

The North Pole to the Rescue

by Dr Elizabeth Wright Hubbard

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A constellation of vesicles on the left side of the brow and scalp of a merry, pretty, mid-century schoolteacher who had been under appalling strain for years without complaint, which burned and itched quite unendurably, spread to the left eye. She had very little fever and few constitutional symptoms. She described the pain as "frightening" and had sat bolt upright in a hard chair all night. She panted with the pain. She desires to be left alone and not talked to and is sensitive to people moving about in the house, both from the jar and the noise. Difficulty in keeping the legs still. Numb sensation in the left temple. Diagnosis: Herpes Zoster. Some relief from cold. Initial prescription based on numbness of the left face, Kent 379 and flippancy of the lady even in her anguish: *Graphites 10M*.

No relief. Quite desperate with pain. I asked her if she could not describe better how she felt. She said there was a sensation of coldness in the painful eye. Kent 236. The only remedy *Thuja*. The larger heading - coldness in the eye includes the *Graphites* and *Calcaria Phos*. The pain, by the next day, had concentrated in the left temple, where it throbbed, *Spigelia 2C* gave slight relief. On further questioning, she said she felt as if the eye were separating from the head. Roberts' "Sensations As If," page 131 suggests *Lachnanthes* but on reading it in the *Materia Medica* it does not fit at all. Finally, the patient said, "It feels as though there were lumps of ice behind my eyeballs." Roberts, page 119, "as if a lump of ice lay in the orbit of the eye," one remedy only: *Magnetis Polus Arcticus, 1M*, 3 doses. Next morning, she phoned and said "You have hit it." The pain had lessened almost immediately. I have never used *Mag. P. Arct.* before, although I once used the Southern magnetic pole, *Mag. P. Aust* for an ingrowing toenail.

Why do I quote this case? Partly to show how indispensable are the sensations "as if." Next to my Kent, I would rather have Roberts' "As If" for frequency of use and accuracy of prescribing. Moreover, it can be bought. One could discuss this case for a long time from many viewpoints. For instance, to be pathological for a moment, Kent, page 1314, has a rubric on zona which includes *Graphites*, *Ran. b.* and *Thuja*. Oddly enough, it does not mention our North Pole, which alleviated the condition, because of its exact and unique symptom similarity.

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