

THE STUDY OF MATERIA MEDICA

By C. M. BOGER, M.D., Parkersburg, W. Va.

Our pathogeneses, in spite of showing many features due to the provers' idiosyncracies, the translator's command of idioms, clinical experiences and misinterpretations, are nevertheless excellent resumes which place the keynotes in their true light, as points of departure only for their abuse distorts nature's image and often brings disaster which ends in scepticism or mongrelism. A concise view not only includes the time and order in which symptoms arise, but also the things which modify them—the modalities.

Bönninghausen saw and corrected the tendency of Homeopathy to pay too much attention to subjective sensations while it lacked the firm support of etiologic factors and the modalities, which afford so many objective and distinctly certain criteria. The triumphs of similia in the diseases of children and insanity certainly show how vastly important they may be, for no judgement can pay it a handsomer compliment than to speak of its especial adaptability to children and old people.

From a very few provings, in which he saw but a small part of the immense circle of similia, Hahnemann predicted its amplitude, and finally gave us the immeasurable power of potentization; a scientific demonstration which rests therapy firmly upon experiment and dispenses with learning our symptomatology by rote.

Study shows every drug to be a living, moving conception with attributes which arise, develop, expand and pass away just as diseases do; each holding its characteristics true through an ever widening scope, to its last expression in the highest potencies. The homeopathist is a true scientist, in that he spares no pains to learn the nature of this individuality; it lifts him above doing piece-meal work and the restraint of nosological ideas. Every day practice, too often, never gets beyond the simple lessons of student life and they remain the doctor's only resource. This is very wrong and acts as a constant handicap. The true physician is the man who knows how to make the best cures and the most expert healer is the man who knows best how to handle his materia medica. The faculty of mastering it is not dependent upon encyclopaedic memory, but rather upon the inquisitor's ability to pick out from among the essential embodiments of each picture the things which show how it exists, moves and has its being, as distinguished from its nearest similar. That a mental variation should be the determining factor is therefore not strange, for are not minute differences the very essence of science?

It is very useful to have an idea of the relative values of related remedies for in essence each portrays a certain type, with variations in which relate it to its complementaries, thus dovetailing into each other. The effect of material doses simulates acute diseases while the potencies bring out finer effects, although this is not an invariable rule.

A knowledge of many symptoms is of small value, while on the other hand learning how to examine a patient and then to find the remedy is of the utmost importance. The common way of eliciting well-known key notes and prescribing accordingly is a most pernicious practice, which has earned a deserved odium and is no improvement upon the theoretical methods of the old school.

To be ruled by clinical observations and pathological guesses is a most disastrous error which limits our action and only obscures the wonderful power of which the true similia is capable. Such reports mostly lack individuality and at best describe only end products; standing in strong contrast to those expressions which reveal the real mind, whether in actions, words or speech. The recital of cured cases only shows what

can be done, but not how to do it.

To do the best work, nothing must prevent a full, free and frank presentation of the symptoms as they are, without bias, and although their comprehension necessarily involves judgement, the more clearly they follow the text the greater is their similitude, hence usefulness. Hahnemann showed rare acumen in setting down each expression in a personal way, thus securing scientific as well as psychical accuracy.

The patient's relative sensitiveness is a very material help in separating remedies. The alertness of drugs like aconite or coffea is just the reverse of the dullness of gelsemium, phosphoric acid and the like, and yet fright may cause the oversensitiveness of the former as well as the depression of opium. If stupidity be due to high temperature or an overwhelming intoxication we don't await the development of a sense of duality, which may never come, but think of baptisia, etc., at once. Such an early prescription saves many a life and forestalls pathological changes.

The various cravings and aversions are highly significant, especially when combined with the patient's behaviour toward solitude, light, noise, company or any other daily environment. The most expressive new symptom is usually the key to the whole case and directly related to all of the others, and is often expressed by a change of temper or other mental condition. Such apparent trifles reveal the inner man to the acute observer and have proven the undoing and insufficiency of liberal homeopathy.

We do not say however that diagnosis is of no value in choosing the remedy, for certain drugs are so often called for in some diseases as to have established a fundamental relation thereto, hence they involuntarily come to mind during treatment and deserve our careful, but never exclusive attention. A baryta carb. patient may have adenoids; black teeth make one suspect that the patient drooled badly during dentition and the survivor of pneumonia may still carry earmarks calling loudly for phosphorus, etc. These and many more should suggest the patient first and the disease afterward.

The past history and the way each sickness leaned is both useful and interesting, for most persons develop symptoms in a distinctive way through the most diverse affections. Such constancy's are truly antipsoric and it should be your pleasure to search out the differentiating indications from among them. While their discovery is not always easy, for it involves a recital of every past sickness, the trend of each illness and its peculiarities are a part of the sick man's way of doing things and must be known if you wish to do the best work. They will give you a better idea of present and future prospects as well as lay a solid foundation for the prescription that will do much and reveal many things.

If we say that remedies typify patients and know that constitutions exhibit tendencies, then why are drugs not specifics? Simply because vitality is a varying force whose mutations are always similar but never the same; it is modified by every influence and keeps itself in relative equilibrium only. The more nearly it holds one phase the more certainly will it, even with varying external manifestations, demand a particular medicine. Under what circumstances and in what way shall we then discover this more or less constant factor? It lies in the peculiar personality of the patient, especially in the deviations of his mind from the normal. Sometimes an active mental state overshadows all else, as under aur., bell., ign., lyc., nat-c., phos., plat, pul. or veratrum, according to circumstances; at others a strange mental placidity during the gravest physical danger, is a most striking guide. The facial expression may be its true index and deserves our most careful scrutiny. No effort should be spared to learn the nature of the mental change which has overtaken the victim for it epitomises the whole patient.

Ideally no two remedies can be equally indicated although practically we find innumerable variations obscuring the choice. As students it is of the first importance to

have a grasp of the type which each represents, leaving experience to master intricacies and detail. We speak of a phosphorus, sulphur, sepia or a pulsatilla type and yet this does not convey a very useful idea to the young man because he lacks the experience which rounds out the image of each drug in his mind's eye and finally enables him to pick it out on sight. How often does the dilated pupil suggest belladonna when accompanied by nervous erethism and dryness, while contrariwise moisture, puffiness and sluggishness make one think of calcarea-carb. Then we have the nervous irritability of a nux vomica patient to contrast with the mildness of pulsatilla, etc.

The treatment of coughs is a severe test for the prescriber, and yet no patient demands a more careful going over than the one who coughs. In addition to the above hints one should first carefully find out where and by what the coughing is excited. Ordinarily it is the result of an irritation starting from the throat, larynx, chest or stomach, but it is especially necessary to know the exact point of origin. Those beginning in the throat pit generally call for bell. cham., mix-v., rum., sang., sepia or silicea. When the primary seat seems to be on the left side of the throat or larynx bapt., bell., con., hepar., ol-anim., or salicylic-acid stand first, but if it is on the right side we look mostly to dioscorea., iris-foet., phosphorus or stannum. Coughs that come from what seems to be a dry spot generally need nat-mur. or conium. If a sense of a lump in the throat excites it, we have bell., calc-c., cocc-cact. and lachesis. So the matter goes on indefinitely, with the accessories determining the final choice, but it is not difficult to see how greatly our task is lightened by being able to find the location of the exciting cause and then differentiate with the aid of the modalities and the general picture. This is the true homeopathic way and will bring unexpected aid, doing more than any other possible method. The similimum re-establishes the normal conversion of energy and the patient reacts with a definiteness unknown under other methods. It is the nature of every human being to be extremely sensitive to the constitutional similimum, and although it may not always be easy to detect the signs which call for it; when once found a single dose of a very high potency will act over long periods of time. Because they do not know how to manage reaction and are not thoroughly conversant with the materia medica, some prescribers avoid such prescriptions. With a little more knowledge of the Organon and care in handling the complementaries, particularly the nosodes, they will-be able to accomplish much more than they do now. We should keep in mind the fact that the premature repetition or changing of remedies before reaction is finished does endless harm to the patient and almost hopelessly confuses the prescriber. The prescriber must know when to give the remedy and when to hold his hand while nature expedites the forces to which he has given a new direction. He must know the power of sac lac and remember that an inward movement of the symptoms bodes no good.

It is worth remembering that most prescriptions are guesswork, a hideous trifling with human life, for every drug is either similar, hence curative, or dissimilar and baneful, therefore it surely behooves every man to do his utmost in diligently and systematically getting every symptom and then searching for the nearest similar. When you have once fully tested this method you will discard empiricism and all that charlatanry which goes under the name of rational medicine while it puts the conscience of the doctor to sleep and, by suppressive measures, steadily pushes the patient toward the grave.

To make good cures it is above all necessary to avoid running to the specialist every time new symptoms arise, for very few men of this class are broad enough to see that the whole man is sick when he shows local symptoms and that the carefully selected remedy would render most of his work superfluous. If the laity ever learn this lesson they will certainly smite the men who call themselves doctors but as surely are not physicians.

Every day we are confronted with conditions which lie on the borderland between surgical interference and the remedial powers of medicine for surgeons, with the aid of the knife, have steadily pushed the use of medicines further and further into the

background. This is especially true of allopathic procedures and although most homeopaths have not gone to such extremes, the signs are not wanting that many men who profess the law of similia understand so little of it that they are constantly willing to relegate it to a very subordinate place and go on using the knife to the utmost limit. It is too often not a question of what is good for the patient but of how far he will allow the operator to go. Such is the spirit with which the glamour of the operating room overshadows the more prosaic prescription, which, if left alone is capable of gradually unloading the embarrassed vital force and allowing life to flow on in its usual way; it nips disease in its inception before the microscope can possibly pass a doubtful verdict. No manner of cutting can do as much.

The similitum often surprises us by its power; what we have been taught to look upon as incurable or to be removed with the knife only, is cured. In these days the laity look for mechanical removal because homeopaths have not led them to expect anything better than the work of the surgeon. I can full confirm what Bönninghausen says in his Aphorisms of Hippocrates, Book 6, Aphorism 58, "Homeopathy. cures all kinds of ruptures," a strong statement, but experience bears him out. He further says that it is not a local trouble and at best will not long remain so and that the final cure depends upon the concomitants, all of which is true. He mentions Aco., Alum., Asar., Aur., Bell., Bry., Calc-c., Caps., Cham., Coccl., Coloc., Guai., Lach., Lyc., Mag-c., Nit ac., Nux-v., Op., Phos., Plb., Sil., Staph., Sul., Sul-ac., Thuj., Verat-a. and Zinc. as the foremost remedies, from which we choose Aco., Alum., Aur., Bell., Calc-c., Caps., Cham., Coloc., Lach., Lyc., Nit-ac., Nux-v., Op., Plb., Sil., Std., Sul-ac. or Verat-a. for incarcerated hernia. The predisposition to this disorder is often hereditary and the surgical dosure of one ring is just the prelude to the formation of a rupture at another.

The domain of surgery lies largely within the traumatic sphere and in the palliative, which enables the chronic patient to live, but on a lower plane. The vast majority of early operations for incipient malignant disease not only inflict a severe injury upon the vital force, but at best remove a suspicion only. None but the grossest materialist would do such a thing. We should use the indicated remedy from the very start, well knowing that it saves the strength of the patient and improves his chance immeasurably if an operation is finally necessary.

Why do we operate for adenoids or polypi, for piles and a thousand other things? Simply because of the uncured sin of the parents and ignorance of how to live the present life. The law leads toward morality and a natural expression of inherent powers; it adds nothing and subtracts nothing, but harmonise everything. Until the cutters can be brought to see this point and that the most facile method of cure lies in its correct application, they can know nothing of homeopathy and very little of nature.

Such things may seem far off, but a clearer view is fast giving a better understanding of life, its ways and ends, and is beginning to see that sickness means ignorance and that a cure means a comfort-able return to health instead of the old-fashioned, lame recovery. The former is what is expected of homoeopathy, the latter is essentially the surgical way. To be a good homoeopath and at the same time a good surgeon; there's the rub. The materialism of the one seems incompatible with the dynamism of the other, but no amount of sophistry can rub out the fact that we are dealing with the man whose life and being flows from within and who uses his organs to guide this internal self; therefore an external injury has an internal effect and an internal disturbance shows itself by external signs, be the cause moral or physical.

The psoric theory of Hahnemann has been a great stumbling block, especially to those who have not read the 39th aphorism of the 2nd Book of Bönninghausen's Aphorisms of Hippocrates. Among other things we read there that "The discovery of the itch mite does not belong to modern times, as 650 years ago the Arabian physician Abenzohr not only surmised it but the common people knew it by the name of Syrones. Fabricius, (Entomologist 1745-1808) also, in his "Fauna Greenlandica" praised the

dexterity of its inhabitants in detecting and destroying these insects with the point of the needle." He also points out that Hahnemann's critics have uniformly confused the product of psora with its cause. Hahnemann was perhaps unfortunate in calling susceptibility, Psora, especially when applied to the herpetic diathesis; he laid the greatest stress upon the fact that itch aroused or greatly intensified this susceptibility (psora); nothing could be truer.

It is certain that psora shows itself in the form of skin symptoms in some persons and that their suppression often causes metastases. The seriousness of such accidents is perhaps plainest in the case of erysipelas. When this happens the similitum generally includes the symptoms of the original disease plus those of later development which thereby become all important. Occasionally no one remedy corresponds to the whole picture; then we must prescribe for the most recent 'phase first and for the earlier one when it is again uncovered.

A metastasis means that an ingrained affection is expressing itself in another form and is demanding the patient's constitutional remedy, rather than a time serving palliative. In this connection I cannot too strongly insist that the chronic diseases cannot be successfully treated without taking the anamnesis into account. The mistake of omitting it seems to be one of the great causes of failure in our times. It has been artfully claimed that such a proceeding nullifies the whole law of but a more egregious blunder is hard to imagine for it is, on the one hand indeed, unthinkable that the entire list of anamnesic symptoms with their correspondingly numerous drugs could be the result of the experience of any one or two men, or on the other, that they should have been so adroitly conjured up by the human mind. On the contrary they bear much inherent evidence of having been reasoned out from the provings as rectified by innumerable experiences. Unfortunately our modern life becomes less and less suited to such a way of doing things; everybody is in a hurry, some even die in a hurry; everyone wants to be cured quickly without regard to the natural vital processes. This is one of the great and fundamental causes of palliative medication and drug addictions.

In the last analysis it will be found that the mind of material mould grasps the idea of imponderables with difficulty; but recent advances of science are about to force the issue and it will no longer be possible to impugn the qualifications and motives of those who trust and use their powers with unrivalled success. Their advocates must of necessity persistently cultivate the habit of keen observation, correct reasoning, direct inquiry of nature and absolute honesty with themselves, and all will be well.

When we remember these things we should be more charitable toward many who differ from us in therapeutics; they mean well, but some don't know, some don't care and others can't comprehend. After all is said and done it simply resolves itself into a matter of education; you must, first of all, educate away all prejudice and preconceived ideas. No man holding tenaciously to the idols of a cure by force, as generally understood, can be a good scientist or a clean homoeopath; there is no such thing. The power used comes from within and in curing you draw it forth and guide it into the ways of health. This law is spiritual as well as material; it gradually merges from one into the other; if you would be a whole man you must understand it and learn how to apply it, for by similars you are healed both mentally and physically. No man can stand in your place; there is a great image after which your mind copies and a perfect life toward which your body grows; it is a unit striving to bring itself into harmony with the All Father.

They are our best friends who make us think, albeit we may not fully agree with them. Now if I have shown you only one reason why the sick are cured by similars you are thinking, and it is but a step to seeing that the highest potencies act for the same reason that the lower do. By the similarity of their time pace they change the polarity of vital action and a cure follows.