

Some Similia Similes.

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THE life of this paper is sufficiently comprehensive to admit of similes on every point of Homœopathic philosophy, but we are sure that you will be pleased to learn that it is not our intention to reach the ultimate possibilities of the caption, but merely to touch the subject in high places, as it were.

We have often seen a lad "skip" a flat stone on the surface of smooth water, which left expanding circlets behind it finally merging into an undulating path, which in turn extended its wavelets to the adjacent fluid until the whole surface vibrated with a wavy, tremulous motion.

If the ideas contained in this paper, shied at the broad expense of its subject and projected on the ocean of thought here present, create a shimmering line of thought, corruscating with similar ideas, the purpose of this paper will have been accomplished, and we shall be happy.

The teachings in Hahnemann's *Organon* are so radically different from the traditions and practices that we have accepted for lo! these many years, that when coming across them for the first time one naturally shrinks from their immediate acceptance, because they are not at once self-evident. On the contrary, the Law of Similia is to all appearances a flat contradiction, but the experience of a hundred years has demonstrated that it is no such thing, and, therefore, if it has the appearance of being a contradiction and is a real truth, it is necessarily a paradox. And so it is, of the most pronounced type. And since paradoxes are merely truths in disguise, it becomes the duty of the advocate of their principles to demonstrate them and to remove the masks which hide their beauties from the uninitiated.

Being forced to admit that we have a paradox to put

into practical application, we naturally seek its most salient points, and in doing so at once come across these three, which we will consider, *i.e.*, "Drug Action, Primary and Secondary," "Like cures Like," and "Potentiation."

In the "wild and woodlly West," or in that part of creation so considered by the more ancient East, Homœopathy is yet in comparative infancy,—at about that period of its existence which would correspond to the teething period of a growing babe. Being yet in swaddling garments, and having to be vouched for, it is often necessary to leave the high standards of finished and technical language in which the more highly educated would find pleasure and receive understanding, for the simpler and plainer speech of the realm—to put the pabulum of Homœopathic truth in such homely form that the minds of the inhabitants can assimilate it.

To this end it is often necessary to construct figures of speech containing a central idea that corresponds to the fact under discussion, and which is familiar enough to the listener to enable him to appreciate its application and be instructed thereby. Even in teaching medical students the intricacies of the *Organon* we have found that this means of instruction has produced the deepest impression and left the clearest understanding of the subject matter.

Unlike the student of to-day, who attends medical college with a teacher to explain the intricacies of the Homœopathic philosophy, we studied it alone, and many and long were the hours of reflection on and ruminating of the various paragraphs before their meaning became clear and their application apparent. *Our* school was individual reflection, in secluded silence mostly, but often in the loudest uproar. But whether in the stillness of a night in the country, in the seclusion of a shady spot on the river's bank practicing the art that keeps the White House bereft of a master much of the time, or amid the clamor of a ball game, our teachers were the events constantly transpiring around

us, that without language of words became explanatory expressions of problems that awaited solution.

Whether the conclusions arrived at were correct or not, we will leave for the decision of this body, as some of them are here given in the particular form in which they were born, and clothed in the thought raiment which at that time invested them. But whatever that decision may be, they scattered much of the mist of uncertainty which intervened between us and a clear understanding.

DRUG-ACTION—PRIMARY AND SECONDARY.

The whole superstructure of medicine must necessarily rest upon drug-action in its widest sense of application, and it must be conceded that the giving of medicine, to become a science, must be done according to fixed principles. The belief that medicine will finally become an exact science, must needs include the proposition that drugs produce certain specific and invariable effects. Then what is drug-action? Hahnemann characterizes it in classic language; we roughly say—it is their sick-making property. Experiment determines the fact that drugs cure sick people, and they must do so, therefore, by virtue of their sick-making property. The deduction follows, as the day the night, that no drug will make a sick man well that will not make a well man sick. Experience further determines that drugs have two effects—primary and secondary. How, then can the same drug cure in two different ways? Because it has two different actions, *i.e.*, a primary and a secondary effect, and the Old School prescribe on the indications of the former—when they prescribe on indications—while the New School prescribe on the indications of the latter. But some will say, “While I know what you *say*, I do not understand what you *mean*; I cannot fathom that thought at once, please illustrate.” Well, my friend, Hahnemann, in Paragraph 63 of the *Organon*, states that “every drug alters the harmony of the vital force, more or less, and produces a certain change in the

state of health of the body for a longer or shorter space of time. This is called primary effect. Although a product of drug-action and vital force, it is probably due chiefly to the drug. Our vital force, by means of its energy, endeavors to oppose this effect. The resulting conservative reaction is an automatic activity of the vital force, and is called after-effect, or counter-effect." If possible, the inquirer after light on this subject, or the student reading this passage is more mystified than before because of the complexity, as well as the newness, of the idea, together with the addition of this new element—the vital force. As it is not necessary, or even expedient, at this point, to give an explanation regarding the vital force, we usually say to them that the human body is subject to the same laws as any other body, and that one learns very early in his scientific career that "wherever in nature there is an action there is a consequent reaction." For instance, if you hitch your thoroughbred trotter to your road-cart, get behind him with a whip and lash him savagely until he gets to the top of his speed, and repeat the castigation as soon as he begins to lag, you will travel a greater distance with him in the same length of time by so doing than by any other means. But if you keep up this treatment it will soon be discovered that he will not respond to the stimulus of the whip, and other and more drastic means have to be adopted, until all the spirit in him has been worked out, you have brought him to a condition corresponding to the secondary effect of drugs. Administered in crude form, they set up an intense action, but it soon runs its race and then the day of reckoning comes, and the penalty is an actionless constitution. The sensitiveness to drug-action has been killed, like the spirit of the horse, by the drug. And as the muscular power of an organism may be exhausted by over-exertion, so may the vital force be destroyed by the constant repetition of crude medicinal agents.

But, you say, "I am not yet clear on this point. There is too much 'vital force' in your explanation for my

understanding. Can you not make it clearer in some other way?" Well, yes, as nearly as can be done by omitting one of the essential elements of the proposition. However, if you will take an ordinary convex lens and get it "in focus," you will see the object under the glass very clearly, more so than without it, while if you move the glass away the object will gradually disappear, until at length it will reappear, but will be inverted and not so distinct. The object in focus, in correct position, is the primary action of the glass, and the object in focus appearing to be inverted is the secondary action of the glass. The primary effect of a drug being a given one, the secondary effect is just the opposite. Now, those curing the sick by the aid of the primary effect of medicines, do so, as a rule, according to the law of contraries, while those curing by the secondary effect of drugs do so, almost invariably, according to the law of similars. "Oh! I see," says the inquirer, "Similia, Similibus Curentur—the hair of the dog is good for the bite." Not so fast, my friend, with your translation. It is not the hair of the same dog, but that of a similar dog, if you wish to paraphrase correctly. But how can you possibly say that a drug producing a given effect can cure effects similar to those of the drug? It is the very acme of paradoxes to make such a claim, and it is more than that, it is absurd. Now, my friend, you have seen equally absurd and contradictory things, and I will show you from your own experience that this proposition is as practical as any other apparent contradiction which you have seen demonstrated. This brings us naturally to our second point:

LIKE CURES LIKE.

You have seen water made to boil by pouring ice water over the vessel containing it. You have heard silence ensue after the introduction of a humming "A" tuning-fork into an "A" tube, and heard it resume its song on being withdrawn. You have had the burning which follows a swallow

of Bourbon vanish on taking a swallow of Seltzer water ; both of them are irritants, but the one destroys the other. Now, the present application of this fact is this : Whatever life is, and whatever health is, they are modified by the action of drugs. If life is a mode of harmonious motion, and the specific effect of drugs is a mode of harmonious motion (if health is harmony and disease is discord), then as silence results from the meeting of similar sound waves, so harmony is restored to the discordant organism by the meeting of its specific actions with similar specific actions of the drug kingdom.

And, on the other hand, do you not know that if you strike an "A" chord on the piano, every other "A" string in the instrument will vibrate in unison with it? This fact still further explains how likes are influenced by likes, the former case corresponding to what we term the primary, and the latter to the secondary effect of the drug. Thus, as the harp-strings tuned to a certain key, are set singing in unison by similar chords sounded by the musician's hand, so are human life-vibrations influenced by similar chords of action when adapted to them by the skilled physician.

The question is often asked, what is the difference between the Old and the New Schools? My reply is, the same difference as between the north and south poles. By that I do not intend to say all the difference in the world, but that they are diametrically opposite. The difference might be expressed somewhat in this manner : The Old School is a system of medicine based on experiments on sick people and dumb animals, while the New School is based on law established by experiments on well people. Medicine given the old way suppresses disease by a superior physical force, while medicine given according to the law of similars cures the sick by suasion. This latter statement I illustrate in this way : Disease may be considered to be a riot of the cells of the body, and like a riot of men who, up in arms, clamor for a point which they deem to be a right, will

destroy everything in their way to attain it unless restrained, suppressed or persuaded to desist and be quite. If you place them under arrest, or in prison, they can do no harm, but liberated them and they again congregate and riot. Place a cordon of soldiers, 5000 strong, around them, and no demonstration of a hostile nature will escape them. Remove the soldiers, and the demonstration at once breaks forth anew. But if, on the other hand, some one companionable to them, and who has ideas similar to their own, comes from without and announces to them that, because of certain concessions on one or both sides, the grievance for which they riot has been adjusted, peace and quiet immediately prevail, and the militia are no longer needed. There is no riot to quell, though the same individuals are present who but a moment ago were in a state of frenzy. You may imprison with Morphia the pain of neuralgia, which is peculiar in that it darts and shoots like lightning, and is temporarily relieved by warmth; but as soon as its effect dies away, the lightning pains reappear. A dose of potentized Magnesia will persuade the pain to disappear permanently. These cells are certainly in the same location and apparently in the same condition, but they no longer evolve pain, for their grievance has been adjusted. The disease has been *cured* by suasion; it was only *suppressed* by superior physical force. Crude drugs almost always suppress by preponderance of physical force. Potencies always cure by suasion.

Tom Moore evidently had a glimpse of this truth when he wrote :

"No flower of her kindred,
No rosebud was nigh
To reflect back her blushes,
And give sigh for sigh."

The "last rose of summer" was evidently sad because of her approaching demise, and, from the poet's expression, evidently yearned for sympathy. Now sympathy is a

feeling corresponding to that of another with feelings kindred in kind if not in degree. Another element of sympathy, we think, is the voluntary assuming of the trouble of another. This brings to mind the axiom that "a trouble shared is half over." If, then, sympathy will relieve the trouble existing in the mind of another, and as sympathy is necessarily in its very nature trouble, we have again an illustration of "like curing like."

This suggests another thought which we very much desire to present, but hesitate to do so because it is treading somewhat upon "holy ground." We do not wish to lightly quote serious Scriptural expressions, but one occurs to us which is so beautifully appropriate that we cannot refrain from using it in this connection. Since the law of cure is concerned in the saving of precious lives and as the Subject of the quotations not only saves lives but souls, it may not be deemed inappropriate for us to use it here; and having introduced several similes more or less familiar, some of which may have appealed to one and some to another, doubtless this divine one will appeal to all: "For since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." So also: As by drugs may come disease, even so by them shall it be cured; for as by poison one may die, even so by drugs shall he be made alive.

POTENTIATION.

The subject of potentiation, however, was the hardest problem, the chief source of worry, and presented the greatest difficulty of acceptable solution that we encountered. It was five years before a verdict of our own was reached, for engaged as we were in a country practice—Old School—with baseball as a diversion, ample opportunity was afforded to solve the points of difficulty while waiting for a patient, to pull a tooth or to handle a "hot grounder" and get it to first in time to catch the runner. Many and various were the

ideas and theories concerning dosage that came up for consideration, but they would all finally become misfits until one day, when the idea of "potency" lost its elements of volume or magnitude, preponderance of force and physical dominion, which prior to that time had been considered by us to be its chief attribute.

The idea came about in this way : The ball club of which I was captain was composed of nine men, who averaged 170 pounds, and we were pitted against a team from a neighboring town who were mere feather-weights compared with us. We felt as though we were playing against "kids" or mere boys, and were really ashamed to array ourselves against them, for we naturally felt that we would simply "sponge them out." When the game was finished, however, and the dust had cleared away, we were even more ashamed than when it began. The score was as "jug-handled" as one could well imagine, but the handle was in the other fellows' hands. The umpire, even, was quite a small man, but my ! how efficient ! Potency then and there acquired a new meaning to our mind—that of efficiency or capacity. Efficiency becoming a synonym for potency, the whole subject was clad in new meaning. A new light had broken over the entire field of thought, and the things that had been obscure became plain. Potency, considered as power and without qualification *per se*; contrasted with potency considered as efficiency, is like studying a landscape by moonlight one moment and considering it under the full force of the noon-day sun the next. There was opposing that small team a tremendous force, if it could have been properly utilized, but the conditions were unfavorable. Force cannot always have its own way unconditionally. On this occasion, for instance, those nine big fellows attempted ever and anon to "knock the cover off'n that ball," but they were not "on to its curves," and it persistently eluded their efforts. The curves which that ball described were not wide, and could only be seen by the practiced eye of the umpire, but they

were efficient just the same, and the joke was on us, for we couldn't hit it.

Now the lesson we learned from that experience was, that if we desired to utilize the great force resident in our combined muscles, we must adapt it to the exigencies of the conditions, and that a very little apparent force, coupled with great capacity, could produce overwhelming results.

The application of it to me was, the adaption of crude and refined drugs to the work to be done by them. Unquestionably, there is more innate force *per se*, more magnitude of measured power, in the crude drug than in the trituration. But the conditions are such that not all of the force is necessary, certainly not available. The molecules of some forms of matter are too large, apparently, to pass through the interstices leading into the ultimate cells of the living body, under certain conditions, or these same molecules are unable in their crude form to leave their impress upon the system, and the cells riot *ad libitum* because of the absence of the pacifying element. Our food, in order that it may serve to nourish the body, must first be changed from its natural or crude state—digested; then, if properly refined, it is assimilated by the cells, and becomes blood, muscles and bone. Now, it occasionally happens that the living cells boycott a certain element of the food, and although they suffer its absence intensely, and show it in a hundred ways, they will persist in refusing it lodgment among them, as the striking miners do the advances of the arbitration committee, preferring rather to suffer than to take the apparently distasteful (crude) material.

For instance, the cells refuse, for some reason, to assimilate lime from the food. The body emaciates, the bones soften and bend, and the dismal picture of rachitis is developed. Undoubtedly, lime in the tissues, in the proper proportion, is the only thing that will restore them to their pristine condition; but, while that is true, a barrel of lime, if it were possible to be given at one time, would not

accomplish the desideratum, for it has been boycotted. The striking miners really need money to sustain themselves, but they must have it under conditions that suit them or they will not take it at all. The cells really need lime, and there is plenty of it in the food taken, but they will not have it crude. Now refine it, potentize it, make it capable, render it efficient by comminution of its molecules until they are so small that they will be able to pass the threshold of the forbidding cells, and what a change will then be wrought! The boycott will be raised. The food material that the builders rejected will be accepted and "become the head of the corner." Harmony will replace chaos, and life's song will be as sweet as before.

The same reasoning obtains in the case of the so-called inert class of drugs—the pure metals. There is surely more intrinsic power in a section of railroad iron than there is in a very small key, so much more that the key might easily represent the tenth potency. And yet, with all the immensity of innate strength in that crude piece of iron, it is incapable of opening the tiny lock that the key fits; whereas the key, although so light that its presence in the hand is scarcely noticeable when inserted into the body of the lock and gently turned, will move the tumblers in unison and the door will swing open; the bar that held it closed has been moved. It had a capacity which did not reside in the greater magnitude of the big rail.

Did it ever occur to you that more keys in a descending scale of size and conformity would open a given lock than if they were in an ascending scale? Beginning with the perfect fit, which represents the correct remedy and proper size done, reduce the size a degree at a time, and it will surprise you to find how many shades of difference downward you will go before the turning of the key will not produce an effect. On the other hand, increase the size a shade, and it is a tight fit, but will turn, although the lock itself is in danger of injury. Increase yet another shade and the

key won't fit at all, although of the proper material so far as quality is concerned and of exact conformity. The lock, like the sick individual, must have that particular quality of remedy, but in such large quantities cannot be assimilated consequently cannot work the combination, and, therefore, is impotent. By adding force still further you may destroy the lock by attempting to open it with too large a key, as you will the patient by forcing too large quantities of crude drugs into him.

Again, health is the victory of the reparative life-forces existing in the body over the breaking-down or destroying death-forces. These two forces are so equally balanced that during health the destroying or breaking down force is invisible, as is the Bunsen burner standing beside the arc light. As the balance between these forces is very even, it only requires a little change on either side of the scale to create a disturbance between them. As the life force is in the ascendancy during the period of adolescence, the tendency to good health during that time is very great. After full maturity decline begins, when the tendency to grow worse is very great, and the balance is more easily disturbed. Now, since these two forces are so nearly equal, it is readily seen that only a little force is necessary to be added to either to make it more powerful than the other. If the *Materies Morbii* perches on the side of the building-up force, the other, or sick side, immediately gains the ascendancy ; but at the same time all of the reparative forces are hard at work on their side, and in a little while, or with judicious assistance, it regain its former position, and the destructive force must resume its place in the shade. To illustrate : We once saw ten strong, healthy men attempting to place a railroad rail on a wagon. Their combined strength was almost equal to the task, but not quite. A small boy standing by, observing them, saw their distress, and running up applied his strength, and over the rail went. His strength was to the combined power of those ten men

what the twelfth potency would be to a similar amount of disease force, but his strength was the immediate cause of the loading of the rail, as the small dose of medicine is the immediate cause of the restoration of the lost health. With the great help of the vital force—the men—which must never be lost sight of, small amounts cure. He had loaded the rail on to the wagon as drugs cure diseases. The combined strength of those ten men and the intrinsic weight of the iron were about equal. It only required a little addition of strength similar to that of the men to solve the problem.

Gold in its ordinary state is only good to stir up strife, lessen McKinley's chances to be President, and serve as a plank in a political platform. Under certain conditions, however, it is one of the finest of remedies. Although not all the gold in Eldorado could scatter the despondent could that obscure the sweet sunlight of reason in the mind of the unfortunate creature who labors under its suicidal spell, yet gold properly prepared, rendered efficient, will disperse the clouds in that suicide's mind, leaving it bright and clear, as a northwest wind drives the clouds out of a winter day.

Iron as it is taken from the ground, or in its usual form of nails, beams and rails, is only good to build bridges, put up houses and make railroad tracks. But in some forms it becomes an invaluable medicine. Not all of the iron in Vulcan's mines, however, could tint the blanched lip and check with cherry and crimson, and cause the languid eye to glow with the fire of ardent health, although when needed, if properly prepared, a quantity infinitesimal in itself would accomplish that desired end.

And silver in the form as taken from the mines, or made into money, is of no value to the sick in a curative way, for not all the silver that could be coined at the rate of 16 to 1 could clear the voice of our Richard P. Bland, made hoars from long speaking in Congress halls on his pet theme; but

an infinitely small quantity, when indicated, can take the huskiness out of the throat, so that the tones that issue therefrom will ring, and be sustained, and clear as the tinkle of the *dollar* that bears our Richard's name.

DISCUSSION.

T. P. WILSON, M.D., Cleveland, O. : Many things are so beautiful that it seems a pity to find fault with them ; they leave such a nice taste in the mouth. I say *similia* is not a contradiction, it is a law of nature, and no law is contradictory, seemingly or otherwise. It is not a paradox, unless you get two doctors prescribing for the same case (when you have a pair-of-doc's). The law is not explanatory of the action of drugs. It is a law of selection by which we learn which remedy to use under certain conditions. The law simply says "Use that remedy," it does not say how it works. There need be not further knowledge of the law. It is not philosophy, but fact, and facts are to be given to us under the direction of a wise philosophy. The *Organon* treats of the philosophy of Hahnemann ; all of the philosophy of Hahnemann I put in the doubtful list, but the facts I respect. The primary and secondary action of drugs may be correct, but is scientifically undemonstrable. While it is clear in Aconite, Belladonna and a few others, there are many of which this cannot be said. There is no such thing as a vital force ; it is not an entity. It is the co-ordination of many forces which, together, make up the condition known as life, when scattered there is no life. It consists of co-ordination, which is to-day and is not to-morrow. Life is not the antithesis of death, you cannot have death without life, and *vice versa*. A scientific separation between them cannot be made, and no proposition founded upon such a difference will stand for a moment.

Homœopathy is not the antithesis of Allopathy. It is or is not, without being the antithesis unless something is the antithesis of nothing.

D. C. McELWEE, M.D., St. Louis, Ma., Essayist : I did not think that any one would suppose from what I said that I believe that *similia* is anything but an absolute and certain law. Many people, while believing implicitly in the law, think it apparently contradictory ; if, therefore, it has the appearance of a contradiction, and is true, it is a paradox.

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