

## NEW LAMPS FOR OLD

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No doubt you are familiar with the story of Aladdin—the tale of a poor boy who was led by his uncle, the wizard, into a cave full of treasure. Gold, silver and precious stones were stacked from floor to ceiling, but the most valuable thing there was an old brass lamp, because if you rubbed it, a genie appeared who could bring you anything you asked for. In other words, the owner of the lamp gained all the other treasures as well. Aladdin followed the instructions carefully, became a rich and powerful man, and married a princess.

Those who have been led, by interest or by curiosity, to turn aside from the wonders of modern medical science and investigate the relatively antique art of homœopathy, are indeed in Aladdin's cave.

For those who know as little about homœopathy as once I did, a short account will be needed. Homœopathy is the treatment of sick people by similars, that is, substances which, when given to healthy people, would produce similar symptoms to those from which the patients are suffering.

The name, derived from two Greek words meaning "like disease", was invented by Hahnemann, the founder of homœopathy. The best way to understand his system is to consider briefly his life and work.

### *Evil Days in Medicine*

Samuel Hahnemann was born in 1755, and grew up to study medicine. At that time the practice of medicine had fallen upon evil days. Violent physical procedures, such as purging, bleeding, blistering and clystering were fashionable, and drugs were administered indiscriminately in dangerously large quantities.

Hahnemann, who believed that the physician's duty was to assist, rather than to hinder, nature's power to heal, was so disgusted with this state of affairs that he gave up the practice of medicine altogether for a time, and made shift to support his family by translating ancient and contemporary medical writers.

In this way he came in contact with great men of the past, such as Hippocrates, and no doubt absorbed many of their ideas. One day he was translating an English account by Cullen of the recently discovered remedy Peruvian Bark, or Cinchona (we know it as Quinine), which was used by the Jesuits as a cure for malaria.

It struck him that side-effects produced by a poisonous dose included rigors and fever—the symptoms of malaria—and this brought to mind Hippocrates' Law of Similars: *Similia similibus curentur*: let likes be cured by likes.

To test this hypothesis, Hahnemann himself took a dose of Cinchona, and sure enough, he reproduced in himself the symptoms of malaria. He rightly believed that he had made an important medical discovery and thereupon set about testing the symptoms of poisoning by other substances in the same way—a method which came to be called “proving”—with a view to using them curatively.

Opportunities soon presented themselves for him to test his theory in practice—and he found that it worked. Patients treated with a small dose of the substance which would have produced symptoms similar to those from which they were suffering, recovered, often after a short aggravation.

Hahnemann explained this by saying that the drug produced an artificial disease which replaced and drove out the original, naturally occurring disease. Encouraged by success, he set to work to “prove” more and more substances, assisted by his family, friends and enthusiastic pupils, and he recorded these provings in the *Materia Medica Pura*.

#### *Early Experiments*

Having made his point that like did cure like, Hahnemann began to experiment with dosage, for he reasoned that the smaller the dose of remedy given, the more rapid would be recovery from the artificial curative disease. So he set about diluting his remedies to find out how small a dose could be and still act effectively.

He devised a special method of dilution and succussion, or shaking, and to his surprise, found that remedies treated in this way became more powerful with increased dilution. So he called his dilutions potencies, to indicate that they carried power.

At first he used decimal potencies—one part diluted in 10 being the first decimal potency, one part of that in 10 the second decimal potency, and so on—but later made centesimal potencies, where each stage represented one part of the previous potency, diluted in a hundred.

Substances insoluble in water or alcohol were triturated: that is, finely ground up in sugar or milk for the first six decimal potencies, after which they became soluble and were treated in the same way as soluble substances.

And still, incredibly, Hahnemann found that as he ascended the scale of potencies—and you must realise and remember that high potencies mean a greater degree of dilution and therefore less of the original active substances—as the scale of dilution was ascended, so the action of the remedy became more profound and dramatic.

I want to stress this point, because it is the pons asinorum of homœopathy, the thing which makes it so difficult, and often impossible, of acceptance by scientifically trained people. The high potencies used to-day involve an astronomical degree of dilution—yes, I say astronomical on purpose.

For scientists trained in the traditions of Newton and Avogadro, they are ridiculous; but what of the men who count their small change in stars,

or sub-atomic particles? Will Hahnemann be vindicated by the astrophysicists of the second millenium, I wonder?

Another discovery made by Hahnemann was that substances which in their natural state are quite inert, or harmless, such as sand, or common salt, develop, when potentised, dramatic action. His provings of these substances were made with potentised material.

Hahnemann lived to be 88 and worked hard all his life. He acquired an enthusiastic following and, as may well be imagined, bitter opposition. In the century following his death in 1843, homœopathy spread to all the countries of the world and proved its value again and again, notably in the cholera epidemic in London, in 1854, where the deaths from cholera in the Royal London Homœopathic Hospital were proportionately half those in all other hospitals in the country.

#### *Homœopathy's Touchstone*

The touchstone of homœopathy, you see, is that it works. No such fantastic theory could otherwise have lasted five years, let alone 160. Its practitioners, from Hahnemann onwards, have been in the main sound, solid, practical men.

Of those in this country at the moment, a large proportion are Scots, a race renowned for its common sense. They remain homœopaths because they know that they are in possession of a practical instrument for healing the sick with the least possible incidental trouble, suffering, and side effects. Who could ask for more?

Well, as you know, some people can, and do, ask for a great deal more. They want to know how, and why and wherefore, to see round corners, and behind veils and through what D. H. Lawrence called "the long telescope of time". And it is from this point of view that I want to discuss homœopathy.

#### *Pioneering Spirit*

All children are explorers at heart, and I can remember feeling keen disappointment when an aeroplane first flew over the summit of Mount Everest; to me this meant that the earth's surface had been charted, and there were no more discoveries to be made.

Some years later my hopes were fired again when I read "Man the Unknown", by Alexis Carrel. This book left a deep impression on me. Of course, there was another world to explore—the world of Man.

Perhaps medicine would provide the answer. But alas! When I came to study anatomy, I found that this land too had been thoroughly mapped and charted by others. Not a ridge nor a crest, not a trough or tract or foramen but bore the name of its discoverer, with pages of patient descriptions of its appearance and structure, and relations.

The sea, then? The depths of man's unconscious mind? Before I was born expeditions had been made into its depths by many, of whom the

names of Fried, Adler and Jung come readily to mind. It would take a lifetime to follow in the tracks of such giants, let alone break new ground. Sadly, and for the second time, I abandoned the ambition of being an explorer.

And it was in no such pioneering spirit that I came to homœopathy. Indeed, I think I can say that I was in full retreat. This is what happened.

#### *Drug Inventions*

Domestic duties had kept me out of the field of medicine for six years, when a colleague asked me to do three weeks as locum tenens in general practice. With some misgiving I accepted, but before starting called on a friendly pharmacist.

"Tell me something" I asked him, "about the drugs which have been invented in the last six years". For answer he waved an arm towards one wall of his shop, which was lined with shelves carrying bottles.

"Madam", he said, "*all* these drugs have been invented in the last six years. But I shouldn't worry", he added, becoming confidential, "prescribe the things you learnt about in medical school and you won't go far wrong". I took his advice, which was sound, and made out all right; fortunately the doctor kept very careful records. But those three weeks were an experience I shall never forget.

The patients were so likeable; all of them troubled, but few really ill with any disease that had a name. They were fat, thin, dark, fair, or ginger, hot or chilly, placid or grumpy, silent or talkative (mostly the latter), but above all they were infinitely varied. And their complaints were as various as they: aching pains, burning pains, pricking pains, dizziness, funny feelings, full feelings, empty feelings, feelings on the right, on the left, on both sides, all over.

What could one do for them? In spite of the ever increasing array of new drugs, precious little. Analgesics for pain, anti-biotics for infection, laxatives for constipation, hypnotics for sleeplessness, antacids for indigestion. And that large proportion, 70 per cent. to 90 per cent. by some estimates, of patients whose symptoms indicated no definite pathology, were of necessity classed as neurotics and given variously, sedatives, pep-pills, and tranquillisers.

I left that job with two well formed ideas; these were the people I wanted to work with and for, but these were not the methods I wanted to use. And just then I saw the advertisement in the *British Medical Journal* which led me to the Royal London Homœopathic Hospital.

#### *Attractive Feature*

Now at that stage I knew just two things about Homœopathy. You gave "the hair of the dog that bit you" and you gave it in incredibly tiny doses.

I must admit that it was the second of these features which attracted me then.

Doses of that order couldn't hurt people. They probably wouldn't do anything, and thus the healing power of nature (in which, in spite of heavy indoctrination from medical school onwards, all physicians who watch their patients still believe) could be left to do its work in peace.

As for the hair of the dog... well, wasn't that the principle behind all vaccination and immunisation? And those things worked, if at times too well. I decided to come and find out what it was all about. And in due course I found myself listening to the introductory lecture to the Faculty Course in Homœopathy.

#### *Pictures of People*

The first thing which impressed me was the homœopathic case history. It began like an ordinary medical case history: complaint, past history, present condition, etc.—but soon left it far behind. An orthodox doctor is not likely to be very interested in whether a patient is musical, or fears thunder.

A psychiatrist might be—but he wouldn't attach much importance to vaccination, or measles, or earache on the left side. And it was so refreshing to be encouraged to record these curious symptoms in the patient's own words, instead of translating them into soulless medical jargon.

A homœopathic case history records a picture of a person who is suffering from various disabilities, rather than a stereotyped case of some named disease. It takes longer, of course—one of the objections to homœopathy is that it is not suited to the speed of modern life. But is that speed such a good thing?

My experience is that training in homœopathy helps one to gain a better understanding of every patient, however long or short a time one is able to spend upon him or her, and whatever treatment is eventually given.

At the time I am speaking of, there was currently much interest in psycho-somatic medicine, with articles in the Sunday papers. I thought I had made a great discovery, and took it to the Dean of the Faculty.

"It's easy to see why homœopathy works", I told him. "It's just psycho-somatic medicine."

"So you think they're cured by the case history, do you?" he said, kindly. "Well, many people have thought that. But it's a fact that most of them don't get better till they have the right remedy."

And of course, he was right. It is significant that some of the greatest successes achieved by homœopathy have been in the treatment of the so-called psycho-somatic disorders, such as asthma, eczema, migraine, colitis and rheumatism.

#### *Gallery of Provings*

The purpose of this detailed and at first rather bizarre-seeming case

history is, as I have said, to build up a picture of the patient, and this is matched against the range of drug pictures which have been built up from provings, from the time of Hahnemann until this day.

And what a gallery it is! There is *SULPHUR*, the ragged philosopher—thin, dirty, untidy, hungry, cannot resist an argument; *LACHESIS*, the voluble, jealous, middle-aged woman, warm-hearted, but always worrying about what the neighbours think of her; *ARSENICUM*, the “gentleman with the gold-headed cane”, neat, precise, punctual and very sensitive to cold; *NUX VOMICA*, who has dined not wisely, but too well, and loses his temper; *IGNATIA*, who becomes miserable through keeping hers; *PULSATILLA*, changeable as an April day, with chilblains on her hands and feet, always gets her way by weeping; *AURUM*, plunged in deep depression.

They, and many more, are described in Margaret Tyler’s book “Homœopathic Drug Pictures”, which is required reading for any homœopath; but it is not the last word, and new drug pictures are still being described on both sides of the Atlantic. Will remedies be found for the beatnik, the square and the egghead, I wonder?

I have not mentioned these homœopathic types just to introduce a new parlour game, though they would obviously lend themselves to a very pretty one. There is a marked trend among psychologists—its beginning can be traced back to Paracelsus and further—to classify people into groups, physical and mental, preferably both.

Thus, we have the pyknic, asthenic, and athletic-somatic types of Kretschmer, the ecto, endo and meso morphs, Sheldon’s types, the introverts and extraverts of Jung, and a typology of Pavlov’s which corresponds to the four humours of the Middle Ages—phlegmatic, sanguine, choleric and melancholic. What a contribution our homœopathic drug pictures could make to the science of typology, bringing life and humour, and indeed, sanity, into this field.

But to return to the work of the homœopath. When a patient’s symptoms and characteristics have been carefully matched and found to correspond to the drug picture of a remedy, then that is “his” remedy; and if it is skilfully administered, the patient will be cured. There is, of course, a good deal more to it than that; but that is the general principle.

#### *Ever Growing Basis*

The sum total of all that is known about every remedy is the Homœopathic *Materia Medica*, and it is the great, unchanging, but ever growing basis upon which homœopathy is founded. Hahnemann collected his provings and clinical findings into the *Materia Medica Pura*, and many others have been published down to the present day; but they can be treated as one work since they all consciously, or unconsciously, repeat one another.

The number of known remedies is not certain; there are about 2,000 in the western world, and a lot more in India. Any substance can be submitted

to proving and used as a remedy; but in practice a group has been found which are used more often than any others, and these are known as the polycrests.

They include APIS, AURUM, LACHESIS, LYCOPODIUM, NUX VOMICA, PHOSPHORUS, PULSATILLA, SILICEA, SULPHUR, etc. Remedies may come from any of the kingdoms of nature: mineral, vegetable, and animal.

Learning the Materia Medica, the symptoms produced by a given substance and the type of person they are produced in, was at first a drudgery to me, until I began to notice something, a sort of correspondence between symptom, remedy, and patient.

It is more obvious in some than in others. PULSATILLA, the Wind-Flower, "changeable as an April day"; AURUM, miserable, the miser; LACHESIS, the serpent, suspicious, jealous; BELLADONNA, the plant of violent growth, sudden illness; BRYONIA ALBA, the gentle climber, insidious disease; and so on. At first I thought it was poetic imagination.

Some homœopathic writers play down this aspect, thinking it will cause homœopathy to be condemned as unscientific mediæval witchcraft; others, like Margaret Tyler, glory in it; but none of them can keep it out of the Materia Medica.

For me, the Materia Medica now reads like poetry, where before it was just a dry list of symptoms. If this correspondence is a true one, it means that homœopathy provides a valid way of relating man's inner environment, his mind and body, to his outer environment, the world and all that it contains.

#### *Second Part of the Story*

It is time to tell the second part of the story of Aladdin. His wicked uncle wished to regain possession of the wonderful lamp, but he knows that Aladdin would not part with it. So he bought a load of fine new lamps and peddled them in the streets with the cry "New lamps for old".

Aladdin's wife couldn't resist a bargain. She fetched the old lamp from its shelf and the magician, in his gratitude, gave her all the new ones. They were splendid, shining and up-to-date; but no amount of rubbing them would produce the wonder-working genie, or genius.

Medicine to-day is subject to constant development and change. At heart we all want to believe in progress and to follow what is new. Homœopathy, on the other hand, has hardly altered since it began; like the nature of man, on which it is based, it changes very little, if at all. Perhaps its function will be to preserve the relationship between medical science and man; to tether these soaring systems which are sometimes in danger of losing sight of their object.

#### *The General Practitioner*

Of all branches of medicine, general practice is that which keeps closest

to man as he is. The general practitioner is best fitted to represent the physician as *naturalist*, which is the real meaning of the word. He can watch birth and love and sickness and death in the same families, although this certainly becomes more difficult in an age of high-speed travel. I should merely be repeating myself if I were to attempt a detailed account of all that he could learn from homœopathy, or all that he could teach it.

One of the biggest fields of twentieth century medicine has been the development of psychology, particularly the analytical schools, which have had an impact on art, literature and thought, even greater than on clinical practice.

There is a curious parallel to be found between analytical psychological treatment, homœopathic treatment, and the treatment of patients in the temples of Aesculapius in ancient Greek times.

In those days, patients used to sleep under the porch of the temple. The following day they would relate their dreams to the priest-physician, who would then give them the herb which would heal them.

In analysis, the patient also relates his dream to the analyst, who then helps him to see, in the light of its interpretation, how best he can find himself.

In homœopathy, the patient relates not a dream, but his symptoms; it could be said that the symptoms are the dream. These the physician interprets into a picture of the healing remedy.

Analytical psychological treatment is lengthy and costly; and it can be of the greatest value. It is *my* dream that homœopathy may be a bridge or short cut which could bring these benefits to many more people.

#### *Orthodox Medicine's Debt*

In the field of prophylaxis against disease, orthodox medicine already owes a debt to homœopathy. Hahnemann described the transmission of disease before the work of Pasteur, who was a young man in Paris at the time of Hahnemann's death there. All vaccinations and inoculations are crude homœopathic, or more often tautopathic, techniques, which might now be more successful and less potentially dangerous had the work of Hahnemann and his undoubted influence been acknowledged.

There is a treasure chest of valuable material dormant in the homœopathic archives for workers in this field—for instance, has the claim that BAPTISIA produces antibodies against the Proteus Bacillus ever been seriously investigated?

The homœopathic treatment of miasms, that is, hereditary disease tendencies, in unborn infants, as advocated by Dr. Leon Vannier, of France, might well be taken up and replace the twelve punctures which most babies endure during the first year of their life.

Psychology, preventive medicine, pædiatrics, geriatrics, gynæcology, ophthalmology—every branch of medicine could be enriched and illuminated



by a knowledge of homœopathy. It is one of the criticisms levelled against us by our adversaries that "homœopaths claim to cure everything".

This, alas, is untrue, but it can be said that Homœopathy, a real human medicine, has a contribution of some sort to make in every condition to which man is subject. Even in the more abstract field of biological research—biochemistry, biophysics, cytology, genetics, and so on,—there are echoes to be heard by the homœopathically-minded, questions which only they can ask—and all scientific progress depends on asking the right questions.

Trace elements and their effects, auto-immune reactions, patterns of cells, of chromosomes, of molecules, of solvents—to read of any of these subjects gives one the feeling that homœopathy could provide new and useful angles from which to approach them, to say nothing of possibly useful material in the archives. And, as I have suggested already, the work of nuclear physicists in this century brings orthodox science nearer than ever before to the homœopathic concept of the infinitesimal dose.

#### *Practical Research*

When we come to practical research, homœopathic feeling in this country has always condemned animal experiment, or vivisection, as it is called. The orthodox school is now beginning to realise that this method has its limitations, especially where drugs that affect the state of consciousness are concerned. What are clinical trials but provings?—but differing from homœopathic provings in that they are carried out on sick people, and lack the careful, subjective provers' accounts of *all* their symptoms, mental and physical.

On this question of subjectivity, orthodox science is at last being forced, reluctantly, to admit that there can be no such thing as a truly objective observation—the observer is bound to affect his field in some way. This is no news to the homœopath.

I offer no apology for a superficial article. It was my aim to give a general view of this still largely unexplored domain. It is for you now to go into it more deeply. And may you strike gold!

The story of Aladdin has a happy ending; through the exercise of common sense he won back his lamp and all his treasures, no doubt including the new lamps as well. I should like to make one other point: you may take it as a moral, or as a warning:

To raise the genie, that lamp had to be well and truly rubbed; no press-button magic here! And homœopathy, if it is to be successful, demands plenty of hard work.

—*Homœopathy, Dec., '60 & July, '61*