

Homoeopathy and Children.

By DR. H. FERGIE WOODS.

Why is it that children respond so wonderfully to homoeopathic treatment? It is an undoubted fact that they do so. In this respect they are like the animal and the uncivilised native. What then have children, natives and animals in common? Surely an unspoiled constitution, a virgin soil, upon which our remedies can act unhindered. The child has not been ruined (from the homoeopathic as well as from every other point of view) with indiscriminate drugging. Perhaps it is correct to say that the younger the child, the more rapid and complete the response to treatment—there has been no time to get spoiled. The child is nearer to Nature, has not become saturated with all the various influences (baneful in the most part) of our (so-called) civilisation—wrong feeding, smoke-laden atmosphere, continual hurry and stress, and the like.

The small child, moreover, is free from mental hindrances to recovery—worry, despair, overwork of brain, and such (though many modern children develop their minds at a very early age). Worry, grief, shock, as we know, have a directly hindering effect on the action of the homoeopathic medicine, and sometimes it is necessary to antidote the effects of the shock by the appropriate remedy before further progress can be initiated.

Children, with very few exceptions, want to be well. They normally hate the restraint of bed and the fussing attendant upon the sick room. They want to be out and at play, developing lungs and limbs by healthy exercise.

And I would here say how mistaken it is to try and restrain the child from being restless. Such repression must start mental and physical abnormalities which

will affect the whole future life. Children are *meant* to be restless. Note the kitten and the puppy. A child or an animal that is quiet, except when feeding or sleeping, is abnormal.

For children, especially, homœopathic remedies offer advantages over the old-fashioned pills and potions. No child objects to the sugar pellet or powder of the homœopathic variety. When parents remark to me delightedly how nice the medicines are to take, and how the children ask for them, I reply, "There is no *need* for nasty medicine."

Another advantage of the homœopathic medicine is that it can be mixed in water, and even given drop by drop without waking a sleeping child. Still another welcome advantage is the pleasant and gentle working of the dose, usually (in the case of children especially) quite without violent reaction, an action often so gentle and unseeming that it may not be known that the doses have done their work until it is suddenly realised that the former complaint has disappeared.

It is sometimes amusing when questioning a mother regarding her child's progress under the treatment to note how, after saying that the child is about the same, when asked how such and such a symptom is, she will reply, "Oh! yes, he hasn't had that," and, how this or that troublesome feature is: "No-o, I haven't noticed that at all." Then the mother may realise that her child is *not* "about the same," but has made progress even unrealised by her.

One of the most astounding things in homœopathic treatment is the way in which the right remedy will entirely change a child's mentality, alter its character, and transform it from a grizzling, unhappy and unpleasant creature, into a smiling and lovable youngster. We see

this transformation almost daily, in ward, in out-patient's clinic, and in private. Such cases make one wonder what really is character. Does it rest on the state of the body-cells? One would like to think it was something above that, but in children, at any rate, where the mind has not fully developed, character seems very much dependent on bodily health.

I have always held the theory that there is no such thing as a really naughty child. A child that is wilful, disobedient, destructive, even malicious, is a subject for treatment. Punishment of such children does infinitely more harm than good—it represses and hardens.

The symptoms I have mentioned, of the so-called naughty child, are symptoms of brain-irritation, and can be surely and quickly cured by our remedies. One remedy that often works wonders in cases of violent temper in children is *Stramonium*, and this is the more likely to be needed where the child has had, at some time, a fright. *Lycopodium* is another valuable "temper" remedy.

In infants of a few weeks old, one is often forced to prescribe on very few symptoms, and those chiefly pathological ones, though even infants of this early age may show definite subjective symptoms. However, Nature kindly makes up for the comparative lack of symptoms by giving a wonderful sensitiveness to the remedy, which latter does not need to be so finely adjusted, so near the similitimum, as is the case with older children and adults.

One of the great remedies which has a special affinity with early childhood is *Chamomilla*. Many a weary mother—and father—has reason to bless *Chamomilla*. It is almost a specific for the fractious teething baby, and in such cases will usually bring a welcome peace and rest to the worn-out household.

As deeper remedies for teething troubles, especially where the teeth are slow to come through, *Calcarea carb.*, and *Calcarea phos.* are little short of wonderful in their action. The amount of the actual salt of lime in each dose is, as usually given, infinitesimal, and cannot of itself supply the needs of the growing teeth and bones. But one must suppose that the minute dose given acts as a stimulant to the cells of the body to absorb as they had not been doing, the necessary lime particles from the food. These and other remedies will also help crooked limbs to grow straight, without the aid of splints or other device.

An intensely interesting study is the child of school age—an age of immense importance as regards the future well-being and usefulness of the individual.

I must here interject a word—and a forcible word—against the pernicious system of cramming, competitive examinations, scholarships and homework. Homework for children ought to be forbidden by law. It keeps a growing child indoors, using up a brain already sufficiently tired by the day's schooling, often up to an hour far beyond the right and proper bed-time. The child, instead of having opportunity for games and hobbies in the evening, goes to bed with the brain loaded with sums or grammar, often to lie awake or sleep restlessly with this (generally useless) knowledge seething in the mind.

A bright child is at a positive disadvantage in this way, as he or she is forced ahead for the honour and glory of the school. How much does one hear in later life of the brilliant child? Very little. The work of the world is mostly done by those who made no mark at school.

Many children worry about their lessons, get the fear of not being able to do them, so incurring the displeasure of their teacher and possibly punishment. I have found in such cases *Lycopodium* to be of great service. It

removes morbid fears, gives self-confidence, and helps the scholar to give his best.

Phosphorus is another remedy, similar to *Lycopodium* in its sensitiveness, but *Phosphorus* is perhaps, in addition, more sensitive to physical impressions, such as those of taste, hearing and smell.

There are very few children who have not some fears—fears of the dark, of thunder, of animals, of strangers, etc. and such a fear, which may have lasted for years, can often be wiped out in a few weeks by a dose of the constitutional medicine.

One can sometimes choose the child's remedy on its mental symptoms alone, helped perhaps by the physical appearance. In such cases, I look with the greatest confidence to a successful result from the prescription. The mental symptoms give one the entry to the individual, and individualisation is the key to success in all treatment.

It is important to search for the cause of illness in our little patients. I have already referred to the possibility of a mental shock affecting the child for long afterwards. Physical shock can have a like effect.

A little girl of eight was brought to me with a history that she would not play with other children, never wanted to go out, was always tired out by teatime. Her appetite was poor, and she was small for her age. I gave what seemed the indicated remedy and, though a month after, she was better in some respects, the complaint was that she still got very tired, and could not learn her lessons, being behind other children of her age at school. I was then told for the first time that about eight months previously she had had a blow on the head, and had not seemed so well since. I gave a dose of *Arnica 10m.*, and at her next visit, a month later, the report was "Better

in every way ; happier, plays with other children, and gets less tired." Again, five weeks later still, I was told, "She seems like a different child." She was getting on better at school, and (an interesting symptom) her feet, which had always been dry, were inclined to perspire—an effort of nature to eliminate. She has had no more medicine since the dose of *Arnica* two and a half months ago, that seeming* to be all that was necessary (for the present at any rate) in order to remove the barrier to health set up by the blow on the head.

A fairly frequent cause of long-continued ill-health is Vaccination. The illness resulting from this procedure is sometimes immediate and so can be traced unmistakably to that cause, but often the onset of illhealth is more insidious and not so apparently connected with the vaccination. If there be any doubt, the giving of an antidote to vaccination, e.g., *Thuja*, may help to decide the cause, and at the same time cure the patient.

A chronic state of ill-health sometimes follows an acute illness, e.g., measles, diphtheria, or, more often, influenza, though I believe that these complaints (as indeed all illness) are eliminative and curative in their nature, and if properly treated, the child should subsequently be better in health.

But we have all-sufficient remedies for the chronic effects of acute ailments, and medicine such as *Sulphur* and *Tuberculinum* and *Influenzinum* will restore the poise of nature.

The longer one has to do with children, the more one learns to respect their likes and dislikes. A young child has always a very good reason for a craving or an aversion—a better reason than an adult is likely to have, with his palate and stomach vitiated by years of wrong feeding. Even when the craving is for something that seems

obviously not good for the child, it is probably a second best for the little patient, and supplies a need for the time being, the *best* being the removal of the abnormal craving by the appropriate homœopathic medicine, and the restoration of the internal balance.

Aversions are perhaps to be still more respected than cravings, though as a rule they are far from respected by the parents, who force the unwanted food on the little victim. Children thus are made to like salt, for example, which is popularly supposed to be a necessity on the table, whereas it is simply a habit, and a quite unnecessary one.

When a child's cravings are very unusual, they are a most valuable guide to the needed remedy. A small girl who came to the out-patient's department in this hospital a short while ago, had two very marked cravings, one for vinegar, which she would drink by the cupful if allowed, and the other for fat—raw suet being a special favourite. There is only one remedy having these two cravings in a marked degree, viz., *Hepar sulphur*, and this medicine not only removed the cravings, but improved the patient as a whole in a very striking manner.

In hospital practice, at any rate, one is often working against unfavourable conditions in the home—lack of air and light, wrong feeding, bad environment, etc., and a very valuable preliminary to the child's treatment would often be a good grounding in common sense of the mother!

Most mothers, especially those having children who take cold easily, put far too many clothes on their children, it being not uncommon, on getting the child undressed, to count, six, eight, or even more layers of clothing. If you suggest the immediate reduction of such covering by three or four layers, the mother looks very askance at you, and if further you dare to suggest a linen mesh garment next

to the skin instead of the thick heavy woollen one, well, the startled parent wonders if you are quite sane!

Speaking seriously, a light and open work linen or linen mixture garment worn next the skin keeps the body at a more equable warmth in all weathers, and certainly reduces the catching of colds.

Another fixed idea that a great many mothers have is that strong disinfectant soaps are good for washing their offspring. One result of this is seen in the frequent appearance of scurfy patches on the face. When I see this on a child, I invariably ask what soap is used, and in over ninety per cent. of cases the reply is—, a wellknown and well-advertised disinfectant soap. One cannot perhaps wonder at this and other strong soaps being used for children's faces when one reads the many advertisements insisting on the necessity for killing the germs on children's skins, in order to keep our boys and girls in good health. As if you could kill a germ either in or on a child without damaging that child's tissues to some extent—let alone the question as to why you should try to kill the germ at all. No, most illnesses, in children at any rate, could be cured without medicine if the child were put under right and natural conditions—good food, enough light and air, sensible clothing, sufficient exercise, and freedom from repression. And I know no other essentials for perfect health.

If medicine is needed, as it usually is, in the absence of right conditions of living, the homœopathic remedy works with Nature instead of against her, and helps the system to help itself and to free itself from what, in the child, is generally a collection of hereditary poisons, which would, if allowed to remain, hamper the whole life, but which, if eliminated gently and safely by a course of constitutional medicine, allow the child to grow to full mental and physical health.

—*Homœopathic World*.