

THE MOLLUSCS

MUREX AND SEPIA

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Three classes of molluscs are represented by species producing drugs used in Homœopathy:

- (1) the Lamellibranchiata (mussels), of which *Ostrea edulis* (the oyster) supplies, in the middle layer of its shell, Hahnemann's *Calcareo carbonica*. It consists almost exclusively of calcium carbonate, and contains no organic products. (Conchiolin, a proteid, is a constituent of the outer and inner layers which are not used for the preparation.) *Calcareo carbonica* is therefore properly placed among the inorganic remedies. The product of *Margaritana margaritifera*; *Mater perlarum*, mother of pearl, cannot be considered as a homœopathic remedy as its rare use is merely empirical.
- (2) The Gastropoda (snails) are represented by the Murex species *Murex brandaris* and *Murex trunculus*. The secretions of their purple glands have a definite, though very limited, place in our materia medica.
- (3) The Cephalopoda (cuttlefish, squids) supply in succus Sepiæ one of our polychrests.

MUREX

The substance used under the name of *Murex purpurea* is the dried secretion of the purple gland of the Murex species *Murex brandaris* and *Murex trunculus*, the source of the Royal or Tyrian purple of the ancients, a natural indigo dye. It is produced as a colourless secretion by glands embedded in the mantle space of Murex species found in the Mediterranean and particularly the Adriatic Sea. On access of air, the colourless compound is catalysed by an enzyme purpurase into purple dibromoindigo. This compound, however, does not appear to be an active principle; at least so far no pharmacological actions of it have been established. One active compound found in the purple glands of Murex is murexine, a choline-deriva-

tive of β -[imidazolyl-(4)]-acrylic acid (urocanic acid). Urocanic acid arises from histidine by deamination. From its choline-ester murexine, a strong cholinergic action is to be expected. The toxicity of murexine for other animals has been confirmed. It is, however, probably not wholly responsible for the effects of *Murex purpurea*, for the secretion also contains 5-hydroxy-tryptamine which is strongly active both on the central nervous system and peripherally on smooth muscle. Our knowledge of the potential actions of *Murex purpurea* is still very incomplete, and it would be premature to attribute the few actions on which our use of *Murex* is based solely to the one or the other compound.

The acute toxic and sometimes fatal effects which are on record from eating purple snails need not be considered here. They are the same as those occasioned by other molluscs (for instance the *Conus* species), and are probably due to protozoans (Dinoflagellata) transmitted by these animals.

The provings of *Murex purpurea* are all too few to give an adequate picture of its actions. Besides, they have only been done with women and Petroz's three provers¹ suffered from leucorrhoea which improved during the proving. The preparation in these cases was the 4th trituration taken in water every evening for about a week. C. Hering's trial² with the 200th dil. on two women patients hardly needs to be taken into consideration.

As the very limited symptomatology is derived from women with a tendency to dysfunction of the female organs, *Murex* has been used so far exclusively as a women's remedy. *Almost uncontrollable sexual excitement, "violent sexual desire; an excitement that her will and reason could hardly control"* has emerged as the outstanding and guiding clinical symptom, though it has been recorded by only one prover. From observation in pertinent cases this symptom has been enlarged upon in more detail: that the least contact of the parts elicits this violent excitement and that it does not yield after sexual intercourse. Sensations of a weight and constriction in the uterine region, and of heaviness and dilatation in the labia majora, recorded by another prover, have suggested that active conges-

tion of the parts is associated with the sexual excitement, and observation of *Murex* cases points to that effect. "Constant desire to urinate, and discharge of a little bloody mucus after micturition" may be taken as a sign that the bladder and urethra are involved in the active congestion. Sensation of "bearing down", and relief from crossing the legs tightly, strongly reminiscent of *Sepia*, are adduced, though not found in the provings. In contrast to the venous congestion of the pelvic organs which is so marked in *Sepia* cases, an active arterial afflux, possibly due to vasodilatation of arterioles and capillaries, appears characteristic of the *Murex* patient. The contrast between the almost uncontrollable sexual excitement bordering on nymphomania described for *Murex*, and the frigidity of the *Sepia* patient is conspicuous. Only few remedies such as *Platina* and *Lilium tigrinum*, compete with *Murex* in the said condition and they are readily distinguished by other symptoms and modalities; this is the reason why, in spite of the insufficient provings, *Murex* holds a definite place in materia medica.

Another symptom experienced by a prover has been emphasized, but probably over-emphasized with regard to its usefulness: "Acute pain in the right side of the uterus, which went across the entire body, and extended to the left breast." Another prover had violent shooting pains in the breasts while in bed. This may be an indication for the use of *Murex* in cases of painful swelling of the breasts which is not seldom experienced before or at the onset of menstruation, manifesting the hormonal connection between ovaries and mammary glands. There is, however, no evidence for the general assertion that pains shift diagonally. Pre-menstrual painful swelling not seldom affects only a sector of the breast, giving the impression of an induration. It seems that affections of this kind have been mistaken so as to indicate the use of *Murex* in tumours of the breast; but no case reports to this effect have so far been found in the available literature.

The action of *Murex* on leucorrhœa derived *ab usu*; that it tends to be sanguinolent is in line with the active congestion of the organs. The same applies to the alleged irregularity of the menses, that they are profuse and frequent.

A sensation of "sinking of the stomach" comes from Hering's account of a woman who suffered from prolapsus uteri. In spite of this dubious origin, and without reference to cured cases, later authors have adorned that symptom with details almost identical with those given for *Sepia*.

The mental symptoms noted by the few provers, such as depression of spirits and sadness, averse to conversation, fits of anguish, of fear and dread, loss of memory, "can scarcely ever find words to express myself, are not distinctive enough for the selection of *Murex*. They are vaguely similar to those of *Sepia*, but lack the finer features which have proved so valuable in the choice of the latter remedy.

The apparent contrast between the two mollusc secretions *Murex* and *Sepia* in a cardinal syndrome must not obscure the notion that it relates to an affinity to the same functional cycle. It is common to find that naturally related substances act on the same part-system, but with contrasting effect. In this instance, not enough is known of the active substances to permit a definite explanation.

Dosage: 6x trituration.

MUREX PURPUREA—SUMMARY

Dried secretion of the purple gland of *Murex* species.
Mollusca ; Gastropoda ; Muricida.

Women's remedy:

Almost uncontrollable sexual excitement. Least contact of parts elicits violent sexual desire.

Sensations of weight and constriction in uterine region (active congestion of pelvic organs).*

Sensation of "bearing down", relieved by crossing legs tightly.

Leucorrhœa with sanguinolent admixture.

Menses profuse and frequent.

Acute pain in the right side of the uterus extends to the left breast.

Shooting pains in the breasts (pre-menstrual pain and swelling of the breast.)

• REFERENCES:

- ¹ Petroz, "Etudes," 1864, cit. *Cycl. of Drug Pathog.*, Vol. 3, p. 320.
² Hering, C., *Am. Hom. Rev.*, 4, 406.

(To be continued)

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HOMŒOPATHIC GEMS

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in the *mentals* which decides the choice. Kali Sulph is frequently indicated after Tuberculinum.

Kali Carb. Kali Carb follows well Bryonia, Lycopodium, Natrum Mur and Nitric Acid.

Kali Carb. Kali Carb is followed well by Carbo Veg and Phosphorus.

Kreosote. Kreosote and Carbo-Veg are inimical.

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