

THE CHRONIC CHILD*

H.A. Roberts, M.D.

Theoretically, if we could have the child under homoeopathic treatment from birth, and if we could govern diet, hygiene and environment as well, there would be little adult practise for us. Actually, there are other problems to consider, conditions over which we have little or no control ; and there is always the problem of our own insufficiency or lack of knowledge ; lack of understanding of the child's actual condition, of his needs, of the needs of his parents or more distant ancestors ; and worst of all, too often lack of knowledge of our materia medica, its possibilities and how and when to utilize it.

Somewhere between the actual and theoretical lies the field of possibilities open to us ; it is to the extent that we avail ourselves of these possibilities that our success may be measured. We must face that there are always obstacles that may prove insurmountable ; there is the everpresent probability of conditions beyond our control. There are hereditary tendencies that may be curbed but may not be eradicated in one generation. There are the problems of ignorance and poor environment and difficult financial conditions—too often a vicious circle. There are always those who are destined to rise strong and healthy from the worst environment and hereditary ; there always will be those who sink to a lower level, mental, physical and spiritual, from the best conditions.

If we could have an adequate endowment for homoeopathic care of under-privileged children, who are sick of mind, body or spirit, we unquestionably could save many to useful futures who would be otherwise not only problem children but problem adults.

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If homoeopathy were given a free hand in treating the chronic child, homoeopathy could render tremendous service in spite of discouraging backgrounds.

Everything else being equal, we may assume that a sickly child prognoses a sickly adult; that is, the chronic child becomes the chronic adult sufferer. If the child's need is met homoeopathically early in life, whether this be the similar remedy or the similar disease, it will do much to correct the chronic tendency; but the normal course of a similar disease all too often meets with suppression and the result is more deeply rooted chronicity. If we can teach the parents the dangers of suppression, and to comprehend that a succession of acute illnesses is in reality a chronic manifestation in ever-repeating and ever-varying forms, we shall have gone far toward laying a basis for constructive treatment of the chronic child.

Consider a typical history. At a very early age the babe presents feeding problems: the mother's milk disagrees, or she may wish to avoid the trouble of nursing. If the child is taken to a clinic probably evaporated milk will be recommended as making the baby "fat and healthy". Rapid gain in weight is a real danger in these days of baby clinics and the frequent comparison of weight with other babies. Presently a rash appears; ointments are prescribed. If this is a successful suppression the next step may be bronchial "colds". Probably the child has had a succession of nose colds for some time. Too often there is abnormal perspiration. If this rate of progress is maintained the child will be a confirmed chronic—probably asthmatic—by the time he is two years of age, and perhaps even before he reaches his first birthday. This picture is not an exaggeration, but the actual observation of case histories in many small patients who have been under popular treatment, either through clinics or under the care of intelligent but uninstructed physicians.

If the child survives puberty, when the hereditary taints will appear to add to the chaos, he will go on into adult life carrying an increasing burden and with a decreasing ability to participate

in normal interests, unless he receives that help he so sadly needs.

Here is a boy thirteen years of age. Leonard is asthmatic, and so worn and weary by his sleepless nights that he cannot respond to the tasks laid on him in school. Directed by his teacher, who has witnessed the power of homoeopathy on her own suffering mother, the boy was brought by his father, an illiterate Italian. This was the history : Dyspnoea < night, < on lying down, < rainy weather. < winter and foggy weather, > sunny and warm weather. Always wheezing : sneezing frequently. Coughs a great deal, with thick green sputum. Weight on chest during the attack ; sweats with the attack. Thus far no spectacular symptoms have been given ; the identifying concomitants are lacking. He cannot play long with the other boys, for while he is restless and active he soon tires, and this brings on pains in the arms and legs ; running causes pain in the head, about the heart, and in the extremities. His lips get blue at such times. These asthmatic conditions appeared before he was a year old ; as a babe his head was covered with scabs which disappeared under the application of various ointments. These eruptions appear only at rare intervals now, and they never thought until now that his breathing is better while the eruption is out.

A chronic child, heading for a chronic adult—if his heart does not fail under the strain ! *Rhus tox.* IOM. on November 4, 1935, and placebo since, has made this child over into a normal, healthy boy. Some eruption reappeared but cleared of itself, without repetition of the remedy. This child belongs to that class we designate as under-privileged, but instead of a potential social problem he is a potential worker.

Seven-year-old Rita has a chronic history that dates back to first dentition, perhaps farther. As a matter of fact, it dates back to her ancestors, for her grandmother, aunts and cousins all have asthma ; Rita herself has notched teeth. Always sore throats as a tiny child ; tonsils were removed at four years but the sore throats continued. Continual colds since babyhood ;

colds in the head every time she goes out to play ; these hang on for a month and run into asthmatic attacks. Cankersores in the mouth. Cries out and talks in her sleep ; rubs her nose frequently, even in her sleep. No appetite. Exertion, even a natural amount of play, brings on asthmatic attacks. It is not necessary to go into the detailed symptomatology of the attacks ; it is sufficient for our purpose to point out the tendency toward a frail adolescence and invalid adult period ; even now the child has the appearance of a fragile ornament. *Phosphorus 9M.* gave wonderful impetus toward health. Later, because of early decay of the teeth and a closer study of the remedy, *Calc. phos.* seemed indicated and did even better work.

This year Rita's mother wrote that for the first time in years Rita was able to go out doors and play with the other children before summer came, without taking cold.

A young woman with great courage and patience adopted a three-year-old fairy child. Virginia's mother was dead, probably from tuberculosis ; the father, a confirmed drunkard, committed the child to an institution. The child was frail, slender and waxen. The new mother believed in good feeding, care, and homoeopathy, and gave the child a chance to win against the chronic background. Yale Medical School x-ray plates, required before the child was permitted to leave the institution, revealed well defined tubercular lesions in the chest ; the sputum was positive for tuberculosis. The first "acute" condition was a discharging ear. On a single dose of *Sulphur* she did well for several months. Then she developed night sweats, especially about the head, and *Calc. carb.*, one dose, carried her for a year. She grew and thrived. After several months a series of seemingly acute conditions, at first treated with what we arbitrarily class as acute remedies, yielded to *Lycopodium*. After a time the family moved to another city, where she has continued under homoeopathic care ; but reports from time to time indicate that there has been no serious illness and few acute attacks of any kind. Thus good care in the home plus the *simillimum* have given this delicate child a very fair chance to attain a normal, healthy adult life. (Date 12-6-19)

George, just in high school at 17 years of age, was brought to homoeopathy through the influence of friends of the family who knew what homoeopathy could do when given a chance.

George was a perfect example of the "chronic" child. The history began at two years of age, with an oozing eczema all over the body. This had been successfully suppressed by the time he was five, but long before that he had developed a tendency to take cold; if it were an east wind he had a nose cold, if some other breeze played upon him it was a cough, or a sore throat—he ran through the complete series repeatedly. In the brief intervals between colds, measles, chicken-pox and whooping cough did their best to clean house. Digestive difficulties set in. Tonsils and adenoid tissue were removed and heart symptoms developed, but there was no recession in the other difficulties. With this chronic picture mental retardation became quite marked, and the poor psychic effect of his noticeable difference from other boys was an added factor toward chronicity.

After a year of homoeopathic treatment George's mother writes: "Everyone who knew George as he was marvels at his condition now. His health is excellent and he is getting on well in school. His father and I appreciate this more than we can say." *Sulphur* IM. started him on the right track: *Puls.* 200, an occasional dose for "acute" conditions, carried on the good work. George faces the cheerful prospect of a useful manhood.

Harvey came to homoeopathy when he was seven years of age. Here are the pertinent items of his history: dentition difficult and irregular: eczema on the face and body "cured" by salves at eight months. Colds continuous since one year of age: antitoxin and vaccines at different times before he was five-and-a-half. Asthma developed before he was five. Tonsils and adenoid removed at about that time. Ulcers on one eye. Sweat, particularly about the head. He tumbles, screams and jumps in his sleep. Two doses of *Sephia* IM. in three years have made this boy over. His case was so spectacular in the eyes of the specialist who had "done every thing"

for the boy that the specialist threatened to send more patients for the privilege of observing their reactions—but he is still threatening.

Marcia developed a limp at five years of age. She comes of a family with a very chronic history : all her mother's family failed to erupt a full set of teeth : some teeth were markedly notched : some members of the family had extensive psoriasis ; all the aunts were hysterical almost to the borderline. Marcia's parents were what might be termed intermittent homoeopathic patients, so not content with medicine, they decided Marcia must have up-to-date treatment. So she was hustled off to one specialist after another ; she was hospitalized and later she wore a brace for a year. At last Marcia came back into homoeopathic hands, and in spite of the tubercular hip condition that the early x-rays revealed, *Pulsatilla* at long intervals has taken care of Marcia and her occasional acute manifestations as well.

These are not intended as case reports. Rather, they are given as corroborative evidence of our claim that the "chronic" child has an excellent chance to gain normal health, even against heavy odds of environment and heredity.

Not every child can be saved : there is a certain percentage of circumstances against this : but given the opportunity, how many children can be saved to a useful, productive life with interesting opportunities for future generations ?

In order to accomplish sound results we must recognize the sequence of events ; we must give due thought to hereditary problems. The delicate child, with silky hair and waxen skin, who develops severe headaches upon application to school work, severe nosebleeds, the tendency to take cold, sensitive to every breeze, emotionally unstable, is not manifesting a series of unrelated conditions. We must realize the tendency for this child to develop an active tuberculosis : and we must recognize it before the x-ray reveals a lesion if we are fair to our healing art and to the child's future. While we know that even if the condition has developed into active manifestations the child may

be saved for a healthy future, we must stress the fact that re-generation will not be brought about by careless prescribing.

In other words, we must look to past history for background, to the present symptomatology as a stage in profession, and to our homoeopathic materia medica for that power which unlocks the patient's vital energy to cure, which is our goal for the patient's future.

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DISCUSSION

Dr. Heimbach : I just want to relate my experience with an infant that I delivered at birth. We couldn't get anything to agree with that child, breast milk, or any other combination. It had diarrhoea and vomiting until the child was pretty well emaciated, then I discovered she had influenza. *China sulph.* 30x, in two weeks, time brought her along very nicely, and she is a very husky girl now.

Dr. Spalding : This paper decries careless prescribing, which, after all, is one of the difficulties of almost everyone. There is no question but that many, many children can be brought to useful manhood and womanhood through the application of a homoeopathic remedy. It is important to get the right remedy to begin with in this sort of work, much as in the cancer cases, and the only thing I could possibly add is that regardless of the time it takes to study the case, do not hurry the prescription ; if necessary, observe the child two months, and I believe the work will be very much more satisfactory.

Dr. Grimmer : There is no short-cut to real homoeopathic prescribing, but work, work, work. It seems the farther along the road we get, the more we have to work, the more we can do, the more work we have to do, but we never cease to get a thrill and kick out of a case that is held by a homoeopathic remedy.

Dr. Panos : Dr. Roberts brought out if a child is attended, the child naturally in later life will have less troubles from chronic conditions, not only physically but mentally, and we will have less criminal problems. Healthy minds and healthy bodies make fewer criminals.

I would like to ask Dr. Roberts if he ever had cases where under such prescription the indicated remedy did not restore the child to health, and also if the posture of the child has been taken into consideration. I think that fact should be taken into consideration in the growing child where the indicated remedy does not restore the child to complete health.

Dr. Roberts : I said, in my paper there were cases that were beyond the control of anyone. There is a possibility of that, always. My plea is for the homoeopaths to get back to the foundation in prescribing and more of them take up pediatrics. You know this school of medicine can make the "old school" look sick if they just get into pediatrics and do the things that are possible to be done.

Dr. Stearns : Dr. Roberts, does *Tuberculinum* come often for you in those cases ?

Dr. Roberts : Not very often ; comparatively seldom.

Dr. Stearns : We find it useful occasionally ; it wakes up the case that fails to react to good constitutional prescribing.

Dr. Roberts : Sometimes it wakes it up, but it seldom cures it.

Dr. Stearns : We have never had any harm from it. It opens up the case so the constitutional remedy is more clearly seen.

Dr. Roberts : You get the right remedy, and it will open up ; you give *Tuberculinum* and it carries you along for a little way and you think you are on the road to recovery, and you are not always. Dr. Margaret Webster brought out *Tuberculin* in the *Recorder* recently, and she makes this statement : That the nosodes seldom cure.

I do feel that we should go more into pediatric work. The possibilities of a young man going into the practice of medicine and specializing in pediatrics is simply marvelous today because they can walk away with the "old school's" work right away.

Who asked about tonsillitis ? I said I didn't see why you asked such a silly question. Does the removal of a tonsil ever cure the patient ?

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[*Courtesy : The Homoeopathic Recorder, April, 1937.*]