

VERIFICATIONS*

Margaret Burgess Webster, M.D.

The importance of unusual and peculiar symptoms in the selection of a remedy was first impressed upon my mind in college days by Dr. W. J. Hawkes, the author of a little book, *Characteristics*. Dr. Hawkes related the case of a man who was seriously ill (I have forgotten the diagnosis) and had been given up to die by several physicians. Dr. Hawkes gave a similar prognosis, but he set to work to see if he could find something in the case which would point to a remedy. He asked the patient if he had any peculiar sensation which seemed too unimportant to mention to the doctors. "Why, yes," was the reply, "ever since I have been sick I have felt as though a string was hanging down my throat". With that peculiar symptom as a lead, it was found that *Valeriana* covered the whole case, under which remedy he made a complete recovery.

Hahnemann pointed out the importance of the peculiar symptoms. His instructions were to be particularly and almost exclusively attentive to the symptoms which are striking, singular, extraordinary or characteristic : the symptoms which are peculiar to the patient and not to the disease. Our lamented Dr. Boger put it this way : "A peculiar symptom is prone to occur without any obvious connection with the disease itself. In chronic cases it is very apt to be a concomitant, while in acute cases it often stands out like a freshly painted guide post."

One of the most striking examples of a peculiar symptom leading to a curative remedy was given by a precocious little girl of nine years. She had been ill for several days with an

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enormously swollen cervical gland and had been steadily growing worse under home treatment. When I saw her on the fourth day of her illness her temperature was 104°. Although her gland was extremely sensitive to touch and she held her head in a rigid position because of the pain, the first thing she said to me and kept repeating, "*I feel as if I am standing on my head ; my bed feels as if it is tipped on end and I am standing on my head*". Memory plays queer tricks, but this time it served me well. Under *Phos. ac.* the temperature dropped to normal in twelve hours and the swollen gland quickly subsided.

A little fellow of four had a constant harassing, exhausting cough, particularly severe at night. The mother, a staunch homoeopath, has her own "kit" and I had been trying for several days to prescribe from her information given by telephone, but the cough went merrily on. I finally decided to see the child and on reaching the house was greeted with as severe a paroxysm of coughing as I ever expect to hear. But what the mother had failed to notice was that *the coughing was interspersed with sneezing. A cough would run into a sneeze, which was immediately followed by another cough, and another sneeze. Squilla 200* gave immediate relief and speedy cure.

A brother of the above, aged 14 months, was a very ill little boy—respirations 80 and over, loud and labored temperature 104° pulse so rapid it was uncountable. The whole chest was full of moist rales *suffocating attacks* wakened him from fitful sleep ; *the nose was clogged*, which impeded and aggravated the breathing. *Sambucus 200* produced almost instant relief and prompt recovery.

A highly excitable, precocious lad of six was causing great concern to his parents because of his "tantrums" and an increasingly constant twitching of the face, and *rapid winking* of the eyelids. He was always active, resisted rest periods was full of fears, was heatstrong and irritable. He was badly constipated, the stools being so large in diameter that he would not make an effort to defecate because of the pain produced by the *large calibre stool*. His feet were always *cold and clammy*. *Sanicula 10M.* was followed by a transformation.

A fair-haired little boy of five years was rapidly developing choreic symptoms. His nights were nearly as restless as his days. He would moan and groan and strike his head against the wall, and all the time, night and day, his feet were in constant motion. He presented a history of eczema from babyhood, which had been treated continuously but unsuccessfully until a few months before I saw him, when a skin specialist applied an ointment which promptly cured (?) the eczema—but "Godfried has been getting more and more nervous as the eczema has been getting better". *Zincum* 1200 was given at once. In one week the mother reported with the child. The eczema was coming out again beautifully. "Godfried is much better, as soon as the eczema began to return his nerves began to get better." The family shortly returned to their home in a distant city, but several months later, in conjunction with a check for services rendered, an expression of appreciation and thanks was received, for the little fellow continued well.

A very peculiar symptom was present in a child of twelve who was suffering with hay fever and asthma. She had all the cardinal symptoms of *Ars. alb.* as to time of aggravation thirst, restlessness and she had a very pronounced modality > of asthmatic attacks by assuming a crouching position or perching as a bird with her feet on a chair rather than sitting on a chair. *Arsenicum album* always promptly relieved the asthmatic attacks. She later required *Tuberculinum*. This remedy was considered chiefly because it was generally required to clear up her mother's colds as a child and also was curative in a septic temperature of six weeks following a retained fragment of placenta at the time of the child's birth.

Oliver Wendell Holmes spoke truly when he said: "We are all omnibuses in which our ancestors ride." Frequently the omnibus is overloaded with inherited dyscrasias—psora, syphilis, sycosis—and able to proceed on its way with great difficulty, in spite of the efforts of the most painstaking wheelwright; the failure may be due to inefficient tools or insufficient knowledge.

Some patients present a heterogeneous mass of generalities which lead nowhere; the symptoms due to the pathology of the

disease are foremost. These cases are difficult to unravel. It is a happy moment to the prescriber when they recite symptoms of real importance.

Finding the *simillimum* in a given case is often very difficult and sometimes impossible. It may require many hours, often following false clues, to piece together this most fascinating of jigsaw puzzles. But when the perfect whole is found it stimulates the mind to added effort to attain a fuller knowledge of the homoeopathic materia medica, and inspires a greater appreciation of the fundamental truths promulgated by Samuel Hahnemann over a century ago.

Philadelphia. Penna.

[*Courtesy : The Homoeopathic Recorder, Sept., 1936*]

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WHY OLDER SCHOOLS OF MEDICINE REJECT HOMOEOPATHY*

Constantine Hering

Hahnemann's earliest work on materia medica (1805) was entitled *Fragmenta, de viribus medicamentorum positivis sine in sano corpore humano observatis*.

A criticism of this work is to be found in the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal* of 1809, vol. 5.

The criticism is evidently written by a well-meaning and well-informed scientific physician of the Old School. It begins with the erroneous statement: "This work enjoys a very high reputation in its native country." No doubt the critic's remark refers to the author, not to the book. He further says:

We agree perfectly with Dr. Hahnemann as to the importance of the study which he strongly recommends, but we will not allow that it has been so absolutely neglected as he supposes or represents it to be. Every monographer and compiler *has noticed the positive as well as the relative effects* (of drugs).

By this we perceive that the critic did not understand in the least Hahnemann's strict inductive method of experimentation. Positive effects were never before taken notice of in the way Hahnemann observed them. Effects of drugs were never *purely* observed. That is, according to the old and acknowledged use of the word *pure (rein)*, meaning free from guessing, free from application, free from deductive conclusions—simply *inductive*. Hahnemann was the first, among all observers in medicine, who was strictly inductive in

*An unpublished paper selected from the Hering Collection of manuscripts by Calvin B. Knerr, M.D.

his method of experimentation. That the inductive method of reasoning was introduced by the so-called Lord Bacon, is a widely spread error. Bacon may have made use of the term but himself had not an idea of its true meaning. This was given sufficient proof both by Draper of New York, and by Liebig in Germany. All of the great discoveries of his age, based on induction, Bacon denied in his works. Harvey, the greatest physiologist of the new era, he sneeringly dubbed a "sawbones", and rejected the doctrine of the circulation of the blood. Bacon even published a formula for making gold ! *

Our critic further states :

He sincerely regrets that by the injudicious manner in which Hahnemann had arranged, or rather had neglected to arrange, his facts he had rendered his labours as useless as could (possibly be conceived. Had he given us merely his notes of a few of the most satisfactory experiments on each substance, we could have drawn our own conclusions from them ? We could have had the raw material, which we might have dressed so as to suit our purpose.

The critic is honest though evidently very ignorant of the strict inductive method of reasoning. The particular thing that Hahnemann did not wish was to "draw conclusions" or to "dress up material to suit a purpose". Hahnemann desired no conclusions excepting such as would further the healing of the sick through the greatest similarity of genuine symptoms between the drug and the patient.

Still laboring under a complete misapprehension of the facts, our critic continues as follows :

Our author, with infinite labour to himself, and inconceivable want of judgement (!) has worked and worked amongst it until the materials collected with much care, are rendered useless and incapable of being turned to any purpose even in the hands of the most expert workman.

Knowing, as we do, that all that Hahnemann worked for was the healing of the sick, we must conclude that if he had not been

capable to do this successfully he would not have been able to make a living for himself and family between the years of 1790 and 1805. After the *Fragments* was published, he, with an increasing practice, was enabled to cure Arnold, a prominent publisher, who offered to print his *Organon* and his *Materia Medica*. Nor would he have been able to cope successfully with the murderous war typhus of 1813, after which triumph he obtained his first sincere follower and disciple, Ernst Stapt, who brought into the ranks his friend the elder Gross. Thousands of converts, with the love of healing in their souls, followed to spread his doctrines throughout the world.

It is pitiful to read what our clever opponent, the critic, writes in continuation :

Hahnemann has not selected what was most valuable, nor arranged it according to a judicious plan, he had not given merely results but frittered them down to atoms, not even worth the name of fragments. He has neglected to mention the circumstances under which the effects were produced—the effects lose half their value, he has still further reduced their value by ridiculous minuteness.

One need but examine the index to find that Hahnemann mentioned *modalities* never before sufficiently esteemed to be noticed by physicians or pathologists.

Other objections equally unfounded follow. There are mentioned dosage age of subject doubts if the effects were attributable to the drug or were such as might appear from taking a glass of water or doing anything or nothing at all, it might have been simply imaginary.

Any, or all of these puerile objections are refuted by the duty inductive manner in which Hahnemann describes his very first proving and by every subsequent step in his investigations : as also by the elimination of material found useless in the experience brought by the years of practice that followed.

It is cheap to doubt. With results in practice that overwhelmingly sustain the truth, and the fact that every drug sufficiently proved and tried has acquired a certain *characteristic image*,

which all of our well proved and tried remedies have obtained all superficial doubts must dwindle away.

How miserable and mean it appears to us, in our time, to have the same objections made to the works of the master repeated almost *verbatim* ! How puerile to make objections, whether in good faith or in ignorance, to the methods of Hahnemann conducted according to the strictest inductive method of reasoning, governed by facts and pure observation on the prover as well as on the sick ! It must be that there is a woeful lack of courage, or a want of love for healing, or of thinking it too much trouble, that disposes men to "draw conclusions" or to "dress up the material to suit their purpose". The too-much-trouble principle is perhaps the worst of all, since by it failures to cure are blamed on homoeopathy.

So much for England and its Scotch critic. In Germany the method of Hahnemann was treated much worse, when new. The same treatment was accorded to other prominent men. Lambert, a philosopher and mathematician of the highest rank, was neglected and forgotten. Kant, a very talented man, became the fashion as in our age the crinoline and high heels with women.

It may be mentioned as a strange coincidence, that a certain Brown, a former student of Cullen, put his older master into the shade by inventing a so-called new system of medicine.

[*Courtesy* : The Homoeopathic Recorder, Sept. 1936]



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