

Pulsatilla, a study
and
Ranunculus bulbosus, a study

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Reprinted from

THE BRITISH HOMŒOPATHIC JOURNAL

Vol. LIII, No. 4 October 1964

Pulsatilla, a study

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PHARMACOGNOSY

The remedy is prepared from *Pulsatilla nigricans*, the windflower, meadow anemone, or pasque flower, a member of the Ranunculaceæ family which also includes *Aconitum*, *Cimicifuga*, *Staphisagria* and other remedies.

This is one of the flowers of chalk-lands. It has strikingly beautiful bell-shaped flowers of a deep purple hue with a rich golden centre. The leaves are of two types—foliage leaves growing on their own stalks from ground level, deeply cleft and fern-like, and long finger-like leaves in three segments ringing the flower stems; these are modified bracts.

John Gilmour writes, "In April the turf is sprinkled with the purple and gold pasque flower, the most famous chalk rarity. The first sight of it on a Chiltern slope, or decorating a certain bunker on an East Anglian golf course, is a baptismal moment in botanical experience—at any rate in that of an Englishman, for in Europe the plant has a wider range."

Quelch describes the plant thus, "It is a little plant, covered with long silky hairs, growing about six or eight inches high. Its large purple flowers open in April and May. Even the smell from the bruised leaves or broken flowers has been known to cause headache or fainting fits, and to produce inflammation of the eyes. Handling many blooms causes a form of eczema on the hands, and if the juice enters any cut or scratch a very serious sore may develop."

The flowers often bloom again in September and they are found not singly but in little groups or clumps. The entire fresh plant is used in the preparation of the mother tincture. This has a yellow colour and possesses a somewhat sharp taste.

The name of this plant, wind-flower, suggests variability which is incidentally a prominent characteristic of *Pulsatilla* symptoms. Its deep purple colour points to plethora reminiscent of the venous congestion associated with this remedy.

Hamilton writes, "This plant has an extremely acrid taste when chewed, and corrodes the tongue and fauces; and the dried plant retains a considerable share of acrimony." This is interesting, for one characteristic of the normally mild and amiable *Pulsatilla* subject is a capacity for becoming decidedly acrimonious if "chewed" or "fed-up".

In its habit of growth the plant is not obtrusive as, for instance, *Belladonna*, but quiet and retiring, and its tendency to grow in clusters manifests a correspondence with the gregarious nature of the *Pulsatilla* person, so fond of company and averse from solitude.

PHARMACOLOGY

This plant was regarded aforesaid as having considerable affinity with various parts and organs. Pliny recommends all kinds of the "wind floure tree, in headache and inflammations thereof; cures the infirmities of the teeth; and laid to

the eyes as a cataplasme, represseth the vehement flux of watery humours thither. The magicians and wise men attribute much to these hearbs, and tell many wonders of them. . . .”

There is a very definite affinity with mucous membranes producing catarrhal responses evidenced by thick mucoid discharges.

The action on eyes, ears and skin causes irritation and inflammation. Joints are affected giving rise to synovitis, swelling and pain.

There is an affinity with the heart and circulation, notably the right side of the heart and veins, resulting in venous congestion and varicosity.

The action on the generative organs is to cause varying degrees of irregularity of function and inflammatory changes of chronic type manifesting creamy discharges.

PHYSIOGNOMY

Light hair, blue eyes and a freckled countenance of rubicund hue are associated with the remedy.

The face may appear rather bloated with a tendency to puffiness, which may also affect the belly, feet and ankles. Obesity is common.

A certain clumsiness of movement may be observed in a tendency to stumble when walking or to drop the plates and dishes.

The skin may appear red and hot to the touch without any abnormal rise in temperature. Inflamed mucous surfaces have a purplish hue; discharges are bland, thick and yellow or green in colour.

Speech is somewhat hesitant and answers may suggest peevishness. The sound of the child's cry is pitiful rather petulant as, for instance, with *Chamomilla*.

PSYCHOLOGY

The *Pulsatilla* subject is described as affectionate, gregarious, fond of company and very averse from solitude. It is noted, however, that the *Pulsatilla* child desires and absorbs affection, but does not return it in the responsive way that is characteristic of the *Phosphorus* child.

A French pædiatrician has supplied a valuable picture thus: “*Pulsatilla* is more timid than anxious. Melancholy and sad, the *Pulsatilla* child can stand in front of you dumb and blushing, obstinately refusing the sweet you offer him, petrified by a taboo the grown-ups cannot understand. And, whilst by every possible means you try to coax him out of his mutism, you feel that he is being tortured, that he wishes the end of the world would come, rather than that the conversation should continue.

“Suddenly, his resistance ended, his eyes fill with tears, and he throws himself into his mother's skirts, clinging with both hands and hiding his face. Then if she can find the soothing words he is waiting for the little wretch will dry his tears and you will see him smile.”

Variability seems to describe the *Pulsatilla* subject, who is variously described as tender hearted, easily “hurt”, responsive to kindness; easily discouraged, but never sullen and never mopes; good tempered, placid, mild, yielding, craves sympathy; slow, phlegmatic, may become irritable and touchy, but not violent; changeable, moods vary like the wind; anxious, morose, hesitant, discontented, everything disgusts him.

Certainly this type is capable of inward grief, self-pity, and apt to suffer in

silence. Tears come easily, with some relief to feelings. May weep when recounting symptoms, a feature shared with *Kali carb.*, *Medorrhinum* and *Sepia*.

There is desire for affection, attention, approbation, consolation. Fear of the dark is prominent, also possibly fear of insanity, and the urge to suicide by drowning. Fear is "felt" in the epigastrium and described as "the stomach turning over". The sensation may be accompanied by hot flushes and palpitation, even by actual vomiting.

Unfounded imaginings re food, sex, religion, germs and so on may reach the stage of psychotic obsession.

PHYSIOLOGY

The *Pulsatilla* circulation is extremely labile. Heat and chilly feelings alternate, or occur synchronously in different sites, coming and going in a patchy manner.

Although perhaps feeling chilly even in a warm room, yet cannot tolerate a stuffy airless atmosphere and craves open windows and plenty of fresh air. Draws away from the fire, gets too hot in bed, and flags in really hot weather.

Appetite is capricious, but there is often a fondness for pastries, fat, ice-cream, rich foods, all of which disagree. Food may lack flavour, and there may be a definite dislike of various things such as meat, milk, butter and especially pork.

Thirst is usually minimal, even in fevers, but a craving for lemon drinks has been observed.

The *Pulsatilla* person is usually sleepy on retiring, but is apt to lie awake from ebullition of blood, get too hot, throw off the bed-covers, become chilly and haul them up again. There is a tendency also to wake in the early hours and stay awake for a prolonged spell. While asleep may change posture and is likely to put the hands up above the head.

Sweating is common and may be localized to certain areas or involve only one side of the body. Sweats break out on the face in association with waves of heat. Night-sweats may be profuse; the sweat may have a musty odour.

Modalities are such as would increase or alleviate the disturbances in the circulation. There is aggravation from heat, close atmosphere, humidity, even cold wet; also from too many clothes or too heavy bed-covers. The sufferer feels worse when at rest, when lying on the left side; also in the evening and during the first part of the night.

Relief is felt in fresh air, especially cold dry air, by gentle motion out of doors (too active movement begets heat and causes discomfort); also from cold food, cool applications, pressure, or lying on the painful part, and uncovering.

Ailments brought on by becoming suddenly chilled when hot, or from getting wet through, may call for *Pulsatilla* or possibly *Dulcamara*,

PATHOLOGY

General. The *Pulsatilla* pains are shifting and variable, often of bursting or expanding type, the soreness of congestive states. Pains are apt to appear abruptly and decline gradually or the reverse; they are often diffuse, poorly localized or felt in ill-defined locations. They are worse when at rest and on first movement after rest. Symptoms in general are variable, no two attacks alike; they come and go in an unexpected and unpredictable manner. Only one side of the body may be affected.

Head. Vertigo may be severe, even to the causation of staggering or falling. It is worse when rising from lying down, when stooping, also when sitting and when walking in the open air. It may be increased too after a meal and by looking upwards and is more marked in the evening.

Headache is often frontal and associated with digestive or menstrual disorders. It is aggravated by using the eyes for close work, by stooping, when sitting quietly or when lying down. Relief is obtained by tight bandaging of the forehead and by walking slowly out of doors. There is often great heaviness in the head and sensitivity in the scalp which may itch and be sore to the touch.

Eyes. Severe eye symptoms are associated with this remedy, notably those involving the cornea, possibly with ulceration. Conjunctivitis is accompanied by thick yellow discharge, with agglutination of the lids in the morning, but redness of the lids is not noticed.

Various sensations may be complained about, burnings, itching, "a gauze veil before the eyes", and there is a constant urge to rub the eyes in search of relief.

Styes occur, especially on the lower lid. Cataract may ensue. Photophobia may be accompanied by lancinating pain in eyeball.

Ears. The remedy is of great value in relation to earache, especially if brought on by exposure to cold or in association with an exanthem. Established otitis media is accompanied by thick creamy pus, possibly offensive in odour.

Tinnitus may occur, of the pulsating type. Inflammation of the pinna is accompanied by much heat, redness, swelling and pain, suggestive of erysipelas. Catarrhal deafness may occur, the ear or ears feeling "stuffed up".

Respiratory System. Catarrhal rhinitis tends to persist accompanied by thick, yellow or green, profuse, bland discharge. The discharge may contain large blood-stained crusts. The nose may become sore and swollen. Discharge may alternate from side to side; tends to be freer out of doors; in a warm room and in the evening the nose becomes blocked. Loss of smell and taste are common and there may be complaint of a "bad smell in the nose".

Epistaxis occurs, often vicarious in nature, and the blood lost is thick, easily clotting and dark in colour, almost black.

Involvement of the maxillary antrum is not infrequent, especially on the right side, accompanied by an orange-yellow discharge.

Hayfever in the *Pulsatilla* person usually is accompanied by amelioration of all other symptoms which had been present.

Sore throat is accompanied by a swollen sensation or by intolerable dryness, but in spite of the latter the patient is not thirsty. Involvement of the larynx is associated with scraping, dryness, pain as from excoriation and aphonia.

Soreness may be felt below the clavicles, possibly extending to shoulder or arm. A dry teasing cough becomes more loose in the daytime or vice versa. The cough is worse when lying down, and a suffocating sensation forces the sufferer to sit up and "get more air". Or, on the contrary, the cough may trouble all day and cease at night. Sputum varies in amount and in character.

Alimentary System. There is often a bitter, slimy or even putrid taste in the mouth. The mouth may be unpleasantly dry, yet without any appreciable thirst. The tongue feels numb or as if burnt, and may be thickly coated with rough white fur.

Painful gums are associated with toothache of a gnawing, shooting type, accompanied by chilly feelings, pallor, and most noticeable in the evening. The condition is aggravated in a warm room or when getting warm in bed; some relief is obtained from the impact of cool air. The pain is not increased by chewing food but is activated by the use of a toothpick.

When eating, the food may seem to stick in the throat or it feels as if the food regurgitates half way up the œsophagus, sticks there and then goes down again.

Hiccough may be induced by smoking. Easy vomiting may result from emotional upset or excitement. Attacks of nausea and vomiting are accompanied by a horribly chilly feeling, but in a warm stuffy room the suffering is increased with sweating and flushing of the face. Walking quietly in the open will afford relief.

Gastric symptoms may be accompanied by the sensation of a lump behind the sternum, and much fullness and heaviness in the epigastrium, coming on some one to two hours after a meal. Eructations taste of food. The burning sensation in the stomach is increased by taking warm food, but relieved pro tem by cold food or fluids.

Bloating of the belly and cutting pains are noticed more especially in the evening after supper, and are worse after rich food. Belching gives some temporary relief. Heartburn is characteristic of *Pulsatilla* and water-brash of *Nux vomica*.

Constipation may occur, of the *Nux vomica* type, with much ineffectual urging and the sensation of inadequate emptying of the rectum after going to stool.

Diarrhœa may be violent, often nocturnal, with much burning in the bowel and mucus in the stools. These are loose and watery, accompanied by much flatus, tend to be greenish in colour and vary from stool to stool. Diarrhœa of this type may result from exposure to cold, from taking iced food or drinks, or from eating too much fruit.

Piles tend to be protruding, painful and pruritic, worse by warmth of bed, when sitting still or lying down, and eased by gentle motion out of doors.

The liver may be involved, as evidenced by heavy dragging pain in the hepatic region. The pain tends to spread through to the back between the shoulder-blades. There may be a slight degree of jaundice, associated with a heavily white-furred tongue, and a tendency to acute giddiness on attempting to get up in the morning.

Cardio-vascular System. The chief features in this sphere are a tendency to dilatation of the right side of the heart, to venous congestion, varicose veins and chilblains.

Palpitation and hot flushes accompany anxiety states, or emotional upset, and may occur after a heavy meal.

Lymphatic and Glandular Systems. Swellings of transient nature may occur in the breast or other sites. The remedy is often called for in an attack of mumps, especially if associated with swelling in breasts or testicles.

Urinary System. Diminished sphincter control resulting in a leaky bladder is especially liable to give trouble when sitting, walking or coughing.

Irritability of bladder may occur with much frequency of urge and incontinence if there is delay in emptying the organ. Dysuria gives distress and soreness persists even after passage of urine.

The remedy may be of value in relation to nocturnal enuresis, especially when it is impossible to lie on the back without urge to urinate. It may also be called for when bladder symptoms occur during pregnancy.

Genital System. Pain in testicle extending to spermatic cord and groin. Varicocele, hydrocele, orchitis may be indications for the remedy, as well as gonorrhœa in either sex.

Various uterine disorders are described associated with thick, green, creamy non-irritating discharges.

Dysmennorrhœa may be associated with infra-mammary pain. Menstrual periods are apt to be delayed and the flow scanty.

Milk may be present in the breasts apart from pregnancy. There may be a constant sensation as if a menstrual period was imminent. Amenorrhœa may occur from fear of pregnancy.

There may be a tendency to early abortion at the 5th week. The remedy has proved of value in disorders of pregnancy, with abnormal presentations, in uterine inertia and feeble labour pains.

Locomotor System. In this sphere have been noted varying complaints of heaviness, weariness, weakness, bruised feelings, pains and swellings in various sites.

Shooting pains in shoulders or arms occur in the morning and are aggravated by use of the limb. Legs feel queer with tottery gait. Legs feel very heavy by day and ache at night.

Gouty pains wander from joint to joint and alternate with digestive upsets; the pains are worse from heat and somewhat relieved by gentle motion.

Shooting pains occur in the nape accompanied by soreness to touch. There may be cracking in neck and shoulders on movement. The remedy may give relief when scoliosis is associated with lumbo-sacral pain.

With synovitis or articular rheumatism the pains are worse on first movement but are eased somewhat by gentle motion and by pressure.

Skin. Various eruptions may occur with burning or itching, made decidedly worse by heat in any form and relieved by coolth. Ulcers tend to bleed or exude yellow or green discharges.

POSODOGY

As will have been obvious above this remedy has a wide sphere of usefulness in affections of chest, digestive tract, pelvic organs, joints and skin in the *Pulsatilla* type of individual. It is important as always to treat the patient, not just the disease, so-called.

The remedy is often called for when the troubles from which the patient is suffering date from adolescence.

Pulsatilla patients may need *Graphites* or *Sepia* in middle-age; they often require *Nux vomica* as an intercurrent remedy.

Silica is said to be the chronic of *Pulsatilla*. Other complimentary remedies are *Lycopodium* and *Sulphuricum acidum*.

Unpleasant effects of *Pulsatilla* can be antidoted by *Chamomilla*, *Ignatia*, or *Nux vomica*. *Pulsatilla* antidotes over-reaction to *Sulphur*.

Ranunculus bulbosus, a study

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PHARMACOLOGY

Ranunculus bulbosus, the bulbous buttercup, crowfoot, St. Anthony's turnip, goldcup, is perhaps the commonest of the Ranunculaceæ, covering the meadows in May with dazzling yellow. It is the small buttercup of lawns and fields, swollen at the base to form a round, solid bulb about 1 inch in diameter.

The flowers and fruits resemble those of the common buttercup, *Ranunculus acris*, while the leaves which are divided into three stalked segments are more like those of the creeping crowfoot. Notably the three vivid green sepals of the flower are folded back along the grooved hairy stem, which reaches a height of one foot. The rich yellow of the petals is remarkable for a mirror-like sheen, claimed by some botanists to be a unique feature.

Like other members of the family it was used by the ancients, and for medicinal purposes the entire plant is employed, gathered at the time of flowering in May and June.

PHARMACOLOGY

That the plant is by no means devoid of toxic properties was recognized by Gerarde who wrote, "There be divers sorts or kinds of these pernicious herbes comprehended under the name of *Ranunculus* or *Crowfoote*, whereof most are very dangerous to be taken into the body. Not any of them are to be taken alone by themselves, because they are of the most violent force, and therefore have the great nede of correction." However, he does admit that, "These dangerous simples are likewise many times of themselves beneficial and sometimes profitable."

Writing in special reference to the bulbosus variety he quotes from Pliny that "when drunke with wine and myrrh, it causeth a man to see divers strange sights, and not to cease laughing till he hath drunk pine-apple kernels with pepper", and adds, "I think he would have said until he be dead; because the nature of laughing *Crowfoot* is thought to kill laughing; but without doubt the thing is clean contrary, for it causeth such convulsions, cramps and wringings of the mouth and jawes, that it hath seemed to some that the parties have died laughing, whereas, in truth, they have died with great torment."

Furthermore Gerarde notes, "Cunning beggers do use to stampe the leaves, and lay it unto their legs and armes, which causeth such filthy ulcers as we daily see (among such wicked vagabondes), to moove the people the more to pittie."

Such somewhat crude provings reveal an affinity of toxic nature with skin and other tissues, notably the nervous system. The effect on the skin is one of violent irritation causing redness, burning, smarting, itching and a vesicular type of eruption.

Central nervous effects are seen in mental disturbances and a tendency to convulsions with grimacing. Peripheral effects, or rather involvement of nerve

roots, give rise to severe neuralgic pains and the peculiar type of herpetic eruption which follows the distribution of the affected nerve.

There is also affinity with serous membranes producing inflammatory reactions which result in either adhesions of opposed surfaces or effusion. Muscles, especially those of the trunk, are involved, giving rise to pains of "rheumatic" type.

An affinity with gastric mucosa was evidenced by "four persons who had eaten the root of the *Ranunculus bulbosus*, boiled in chicken-broth and manifested the following symptoms; violent burning in the region of the cardiac orifice of the stomach, with great anxiety about the heart; pressure at the pit of the stomach, with painful soreness at the stomach when touched."

PHYSIOGNOMY

Redness of the cheeks is noticeable, and a tendency to rigidity and immobility, owing to the fact that any movement is liable to increase suffering, as is similarly the case with *Bryonia*.

PSYCHOLOGY

There is much disturbance in this sphere. Fear of ghosts may be present. Over-excitability, hasty temper, tendency to be irritable and quarrelsome in the morning, may contrast with depression and a desire to die.

The mental condition may be due to alcoholism and actual delirium tremens may ensue, calling for treatment with the remedy in potency.

PHYSIOLOGY

There is great sensitivity to cold and cold air, whether out of doors or in a draught. Sometimes there may be complaint of a sensation as if part of the body is swathed in a cold, wet cloth.

Hunger may be increased in the morning and thirst be very evident in the afternoon.

Drowsiness by day is followed by sleeplessness at night, or a tendency to wake and lie awake for prolonged periods. There may be inability to remain lying on the left side.

Modalities are important. There is aggravation from any exposure to cold air and from change in the weather, especially from warm or cold. Humid and thundery weather also tend to aggravate the symptoms. Pain is increased by touch or pressure, also by stretching the limbs or by any movement. A definite aggravation in the evening is a marked feature.

Relief may be felt when sitting down with the body inclined forward, as is the case with *Kali carb*.

PATHOLOGY

General. Pains are of "rheumatic" or neuralgic type, stitching, burning, or pressing, and are often brought on by exposure to cold or damp.

Head. Severe headache may occur, especially felt over the right eye; it is worse when lying down but relieved when standing erect or walking about. It may be associated with a whirling giddiness, a feeling of dejection and a desire to weep. A pressive headache in the forehead or on the vertex is notably

aggravated by a change in temperature either from cold to warm or the reverse. It is also worse in the morning.

Eyes. Eye symptoms are severe and distressing with pressive and smarting, stabbing pains, sometimes in one eye, sometimes in the other. These pains are made worse by moving the eyeballs.

The pupils are dilated and vision is dimmed, with a sensation of mist before the eyes, associated with photophobia and lachrymation.

Herpes zoster may involve the lids and also the conjunctiva and cornea.

Respiratory System. The remedy may be indicated in hay fever, accompanied by smarting and burning in the eyes, with soreness of the lids. The nose is stuffed up, especially in the evening, and there is a relentless tingling and crawling sensation inside the nose or in the naso-pharynx, which causes constant but ineffectual hawking in the endeavour to obtain relief.

Severe pain in the chest is a prominent symptom. This is of the nature of a myalgia of the pectoral or intercostal muscles, or an intercostal neuralgia with sharp stitching pains in the thorax and between the shoulder-blades. Characteristically there is also a marked soreness to touch as if the tissues had been pounded or bruised. Movement aggravates the pain, as do also pressure of clothes or hands.

A stabbing pain may be located in the lowest intercostal space on the right side, associated with a sensation as if a weight were pressing on the top of the right shoulder. Breathing is interfered with, especially inspiration, and it is impossible to lie on the right side.

Pleurisy, possibly diaphragmatic, may be dry or accompanied by effusion, and is associated with great anxiety, dyspnoea and distress, and with pains which shoot from front to back.

Alimentary System. Spasmodic hiccough may be induced by alcoholic drinks. Belching is prominent. Nausea is especially noticed in the afternoon. Pain is felt in both hypochondria as if bruised or as if one had been lying in a wrong position.

Painful soreness is felt under the short ribs on the left side; pressure is felt deep in the region of the liver after a meal; a pinching pain is felt below the umbilicus; violent stitches spread from the left lumbar region through the belly and towards the left groin. Flatulence is marked and soreness to touch, especially in the epigastrium.

Watery diarrhoea or dysentery may occur. Often a morning stool is passed with considerable difficulty and a natural easy stool in the afternoon.

Lymphatic and Glandular Systems. A stabbing pain below the left nipple, aggravated by contact or movement, deserves mention.

Cardio-vascular System. Sudden circulatory weakness may lead to actual syncope.

Nervous System. The remedy is often called for in herpes zoster, shingles, where the involvement of nerve roots is evidenced in the first instance by severe pain along the area of distribution of a nerve path, to be followed by the typical burning, itching eruption of small vesicles. These may coalesce and form horny scabs or scurf.

Locomotor System. Severe pains are felt along the spine, especially between the shoulder-blades or along the medial border of the left scapula. The latter pain may spread to the whole left side of the chest.

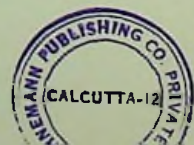
Tearing, shooting pains occur in the limbs. These may be paroxysmal in character and are increased by cold and by movements. Joints may be involved, and extreme weakness may be felt in the lower limbs when walking, especially during the morning hours.

Skin. Symptoms are prominent in this sphere. Eruptions tend to be vesicular and the small blisters often have a dark blue colour. They may appear on the palms and fingers, or in other sites. After bursting scabs form of a tough horny consistence.

Other forms of skin affection may be pemphigoid or xerodermatous. Crawling and creeping sensations may be felt in scalp, nose or fingers. Cracks occur at the tips of the fingers. Corns smart, burn and are very sensitive to touch and pressure.

POSOLOGY

The above-mentioned conditions, alcoholism included, may call for the use of the remedy, which is perhaps prescribed too infrequently. The lower potencies, up to 30c have given good results.





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