

## HOMŒOPATHY

### What it is, and What it is not

*Report of an Address given to the Nottingham Homœopathic Society, on January 4th, 1950, by Dr. H. Fergie Woods:—*

What I want to do to-night is, first of all, to give you objections I have met with in practice and in my career as a homœopathic doctor, objections which come mostly from other doctors, as lay people are most anxious to try Homœopathy. Many of them have had friends who have had homœopathic treatment with success and want to try it themselves.

The medical profession has been slow, not only to accept it, but to look into it. This slowness arises from a complex reason. Homœopathy has been in existence for a century and a half, and for the last quarter or half-century it has received Royal patronage in this country and others.

However, Homœopathy is not recognised by the Universities, is not taught in the medical schools and the medical profession as a whole looks upon it rather with suspicion. One can point first to the proverbial conservatism of the medical profession. Conservatism is a good thing up to a point. It helps to protect the patient against quack treatment and harmful remedies, but it is not consistent, inasmuch as many of the new synthetic drugs are taken up quite eagerly by the medical profession and used for purposes for which they were not intended. But even these strong drugs are in line with medical thought and teaching, whereas Homœopathy is entirely different. Homœopathy itself is the very antithesis of medical thought. The homœopathic remedy is 'similar' to the disease, and the dose as small as will give the desired effect, whereas the allopathic remedy is the 'opposite', and the dose as large as the patient will stand.

So it is not surprising that the medical profession is suspicious of Homœopathy because it is so entirely different, the average doctor looking with doubt upon those who practise it, regarding them as we regard some homœopathic symptoms—as strange, rare and peculiar. But there are other reasons why Homœopathy has not made more headway. Up to the beginning of this generation the practice of Homœopathy was very largely in the hands of the mother of a family, heads of institutions, etc., and very few doctors dared to pronounce themselves homœopathic doctors. If they did, they were ostracised and persecuted.

Things are now changing, and many doctors are beginning to look into Homœopathy, and some of them are trying homœopathic treatment.

All new systems which are any good go through three stages of belief; first antagonism, secondly toleration, and thirdly acceptance. I think Homœopathy is in the middle stage now. The practice of Homœopathy having for so long been in the hands of people who are not medically registered, such as heads of families, etc., as before mentioned, has put the medical profession against it up to now. It is the very fact of domestic medicine being so prominent in Homœopathy that has laid the foundation for the objection which is made by a good many doctors "It may be all right for children and trivial ailments, but it is no good for serious complaints." That is quite a mistake as a good many of us know from experience.

Another objection brought against Homœopathy is that it must be faith healing, it cannot possibly be anything else, because such tiny doses have nothing in them. There are several answers to that. Babies and animals respond magnificently to homœopathic treatment. If that is faith healing, it must be faith on the part of the prescriber and not on the part of the patient. Again, take the case of a patient who receives a homœopathic prescription for a chronic disease and is no better. He receives another dose

of something else, with like result. His faith is rapidly waning, until the doctors gets down to the right remedy and the patient immediately gets better. That is not due to faith healing.

The reason for this charge of faith healing is very largely the smallness of the dose. That, I think, is the great stumbling block. It is one which trips up most inquirers into Homœopathy. When one looks at a homœopathic dose and realises its infinitesimal nature there is some excuse for being doubtful about its properties in regard to treatment, but it is always possible to convince by tests. You can bring evidence from results of tests on healthy persons as well as from results from treatment.

Some years ago I read a paper to the British Homœopathic Society, now the Faculty of Homœopathy, in which I quoted certain cases in which patients received benefit from high potencies. Afterwards I was taken to task by a homœopathic doctor who said that I should be ashamed to quote such cases, because there was nothing in the high potencies, it was all "moonshine." I asked him if he would care to test some "moonshine," and sent him a few doses of the 10,000 potency, 10m. as we call them, of a certain remedy. At the same time I enclosed a sealed envelope containing certain symptoms which were likely to be produced by that remedy. In a week or two I got a letter from the doctor who had been obliged to leave off the doses because they produced such a bad effect. He had looked inside the envelope and found there the exact symptoms experienced—violent bursting headache. The remedy was nitro-glycerine.

Have you ever stopped to think what 10m. really is? Ten thousand potency means that the original drug has been diluted by 1 in 100, ten thousand times, and so the strength of the original drug is one in one, with 20,000 noughts after it. One begins to think of astronomical distances and the distance to the sun. But these potencies

act, and 10,000 is the most strongly acting of all, and one has to be careful using it for fear of upsetting the patient too much.

There is great misconception about doses in Homœopathy. If most people were asked what was Homœopathy they would probably say, first of all, that it was a system of treatment with small doses. But the small dose is not the essential part at all. It is only the sequence or corollary of the main principle. Homœopathy would still be Homœopathy even if we gave very big doses as Hahnemann did at first.

Hahnemann discovered when he started treating patients with usual sized doses, very big doses, that he got very bad effects and upset the patients too much. He began diluting more and more, but he could not dilute so much as to lose the effect of the medicine. It is this infinite diluting which gave rise to the famous gibe that the homœopathic dose was equivalent to dropping some tincture into the Thames at Kew Bridge and taking it out at London Bridge! This little joke misses the point. It is not only diluting but shaking as well. Broadly speaking, it may be assumed that shaking splits up the atoms into finer particles which are more readily absorbed by the system. That is what Hahnemann discovered. By shaking and diluting one can increase and not diminish the strength of the medicine.

Another objection is that Homœopathy treats symptoms, and that again arises from a misconception. I admit that symptoms play an important part in Homœopathy, the symptoms of the patients and the symptoms produced on a healthy person by the remedy, or provings as it is called. As Hahnemann pointed out, how can we discover what the patient is suffering from and how shall we treat him except by symptoms? He meant symptoms and signs; what the patient can tell you and what you can discover by observation.

Symptoms are the only things we have to indicate what is wrong and how to treat it, but Homœopathy does not treat symptoms. I think ordinary medicine can be more rightly accused of doing that, by giving aspirin for headache and luminal for sleeplessness, etc. Homœopathy treats through the symptoms of the patient, not through those of the disease, which is a different thing.

To a beginner, it may seem to be straining a point to say we take the symptoms of the patient and not the symptoms of the disease, but we find the symptoms of the disease are of little value in treating a patient. We call them common symptoms because they are all common to every case of that disease, but they do not help us to find the remedy to cure the patient. The symptoms on which we prescribe may have been brought out by the disease, but they have been modified by the patient's individuality, such as in the case of mental symptoms, change of character or habit, etc. These are the most valuable ones, which do not seem to belong to the disease at all. When you hear that Homœopathy is merely treating symptoms you can reply that it does not treat symptoms, but treats the patient through the symptoms.

Another objection is that Homœopathy is slow. That depends upon what you are aiming at with homœopathic treatment. If you are content to abolish the symptoms of disease you can do that quickly, but it does not mean you are curing the patient. If you have a patient who has been suffering from a chronic disease for many years—all his life perhaps, even if it takes eighteen months or two years to cure him, that is not very long compared with a lifetime. In most chronic cases it may take eighteen months or two years to effect a cure. What we aim at is cure, and not merely palliation. The strong drugs one hears of, and many other means of treatment, may cure a disease in a dramatic way, get rid of the symptoms, bring the temperature down, but that does not mean it is curing the patient. You cannot cure him unless you take the

whole of the patient's symptoms and treat him as if there had never been another case of that disease. Homœopathy is certainly not slow in acute cases. I have seen homœopathic doses which have acted as quickly as a hypodermic injection could have done, but the real test is chronic disease. Acute cases either die or get well themselves. Chronic disease gets worse year by year, so if what has been given can cure chronic disease it is worth looking into, and Homœopathy can cure chronic disease. When I say cure, I should add the reservation that strictly speaking, real cure is seldom, if ever obtained. When you get a patient who has been subject to ailing conditions for many years and has all the accumulated tendencies and taints of heredity for many generations, it is too much to hope ever to wipe all that out in one lifetime by treatment, but if you take a cure to mean what I think most of us do mean, that you get rid of what the patient is suffering from and keep him in good health so that he does not get that complaint or another one again, that is a possible achievement. A true cure should mean that a patient keeps on a higher level of health after being treated, and Homœopathy can attain to that.

To sum up, Homœopathy is not a system fit only for trivial ailments. That can be proved by anyone who looks into the records. Homœopathy is not faith healing. Faith helps in all forms of treatment, of course, but Homœopathy can cure where there cannot be any faith. Homœopathy is not a system which gives merely little sugar-coated pills and plain water. There is energy to be discovered in even the highest potencies. It is true there is no known way of finding out scientifically except with one instrument, invented by Dr. Boyd of Glasgow, called the emanometer. Some years before the war Lord Horder, then Sir Thomas Horder, took a committee of medical men to Glasgow to test out Boyd's work. I was present at the Royal Society of Medicine when Lord Horder read his report. He admitted that Dr. Boyd had been correct in

100 per cent of the tests that were put to him. These tests were largely finding out the energy in these high potencies, and not only finding the energy but the specific energy of a particular remedy, because he was able to say what medicine was put into the circuit without his knowledge. This is scientific proof that there is energy in these high potencies and that the energy in each remains for the particular remedy.

When you hear that Homœopathy is just a system of small doses, you can reply at once that the small dose is the sequence of the main principle, which is to give a remedy that is capable of causing similar symptoms to those in the patient. That is all there is in Homœopathy as regards the principle of it. Everything else follows from that principle.

When you hear it said that Homœopathy is slow, that you can get much quicker results by other methods, other drugs, just ask whether it is real cure that is wanted. I know of no quicker way of getting a real cure in chronic cases than homœopathic treatment.

Homœopathy is capable not only of curing the body, but can cure the mind too. It can even change character. That may sound extravagant, but one has seen it done—the whole attitude of mind and character of a patient can be changed by the right homœopathic remedy. That gives us great hope for the future race, when Homœopathy is more widely practised. When body and mind are cured and perfectly tuned to each other and the universe, then we shall be on the way to a race of supermen, that some people prophesy.

—*Health through Homœopathy, March, 1950.*

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