

from the individual to the society, from the few towards the masses, from the rich towards the poor. Only then we may be sure of working in the right direction and of reaching the goal.

WHICH REMEDY

ARSENICUM ALBUM NUX VOMICA

By D. M. G.

These two remedies have many features in common and are found listed as "possibles" in a great many rubrics in connection with such clinical states as asthma, coryza, disorders of sleep, and gastro-intestinal disturbances.

Both are exceedingly chilly, want to hug the fire, can scarcely get warm even in bed: both shew a strong penchant for tidiness: both are intimately associated with states of "nervous tension:" both are suggested by a spare, sallow, well-groomed appearance.

Nevertheless they must be carefully differentiated the one from the other in relation to any particular case of sickness. Each of these remedies possesses features peculiar to itself which will repay careful study.

The inner nature, genius, or personality of a drug may at times be *suggested*, by its ecology, its form, its habitat, its behaviour, its manner of growth, that is if origin of the drug is botanical or biological.

There is, however, another manner in which the nature of a drug can be revealed whatever its source of origin, namely by its *toxicity*—the subjective symptoms and objective signs which it can induce when introduced into the living body of plant or animal. These toxic effects result when a drug is administered in such form and amount as will give rise to deviations from normal health and well-being. The symptoms are the outward and observable

evidence of underlying tissue changes and disturbances of function caused by the drug.

If it is true that what a drug *can cause* in the way of symptoms, evidencing a sick state of the tissues, it *can also* cure when a similar sick state exists from some other cause, then it is obviously of the greatest importance to know just what toxic effects can be produced by any particular substance when introduced into the body.

Hahnemann and the early pioneers of homœopathy have provided us with a great store of information by their remarkable enterprise and industry in the matter of "*planned provings*". They administered selected drugs in minute doses or in potency to large numbers of "*provers*" who did not know what drug they were taking. As *controls* unmedicated doses were often given without, of course, the knowledge of the dose.

It is obvious, however, that the "*planned proving*" procedure is dangerously wide open to error, especially in these self-analytical days. Give an individual pills or powders to take, bid him or her note any and every variant of sensation, emotion, distress, discomfort, altered sense of well-being that may accrue, and immediately that individual will become abnormally and excessively somato-conscious. Whether the doses taken contain the drug under scrutiny or are unmedicated there is a strong probability that much of the "*effects*" noted and recorded will be either the product of auto-suggestion or the result of physical and physiological happenings which *normally escape notice* passing into the realm of conscious awareness. In other words they are not drug-induced effects at all.

Another pitfall that besets this form of investigation is that the "*effects*" recorded may be symptoms and distresses caused during the period of proving by the prover's contact with the hostile environment of this present day world, and nothing whatever to do with the drug under review. The most meticulous care is therefore called for in interpretation and very prolonged and extensive trial

is required if such planned provings are to be of any real value or validity.

While much of the invaluable material in the Homœopathic Materia Medica is the outcome of planned provings undoubtedly a great deal of its most relevant content has been derived from other sources, namely recorded clinical observations and "accidental provings".

For obvious reasons it is not feasible to push planned provings to the point of causing serious damage to tissues and severe illness such as the physician is often called upon to treat. Opportunities for discovering the toxic, symptom-producing, effects of individual drugs are provided by what may be termed "accidental provings".

Such provings are of special value in as much as the dose is in most cases wholly unsuspecting, complaining in alarm or annoyance of symptoms and "effects" that were quite unexpected.

"Accidental provings" may occur in the course of therapy, when the unwitting "prover" is expecting relief from existing symptoms and is not at all prepared to become the victim of further toxic effects with their added distress and possible dangers. They may also be met with in the course of pharmacological experiment, and as the result of accidental poisoning or of homicidal malice. In all these cases the symptoms manifested can with a considerable degree of certainty be attributed to the direct effect of the drug and not to auto-suggestion. They are therefore reliable evidence of what any particular drug can cause in the way of disease-symptoms.

Further such accidental provings are often extremely informative in the matter of "tissue affinities", revealing the fact that a particular drug has a selective affinity for some organ or type of tissue. This knowledge is of therapeutic value as a drug having known affinity for some organ or tissue can often be used curatively in sick states involving this organ or these tissues, that is if administered in suitable dose and potency.

It is time to return to the two remedies under review. *Arsenicum Album*, white arsenic, is the oxide of metallic arsenic. It is a colourless, tasteless powder and is thus a handy weapon for the poisoner, the more so as the symptoms to which it gives rise can so easily be mistaken for those of "natural disease". Poisoning with Arsenic occurs in two forms, the acute and the chronic. Notable features of acute poisoning are burning pains, severe vomiting and diarrhœa, and "general muscular weakness and collapse". This latter is one of the most constant characteristics of sick states calling for the use of *Arsenicum*. There is a graphic description of acute arsenic poisoning in chapter 1 of Dorothy Sayer's "Strong Poison". At something after 8 P.M. Philip Boyes partook of what later transpired to be a poisoned omelette, and at a quarter past 10 P.M. we read "Philip Boyes seemed hardly able to walk, and sank groaning into a hall chair and asked for brandy"—evidencing rapid and severe prostration as the result of something eaten about two hours previously.

The chronic forms of poisoning manifest an affinity of this drug for other tissues besides these of the intestinal tract, notably for the skin and the peripheral nerves, giving rise to a variety of skin affections and to symptoms of neuritis.

One peculiar feature of the arsenic story is the known proclivity of the peasants in Styria and the Tyrol for "arsenic-eating", the powder being eaten dry and no fluid taken for some hours after. This is said to produce "a clear complexion and sleek hair". This provides further evidence of the affinity of arsenic for the skin and points to its association with a somewhat fastidious concern over "the appearance".

Nux Vomica, also a highly poisonous drug, is derived from the bitter-tasting seeds of *strychnos nux vomica*, the poison nut. The tree has a crooked trunk with irregular branches and yellowish-grey bark. The smooth, deeply veined leaves are in opposite pairs, and the fruit is an

orange-yellow spheroidal berry containing the discoid button-like seeds in a glutinous pulp. These seeds contain the alkaloids strychnine and brucine, which have similar toxic properties though brucine is by far the weaker of the two. One would fain know more of the local background of Nux and its herbal history. The toxic effects of strychnine, however, are well known and provide useful information. One effect is a greatly increased acuteness of all the special senses, including that of touch. Indeed even the light touch provided by a current of air may "fire off" the reflex twitching or even convulsions that are characteristic of strychnine poisoning. In acute poisoning the drug acts very rapidly. Within five to fifteen minutes after ingestion muscular twitchings begin and there is a feeling of suffocation and tightness in the chest. Then quite suddenly the victim is seized with the most appalling spasms, the body is arched backwards, the colour becomes livid and the facial muscles contract into a ghastly fixed grin. Similar symptoms may, of course, be met with in sick states but in less severe and exaggerated degree. The conclusion of the pharmacologists is that the chief affinity of strychnine is for the central nervous system. Its action is to produce a state of nervous "*hyper-irritability*" and this is the most prominent characteristic of the Nux Vomica "symptom-picture."

Thus their toxic effects show marked differences between these two drugs. *Arsenicum* produces widespread degeneration of tissues leading to grave disturbances of degeneration, impairment of sensation, possibly muscular paralysis, and affections of the skin. Accompanying these effects is a marked degree of *weakness and exhaustion*.

Nux on the other hand shows a close affinity for the spinal cord and brain tissues producing an intense degree of over-sensitivity to all external impressions and resulting in *excessive irritability*. There is also the suggestion of sudden extreme episodal violence and uncontrollable impulse.

These basal characteristics run right through the Mate-

ria Medica picture of each drug. Some of the finer points distinguishing each remedy follow.

Mentally both show a state of "nervous tension," but whereas *Nux* is choleric, and wants to smash the furniture, *Arsenicum* is worried, fearful, fussy, and wants to keep polishing and re-re-re-polishing the furniture. Both remedies are "tidy," but *Arsenicum* is tiresomely tidy, fastidious, foppish, house-proud, whereas the *Nux* tidiness is an aversion from mess and muddle, a passion for orderliness, to have things just so.

Arsenicum is full of fears, scared stiff of being left alone, whereas *Nux* is full of rages and easily exasperated by trifles.

Again *Arsenicum* is terribly restless, irritated by the sight of people doing nothing must be constantly occupied, can't stay still. *Nux* is full of drive, exasperated by inefficiency, liable to sudden impulses to commit violent acts.

Arsenicum shows a restless manner, and a worried, anxious, even terrified expression. Whereas with *Nux* it is not so much restlessness as rapidity that is apparent. The *Nux* type is impatient, walks fast, talks fast, eats fast, does everything at speed, is "tense" rather than terrified in appearance.

In the matter of *general reactions* the two remedies have much in common, especially in an intense aversion from cold and relief from warmth. However there are differences. For instance *Arsenicum* shews aggravation from wet whether whereas *Nux* shares with *Causticum* and *Hepar Sulph.* a definite amelioration on moist rainy days. *Nux* has a peculiarly strong aversion from wind. Both remedies are associated with *disturbances of sleep*, but where as the *Arsenicum* subject is roused soon after midnight and often driven from bed to walk the floor, the *Nux* type is liable to wake between 2 a.m. and 4 a.m. feeling pretty good and then after snatches of cat-nap sleep, wake finally much later feeling "awful," fatigued, headachy and irritable.

Arsenicum pains are characteristically burning in

nature, possibly like "hot needles or hot wires stabbing into the flesh", and may show periodically. *Nux* pains are shooting, tearing, jerking, may be insupportable driving the victim nearly frantic. Limbs and joints may feel bruised, taut, numb, heavy and there may be associated muscle twitchings and spasms.

One type of *Arsenicum* headache is neuralgic, accompanied by excessive sensitivity of the scalp—brush or comb seem to "penetrate to the brain",—and is relieved by local warmth. The congestive type of *Arsenicum* headache associated with much throbbing, burning, restlessness and anxiety demands cold air and cold applications. This is unusual for *Arsenicum*.

The *Nux* headache is of the "hang-over" variety, worse in the morning on waking, accompanied by a queasy nausea and a loathing for food, and relieved to some extent by warmth, quiet and firm pressure.

Arsenicum has an acute coryza with violent paroxysms of sneezing and profuse scalding watery discharge. The *Nux* "cold" is worse indoors and better in the open: the nose is alternately blocked or pouring freely from one or both nostrils: at night is "stuffed up", especially on the side next the pillow: and there is much distressful sneezing, often associated with a rawness and scraped feeling in the throat.

Arsenicum asthma attacks come on soon after midnight with fearful tightness and feeling of suffocation: there may be a burning sensation as of "coals of fire within the chest": the sufferer has to sit bolt upright or get out of bed: there may be great quantities of thin, watery sputum: anxiety, restlessness and prostration will be evident. *Nux* has been found helpful in asthmatic attacks which are associated with digestive disturbance: the attack may last all night and be accompanied by cough, rattling in chest, gagging and retching.

Gastro-intestinal disturbances are associated with both remedies. These in the case of *Arsenicum* are likely to be

acute, even alarming, aggravated by talking the least amount of food or drink, especially if cold, and accompanied by much weakness and exhaustion.

The *Nux* symptoms are less alarming but extremely distressing with much queasy nausea, ineffectual retching, sensation of "weight" in the stomach region, and a feeling of constriction round the waist. The symptoms are often chronic with a great deal of heartburn, acidity and relief from vomiting.

The above are some of the more evident distinctions between these two remedies which seem at first sight to have much in common. *Arsenicum Album* can, perhaps, be summed up as, "Anxiety, agitation, exhaustion": and *Nux Vomica* as "Irritation, impatience, exasperation".

—Homœopathy, June 1953

THE MADHYA BHARAT HOMŒOPATHIC CONFERENCE

The first session of the Madhya Bharat Homœopathic Conference was held in Feb. 1950, in Gwalior. For the last two years friends living in Dewas, Ujjain and Indore promised to hold a session but their efforts failed.

This year our president of the Madhya Bharat Association Dr. Thomas Singh, has arranged to call a session on 2nd. and 3rd. October, 1953, in Rajgarh-Biaora which is in the heart of this province.

The need is greater to have a session soon as:

1. Every province has passed a Homœopathic Bill, our province should not lag behind.
2. The Planning Commission have strongly recommended to the Ministry of Health, Government of India,