

# THE HAHNEMANNIAN GLEANINGS.

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VOLUME 1

OCTOBER, 1930.

NO 9

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## Successful Prescribing, & Study of Materia Medica.

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Successful prescribing presupposes mastery over the Materia Medica. Of course the study of our Materia Medica is a long and tediously difficult task and a good deal of patient labour is required. One particular method should be adopted for the study and be held fast all through. Different individuals may have different methods of doing it, and only one that has been found suitable in a general way and for the general run of students, may be attempted to be briefly given here. This method we have been giving to our students graduating every year from our College, and it is hoped that this will be useful to many, if not to all.

First of all, the subject of our Materia Medica must be made *interesting*. An original proving of a remedy should never be attempted by the beginners. A well-round Materia Medica should be selected by them for a study. A dry study as that of a Geography is likely to be quite unwelcome, and so unconnected symptoms study can never be recommended. Once the study is made interesting and pleasant, all difficulties are smoothed away. A successful Teacher of Materia Medica knows well how to make the study interesting to his pupils;—he can *create* the interest. This *creation* of interest either by the Teacher or by the student himself is the first thing that is needful. How to do this,—is the point.

All the remedies of our Materia Medica, at least all the Polychrests, are so many *living* entities, as it were, and they

must have to be studied as such. After the first reading is over, i.e., after a fair idea is obtained regarding their actions in our living organism, attempts should have to be made in *grouping* them, i.e., dividing them into groups or classes, on the basis of some *common* characteristic. Dr. Farrington has very wisely classified them in accordance with their origin, viz., into Animal kingdom, Vegetable kingdom, Mineral kingdom, and so forth. One is quite at liberty to group them in various other ways according to his liking. Some may do so as Mind remedies, Liver remedies, Heart remedies and so forth. Any how there must be some *common* characteristic on the basis of which the grouping is to be made. Then, each group should have to be made a particular item for study. Suppose, one has made into Organ groups, so that his groups will consist of Mental group, Hepatic group, Cardiac group, etc.; he will take one group at a time; say, Mental one, and find out the differences in action, of each remedy of that group, on the mind. Each of the remedies will be found to act on the mind *in its own peculiar way*; thus, though in a *general* way all of them are found to act on the mind, the special or *peculiar* way of affecting it by each of them will also be known. Acon. makes the mind restless with fear of death, Argentum Nitr. makes it badly apprehensive, Aurum again tends it to commit suicide, Apis makes a man fidgety, Gels. nervous, Natrum Mur. exceptionally sad, and so on to the end of the list. After finishing the Mental group, the student will have to take up another group, and will proceed in a similar way. If this course is followed, all the remedies shall be very clearly understood regarding the general as well as particular action under the rubrics or groups.

The next course for study should be the making a *picture* of each and every remedy of our Materia Medica. The previous course has been *analytical* and this one should be *synthetical*. Each should be given an individual entity as a whole. The general as well as peculiar mode of affecting our organism should have to be clearly understood. A *living picture* as

it were, is to be formed, of each remedy as an individual unit. In this course, aim should be to know how each remedy affects the whole human economy, keeping special attention on its *central* action.

Then, comes the *general* comparison of apparently similar remedies. We have known by this time the general and particular action of each and every remedy regarding the whole economy as well as its parts. We have known the action of Arsenicum Album and of Seeale to be almost similar; but wherein do they differ? One is a chilly remedy, and the other is hotblooded. Pulsatilla and Natr. Mur are apparently similar,—where do they part with each other? The one seeks consolation, the other avoids it; the one has no thirst, the other has inordinate thirst, and so on. This sort of comparative study will make the individual picture of each of our remedies permanently fixed on the mind.

Our point is to *retain* the pictures of the remedies on our mind. The first and foremost process is as stated above. The second process is *mental reproduction*. The third process is *use* and *analogy*. The process of *reproduction* is like mentally chewing the cud. It is a process of thinking over the remedies at our leisures, so as to make the pictures thickened into so many living individuals. *Analogy* is a mental attempt to find out a proto-type of each of those pictures amongst our friends, acquaintances and patients.

After the laborious study of the Materia Medica with the help of these processes is finished, in other words, after complete and living pictures have been stored up in mind, the student will obtain a *natural* help from his own mind. By this we mean—from the Power of Association with which we are gifted by God. Every healthy mind is endowed with that power, by the help of which we can “recollect” or “reproduce” what has been stored up in the mind, as soon as we see before our eyes a like or a similar. Suppose I have carefully made a picture of Pulsatilla and stored it up in my mind; now as soon as I see a Pulsatilla patient, that picture *automatically*

comes up,—at least, a *similar* group of remedies will appear before my mental eye. It is practically an *involuntary* act of the mind.

When mind has been so trained, and *Materia Medica* has been so stored up, prescription will be comparatively an easy affair,—sometimes a *pleasure*, indeed. To such a student of *Materia Medica*,—Case taking is by far a simplified process. As soon as a patient will commence to state his symptoms, the similar group will float up before his mind, to be by and by, minimised into only one or two, in the course of giving and finishing the symptoms of the case. If there is more than one to the last, the prescriber has only to differentiate between them, mentally or with the help of his *Materia Medica*, and that is an end of the affair. This looming up of remedies is a *necessity* for being a Prescriber.

When the student of the *Materia Medica* comes to this stage, he will really see visible pictures of the remedies, and then he will *feel* that he has become a master of the subject. He will now be conscious of some inner power which urges him to impart the knowledge which he has himself acquired. Now he has got a true mastery over the subject and he is really a Teacher of his people. Before that stage, teaching others would be a forced process and prescribing, in most cases, abortive. Unless the prescription is made in this way, there can be no confidence of the prescriber over his medicine, and consequently at every step he will have an indomitable inclination to change the remedy, to the *infinite* injury to his patients as well as to his reputation.