published an epoch making paper on Anthrax bacillus, showing that Anthrax bacilli grew in long chains and formed spores, which retained their virulence for years. This was the first paper in the world, which stated that an infectious disease can be and often is, caused by a definite microorganism. He proved it beyond all possibilities of doubt.

It was on 24th March 1882 that Koch announced to the Berlin Physiology Society his discovery of *M. tuberculosis*. This day is celebrated as the world TB day every day. Koch returned again to the problem of tuberculosis. Worldwide excitement was caused in 1890 when he announced his discovery of Tuberculin, which it was hoped, would be a cure for TB but which fell short of his objective, although proving useful in other ways. In 1905, the Nobel Prize for medicine was awarded to him.

He married Emily Fraaz in 1876, a childhood friend. In the beginning it was a happy marriage and he had a daughter in 1878. However after 20 years of married life, the relationship broke down, resulting in a divorce in 1897. Two months after divorce, at the age of 50, Koch married Fraulein Freiburg, a young actress who was only 21. The second marriage was followed by unwarranted social boycott which indirectly forced him to spend most of his time in traveling abroad.

Koch traveled all over the world studying epidemics. He visited India in 1883 and identified the *Vibrio cholera*. During his second visit at the behest of British Government, he carried out important work on bubonic plague, proving that it was transmitted to humans by rat-flea.

The career of Robert Koch is a classic example of what can be achieved by application and perseverance, far away from the stimulus of a university and laboratory. Importance of his discoveries cannot be overemphasized and there are few to whom medicine owes so much.