

## WHAT IS A SYMPTOM ?

DR. N. GHATAK, B. A., CALCUTTA.

Our Students and young practitioners often make a confusion as to the real meaning of "a symptom." A loose sense of the term leads to confusion when attempts are made for a prescription on "the Symptom Totality." A clear idea should be made regarding the meaning of a Symptom. What is a Symptom? Is not the tumor of a patient a Symptom? Is not enlarged liver a Symptom? They are generally under the impression that an enlarged liver, a tumor, an enlarged gland, and so forth are symptoms. Of course, symptoms they are, but not as one of those that would make a symptom totality for the *basis* of a *prescription*. The enlarged tumor is an end-product, a result, or an ultimate. It is the final product of the disease.

The Master defines a symptom, as "any manifestation of a deviation from a former state of health, perceptible by the patient, the individuals around him, or the physician."

So, a symptom in the widest sense of the word, denotes and includes all that can be seen, felt, heard or sensed in any way about a patient in relation to his disease, and may be classified in various ways, viz., general and particular; common and peculiar; general and individual; primary and secondary; subjective and objective; physical and mental; etc., etc. Let us suppose that a man has been afflicted with dropsy and slow fever. There are to be found two sets of symptoms to start with, viz., those that are necessary for a diagnosis, and those that are necessary for prescribing a remedy upon, in order to cure him, under the Law of Similar. Rise of temperature, collection of serum in the abdominal cavity, paleness of the eyes and face, difficult breathing, exhaustion, loss of sleep, loss of appetite, suppression of urine and a few other symptoms are there, which go to show that the man has got dropsy; the diagnosticist, with the help of his knowledge in physiology and pathology, declares the case to be one of dropsy, and he requires nothing for his purpose of diagnosis. But the therapeuticist, who would like to select a remedy for cure, will require altogether a different class of symp-

toms other than those required by the diagnostist. Only the general or common symptoms are sufficient for anybody to find a *name* of the patient's disease, but the duty of the therapeuticist is to find the *individual* symptoms, apart from those symptoms that are common to the disease; in other words, he must have to find out the *individual* stamp which differentiates the particular case of our patient from other patients dropsy. There are lots of remedies in our *Materia Medica* that can produce dropsy, and he requires only one of those remedies which fits in with the individual patient. Suppose our patient has no thirst, has intense burning all over the body which is relieved by cold bath and cold air, the burning is attended with stinging pains, &c., and these are the symptoms that are *individual* for the patient. These are then *peculiar* symptoms for this particular patient, and these are absolutely necessary for a Homœopathic prescription. This case illustrates the idea of symptoms, as *being* general and particular, or common and peculiar.

In a similar way, we can find the shades of difference between the various pairs above referred to. But that does not solve the question as to what is a symptom that forms the basis of a Homœopathic prescription. The above illustration and like ones convey altogether a different sense. We want to know what is a symptom, a totality of which will indicate a remedy.

A true Homœopath will prescribe for the patient, being guided by the *symptoms*. What are such symptoms?—that is the question. In a case of tumor or any pathological entity before it is formed and is open to public view, there was a morbid process going on in the vital economy for a long time. This process precedes, accompanies and ultimates every result of a disease. Now, during this morbid process, several untoward, unpleasant, unnatural feelings and sensations are felt by the patient, giving rise to pains and aches, and wrong functioning of several organs of the system,—these are the symptoms. When a man is perfectly well, he should not even be conscious of any of his organs or of any part of his body; so the consciousness of any organ or any part of the body is also a symptom. But a symptom, as a symptom alone, is without much value if there is no modality qualifying it. These symptoms are evidence of a disease; they indicate that a disease process is going

on in the system and if unchecked would soon produce a pathological tangible ultimate viz., a cyst, a tumor, a fibroid, &c., whose names are a legion. These symptoms are a guide to the selection of our remedy which would be curative. These symptoms with their modalities are technically called "Totality of symptoms." Of course, a "Totality of symptoms," as a basis of Homœopathic prescription, is much more than merely a sum or an aggregate of the symptoms; in other words, there are many other requisites to make it a "Totality of symptoms" than only a numerical aggregate. But more on this later on. For the present, it should be clearly borne in mind that the symptoms which go to make up the Totality as a basis for Homœopathic prescription are altogether different from those that are necessary for the diagnosis. There are symptoms and symptoms; and as a matter of fact a particular case furnishes us with quite a myriads of symptoms, but a physician should have to sift out of the chaos the symptoms that are necessary for the prescription. How to do so and what is meant by the Totality of Symptoms will form the subject of another issue.

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Hahnemann was sitting at Leipzig, with his midnight lamp before him, translating Cullen's *Materia Medica*, which was then a standard work. He came to *Cinchona officinalis*, and found Cullen say that this bark possessed specific febrifugal action, because it was both the most aromatic and bitter substance known. Hahnemann laid down his quill and exclaimed, "Preposterous!" There are more substances, more barks, possessing more both bitter and aromatic properties, and *Cinchona* is not a specific for ague. He argued while it does cure some cases it does not cure other cases. There must be a way to find out under what conditions the bark cured and did not cure. It was at this moment that this good and benevolent man had an "inspiration." He concluded to take the drug himself, and see whether light could not be brought into the prevailing darkness. Bright and early in the morning, Hahnemann went to the "Apothecke zum Goldenen Loewen" on the market-place at Leipzig, and then and there selected some fresh *Cinchona* bark, and obtained some vials and alcohol. He prepared a tincture, took it, and behold, the symptoms he observed on himself showed a marked similarity to cases of ague cured by him by the same drug, and it was then that a new light broke upon him; that light was this: a drug will cure such ailment as its sick-making power will produce a similarity to.—LIPPE.