

# **CHARACTERISTICS INVALUABLE IN DIAGNOSIS AND THERAPEUTICS**

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Archimedes is said to have boasted that "if he had whereon to stand, he would, with his compound lever, move the world." So in Therapeutics, if we can properly apply the characteristic lever, the most obstinate and complicated disease will give way as if moved by an irresistible power.

The gradual development of our vast *Materia Medica*, required some magic wand to dissipate the chaff of common and comparatively unimportant symptoms, and reveal to our delighted vision the beautiful, golden grains of peculiar or characteristic symptoms.

This magic wand seems to have been furnished us when Dr. Guernsey and others developed what is called the "key-note system." Given any prominent or characteristic symptom of a case, this may serve as a "key-note" to suggest to our minds the balance of the symptoms, and almost infallibly lead to the choice of the proper remedy.

Practically this system conduces to the formation of a rapid and brilliant diagnosis, and secures the long-sought desideratum of precision in Therapeutics.

In almost any chronic complicated case, characterized as they not unfrequently are, by a wilderness of symptoms, it thus enables the perplexed physician to speedily unravel the mystery and come directly to the gist of the matter in hand. By simply laying the hand on the patient's vertex, or by asking a few brief questions, one is frequently thus enabled to comprehend at a glance the most complicated case.

### What then are characteristics ?

They are the peculiar or most prominent indications for a remedy, such as may be found more or less in almost any rubric. These symptoms are often common to other remedies. But they are far more prominent in some one, for instance, than in any other.

How then are we to arrive at positive certainty in the choice of the remedy ?

The suitable remedy must generally contain several characteristics. A good prescription is said to be based upon at least two or three characteristics, but four or five of them will amount to almost absolute certainty.

To prescribe with precision, we must be able first to "individualize" each remedy, and then we are prepared to "individualize" each particular case. But we individualize a remedy when we distinguish its symptoms from those of every other remedy, or, in other words, when we become familiar with its peculiar combination of characteristics. For instance, circumscribed heat of the vertex is said to be a characteristic of Sulphur. It is a symptom common to several other remedies, *e.g.*, Calc. c and Graph. If we find this vertex heat accompanied by cold, sweaty feet, and vertigo on going upstairs, Calc. c is indicated. If it is accompanied by profuse leucorrhoea and a very weak back, as I found in the case of a very fleshy lady, Graph. is the remedy. But probably in nineteen cases out of 20 the remedy is Sulphur, because we shall find it accompanied by other distinctive indications for Sulph., such as a Sulphur diarrhoea, a Sulphur appetite, etc.

Generally when some peculiar symptom of a case corresponds with a characteristic symptom of a remedy, we have good reason to conclude that the balance of the case will also correspond more or less with the remaining characteristics of the remedy. And the greater will be this correspondence according as the disease becomes more fully developed.

In chronic case the primary symptoms may indicate one remedy, while the more recent symptoms indicate another remedy. According to Hahnemann, we must give precedence to the latter remedy. First let this accomplish its full mission. Then with the former, finish up in an order inverse to the development of the disease. Now both of these remedies taken together will furnish a complete picture of the case.

Provided a case be curable, we have but to trace these vital and indispensable correspondences, in order to prescribe with precision and a confidence based on knowledge. And even in incurable cases, we ought thus often to succeed in procuring the best palliative effects.

#### **Case (7) Lycopodium :**

A lady called to get relief for sore throat, which had troubled her some two months. As inspection of throat revealed a slight, dark redness of the right anterior pillar of the fauces. She said swallowing was very painful on the right side of the throat only, the pain extending up to the ear, and that she had doctored a good deal, and tried various domestic remedies and expedients for sore throat, all to no purpose. She was apprehensive of a cancer, I was rather surprised to find so little visible evidence of inflammation. I could neither see nor feel any swelling. But the probable remedy, Lycopodium, was immediately suggested to my mind by the location of the right side. As corroborative of this suggestion, I found that she had also, as I suspected, the following dyspeptic symptoms : a little food would always fill her up so that she could not eat any more, and there was much rumbling and gurgling in the abdomen, chiefly in the left hypochondrium. She accordingly received Lycop. 1m/1, and Placebo.

Four days afterwards (December 2nd), she reported that she had been able to fasten her dress every day since my prescription was made—a thing she had not done before in several months on account of excessive bloating. The rumbling and gurgling had ceased ; her appetite was better ; she could eat more, and food did not seem to fill her up so much ; her throat also felt better for

3 days. But at the end of that time it seemed as if an abscess broke between the root of the tongue and the side of the throat, and she expectorated half a teaspoonful of purulent matter. After this there was much smarting as of a raw surface, which had not yet abated. Re. Placebo.

**Case (8) Calcarea Carb :**

A gentleman called in great haste to get relief from a severe attack of headache to which he had been subject periodically since his early youth. This time he complained of considerable fever and pain in the bones. Similar previous attacks had always prostrated him for several days. He also had quinsy, with bright redness and enlargement of the tonsils, which were nearly of the size of hen's eggs, obstructing the throat and nasal fossee. He said that whenever he took cold, they were subject to enlargement, and then his headache was always the most severe. I think most physicians would have prescribed Bell. On inquiry, I found he was always subject to cold and sweaty hands and feet. This being characteristic of Calc.c., I found also, as I expected that he had the following complications corroborative of Calc.c., sour stomach; much rumbling in the abdomen—he did not remember whether this was chiefly in the right hypochondrium; much vertigo, especially on stooping and on going up stairs; always during severe attacks of headache, throbbing pain in the vertex, aggravated by stepping and by going up stairs, and chronic nasal catarrh, always dry and obstructed at night, and fluent and unobstructed by day. Re. Calc. 6m/l.

In a week patient reported that "the medicine acted like a miracle, relieved him every way directly, so that he was able to proceed on his journey and transact an usual amount of business, and that he had not felt so well generally for years."

**Case (9) Advanced Typhoid Pneumonia :**

Stage approaching collapse. Oct. 9, 1870 : Mrs. W.M., age about 35, dark hair and eyes; has had fever and been confined to her bed about a week; was treated "botanically" but rapidly

declined, and is now thought to be almost beyond the reach of medicines ; great prostration ; pulse feeble, over 100, synchronous with respiration, counting 8 to 1—a bad condition. The more pulsations to one respiration the more grave the case. Within the last two years I have many times observed such cases to recover under proper homoeopathic treatment.

Patient has hectic flush on cheeks in the afternoon : feels numb and sore all over ; putrid breath ; tongue coated whitish with red tip and borders ; much thirst : has coughed several months ; sputa tongue, jelly-like adhesive to the vessel, remaining in the same place when the vessel is turned over ; colour dirty white ; marked dulness on percussion on right side of chest : bronchophony : cold, clammy sweat from feet to thighs : head feels too large : some delirium at night : confusion of mind : head feels hot at vertex.

The characteristic of Sulph. suggested the following symptoms which were present : sensation of fulness in head : burning soles : no sleep night or day : auscultation detects a fine crepitation in one portion of right lung : her father died of phthisis pulmonalis with many of the same characteristic symptoms of Sulphur, Re. Sulph. 500/1 and S.L.

Oct. 10 : Cough looser, tongue cleaning off : breath putrid no more ; circulation better ; no more cold, clammy sweat : head cooler : less numbness : rested some last night for the first time : pulse 6 to 1—an improvement. Re. Sulph. 500/1.

Oct. 11 : Rested still better last night ; pulse 5 to 1 S.L. After this, visits every other day.

Oct. 13 : Rest every night : pulse diminishing in frequency every day, and now it counts 4 to 11 a cloud in the urine stands on the bottom of the vessel. S.L. and Broth.

Oct. 15 : As I predicted, in case the patient continued to improve, the cloud in the urine is setting and depositing a reddish sediment. S.L. and broth.

Oct. 17 : Still improving every way. S.L.

Oct. 19 : General symptoms no worse, but some derangement of the liver, which is sensitive to pressure ; tongue yellow ; countenance ditto : more urinary sediment, yellow and whitish, like mucus : cough loose. Re. Sulph. 6m/l.S.L.

Oct. 21 : Better every way : pulse 72 ; no fever. After making 8 visits the patient is discharged, and in two weeks from the commencement of homoeopathic treatment she was able to be up on her feet and to commence doing her own work : no relapse. She received in all three doses of Sulph.

[*Courtesy* : The Hahnemannian Monthly, 1870-71]



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