

## LYCOPODIUM: A PSYCHOSOMATIC STUDY

DR. EDWARD WHITMONT, M.D.

Psychosomatic medicine is one of the 'newer' branches of allopathic science. For more than a hundred years Homoeopathy has anticipated and applied it by prescribing for the totality of mental as well as physical symptoms. Moreover, Homoeopathy could make the most fundamental contributions inasmuch as allopathic medicine lacks the possibility of the true clinical experiment in this field. For the purpose of scientific deduction it is necessary to show that whenever, in a heretofore normally functioning organism, certain mental changes are induced, they are invariably followed by certain physical changes, and *vice versa*. Obviously, experiments with animals are not suited for this work, as the mental and emotional attitudes of animals absolutely do not compare with the human level. Nor has allopathy any reliable and safe method to induce at will in an experiment with human beings mental changes that last long enough to induce physical symptoms with said changes not permanent enough to cause real damage to the health of the experimenter. Such an ideal experiment is carried out in a homoeopathic proving. In this way, Homoeopathy has amassed a tremendous amount of reliable experimental material which in order to furnish a fundamental basis for a new and revolutionary psychosomatic science requires only assortment. Without such material, psychosomatic medicine is foredoomed never to advance beyond mere speculation and guesswork.

The following presentation is an attempt to gather material for psychosomatic research by such reassortment. The material is not new in itself. The attempt is made to extract from the maze of known symptoms a grand pattern of lawfully interlinked physical, emotional and mental states which one remedy demonstrates.

The experienced homoeopath knows that what is described by arranging these symptoms of a remedy into the picture of one single personality, represents but an ideal grand pattern which rarely is to be found with the same clarity in the given case of any one patient. Such a pattern, however, is always dynamically inherent, running like a red thread through every case that responds to the correct prescription of the remedy.

Symptoms directly quoted from the materia medica are printed in italic letters.

The key to the understanding of the personality of patients who require Lycopodium as a constitutional prescription seems to be offered by describing them as: *persons of keen intellect with weak muscular power, dry temperament with dark complexion*. We are confronted in this keynote description, derived from clinical experience, with the expression of a functional antagonism between the activities of intellect and what we may loosely charac-

terize as vital power and vegetative organ functioning. The physical result of this conflict, in which the nervous pole appears to prevail and to depress the activity of its vegetative counterpart, is found in *dryness*: namely decreased glandular and lymphatic activity, and *dark complexion* due to a centering of this glandular underactivity in the function of the liver and the adrenal glands, which in turn results in a lowering of the general tonus: *Weak muscular power, general weakness and debility, lack of vital heat.*

Observation suggests that in general the conscious activity of intellect and brain has a depressing effect upon the purely vegetative and vital functions. It is during sleep, with its loss of consciousness that the vital forces regenerate our body. We know also (to mention another example) that mental exertion interferes with digestion. On the other hand, the vegetative (auto-nomic—unconscious) functions of digestion, metabolism and reproduction, centered in the lower part of the organism and representing the main life supporting activities, in their turn tend to depress the mental and intellectual functions. A Latin proverb says, *plenus venter non studet libenter* (a full stomach does not care to study). Most certainly a good, hearty meal makes us sleepy.

A rhythmical pendulum swing of alternating dominance between these two poles seems essential, for intelligent life functioning. Permanent prevalence of one tends to depress its partner. Thus, people of a robust muscular or fat digestive type are usually mentally less active than people of the cerebral type who tend to suffer from digestive and muscular weakness and are of frail vitality. The lycopodium patient presents a special instance of the 'cerebral' type with its life depressing nerve activity proceeding from the head (brain) downwards towards the vital and reproductive centers. Thus we find that Lycopodium affects *weak children with well developed heads but puny sickly bodies*; that its symptoms generally are: *aggravated from above downwards*; and that it produces and cures a *state of emaciation of the upper part of the body with a semidropsical condition in the lower parts.*

In general, children start out with a tremendous store of vitality and regenerative power. Their intellectual activity is at first on a proportionately lower level. In turn, the old person shows the opposite balance of keen intellectual and proportionately lower vital strength. The lycopodium like disturbance of keen intellect and low vital power is apt to affect more heavily children and older people: *the extremes of life*. A child with less than its full share of vital energy with which to counter its abounding intellect will be more hampered in its formative and growth processes by this imbalance than the adult whose body is already finished.

Thus, Lycopodium is most helpful for *intellectually keen children with high nervous tension who are physically weak* and for children of *lymphatic constitution* (depressed glandular activity) with a *great tendency to take colds*. Conversely, the older person by virtue of his normal development,

approaches a lycopodium-like state himself which makes it more likely for any pathology to call for this remedy. The adult in need of this remedy will reveal a condition which as part of a normal development should be reached but with more advanced years. He appears *prematurely aging*, with *early graying hair*, has an *earthy, dark complexion, deeply furrowed face* and is likely to be *thin, withered, full of gas*.

A great deal of the further symptomatology can be understood by tracing the development which a person of this basic type is likely to undergo. Psychology shows that the experience of physical weakness during the early, formative years results in a feeling of inferiority and insecurity. Our materia medica therefore logically lists: *feeling of insecurity and lack of self confidence* among the mental symptoms of Lycopodium. There always is the tendency to compensate for one's weakness by laying greater stress on one's potential strength. The physically weak but intellectually keen individual will therefore lean more toward his intellectual endeavours the more pronounced his physical inferiority complex becomes. Such a vicious circle carried to the extreme, results in the bookworm or the brooding introvert. The average lycopodium type always shows a leaning in this direction. He is likely to be engaged in an intellectual occupation (librarian, secretary, etc.) with a maximum of sitting and a minimum of outdoor activity. Such a 'sitting' mode of life slows down the general and especially the portal circulation which in the well known chain of symptoms referred to: indigestion due to liver disturbance and reduced intestinal motility (flatulence, eructations, gas colics, constipation, haemorrhoids, etc.). A vicious circle is easily established as the general vitality sinks and the physical activity consequently is even more restricted. Frequently, however, we find an instinctive attempt for correction in the modalities *better from motion, craving for and better from open air, aversion to and worse from tight clothing*.

Some differentiation will ensue from what one might call the fineness of the inner grain of the soul. The finer natures will be *shy, timid and cautious*; they withdraw from the crowd and in a thorough and still way tend to their own work. They diligently concentrate upon their mental efforts. They are *mild and submissive* and often have decidedly philosophical leanings. In their inobtrusive way they may attain the highest goals of spiritual effort. The outer weakness here turns into inner light and strength. Other lycopodium natures are less unselfish and lofty. They seclude themselves from the company of others (*aversion to company*) and by engaging exclusively in self observation and analysis become increasingly self centered, and egotistic. A personality ensues which is thoroughly neurasthenic or neurotic, *general apprehension, fear of breaking down under stress, melancholic depression, oversensitiveness*, are the symptoms growing out of this situation. Being egotistic and self centered they are *easily offended, intolerant and quarrelsome, unable to endure opposition, haughty and domineering, overbearing in their conduct, mistrustful, miserly, greedy, envious, malicious*, suffering from

the consequences of anger, vexation and mortification which they succeed in finding on any innocent occasion.

Through all shades of Lycopodium personalities run a certain peculiar strain of conservatism and slowness of action: the caution of a person who has learned to rely not on physical strength with its impulsiveness but rather upon the forces of mind with their slower pace and careful scrutiny (*conscientious even about trifles*). Often under this hard and slow surface there smolders quite a choleric vein with sudden vehement emotional outbursts, more of course in the irritable neurasthenic who is devoid of self control.

A person given to mental strain who loses the support of his failing vitality will end up in a state of profound exhaustion and prostration. The symptoms expressing it are *fatigue from any intellectual exertion, incapability for mental labour, weakening of memory, confused thoughts, wrong spelling of words and syllables, stupefaction and dullness, failing brain power, physical and mental impotency*.

What we broadly call 'vital strength' has its organic basis in the function of our glands, particularly the liver and the endocrine system. The peculiar *dryness* and low vitality thus are accounted for by an under function of these glands. Clinically we find that the disturbance of the liver and digestive function combined with the characteristic lack of physical exercise are responsible for the meteorism, indigestion and constipation which are so characteristic of the lycopodium picture. The resulting accumulation of autogenous toxins derived from the disturbed metabolism gives rise to uric acid diathesis and the well known kidney and urinary symptoms, thus completing the picture of the *non eliminative lithernic*. The lowered function of the adrenals probably accounts for the *loss of hair, baldness, dark complexion* and the *feeling of weakness, and exhaustion*. Adrenalin has been called the sympathicus hormone. A lowering of the adrenal function is associated with a relative or absolute vagotonia which expresses itself in intestinal spasticity, slow pulse and vascular hypotension. This circulatory inadequacy explains the *lack of vital heat with aggravation from warm air and a warm room* as fresh cold air stimulates the vascular tonus (*better open air*). Inasmuch as during sleep the vagus function prevails, and the blood pressure falls, such individuals will feel *worse after sleep* as it tends to aggravate temporarily their vascular imbalance. The gonads, finally, when 'drying up' result in *impotency and sterility*.

Lycopodium frequently is indicated in tuberculous conditions. It would be an interesting task to investigate to what extent a personality type that, as it were, overreaches himself in his mental efforts is characteristic of the tuberculous makeup. An intuitive grasp of this fact is expressed in the interesting characterization of tuberculous patients in Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*.

The characteristic features of the advanced disease conditions of Lycopodium fit logically into the pattern. We expect to find a person devoid of vital resistance, exhausted, dry and withered appearing old regardless of the

actual numbers of his years. We find the *tendency to slowly progressing diseases*, a state of *general atony* and *malnutrition* and a *tendency to cancerous growth* and *cachexia*.

It is interesting to compare shortly the botanical characteristics of the plant with the picture of the person who needs it as a remedy.

Lycopodium is a moss of dry and thin growth; it prefers dry forests and heath, growing to a length of about 3½ feet but always creeping shyly along the ground. The spores which are used for the preparation of the remedy do not moisten as they repel water (hence their use as a drying powder). They are extremely hard but burn with a very bright flash when ignited. The spores germinate only after 6-7 years. The plant itself reaches maturity with the ability for reproduction only after 12-15 years.

Thus the herb itself in its dynamic structure expresses the tendencies of dryness, slowness, hardness with hidden fiery qualities and a great hesitance in growth and reproduction.

The testimony of remedy proving and clinical experience definitely establishes the connection between a certain personality expression and functional as well as organic pathology. No attempt should be made at this point to raise the question of aetiological priority of either mental or physical state. Such a question would be tantamount to raising the old problem of the chicken and the egg.

Systematical comparing of other personality patterns with their characteristic organ pathology as offered by our many proven remedies should thus greatly enrich our understanding of physiology as well as psychology, thus giving the rational basis for a true psychosomatic medicine.

#### DISCUSSION

*Dr. Grimmer:* There is nothing that we can add to this masterly paper and there is nothing that we can criticize. On the contrary, there is so much that we can learn from it. I like the masterly way in which Dr. Whitmont brings down the correspondences throughout all to remedies and to drugs and to sicknesses. He has brought it out in a beautiful poetic and yet a truly scientific way.

Some of the older men, some of the very ancient physicians in fact, if we recall, prescribed drugs that were related to individuals and to sicknesses, as the doctor has spoken of them. Long before Homoeopathy was mastered, they gave drugs which had certain likenesses to certain conditions in the human body. Some of the cancer drugs and some of the other drugs that were given were given along those lines, but the essayist has shown the wonderful correspondences of the plant and of nature through the whole thing.

It is masterly, orderly beautiful presentation of a great remedy.

*Dr. Hurd:* I have a great admiration for Lycopodium because it once saved my life under the administration of Dr. James Ward and Dr. William Boericke when I had diphtheria in 1926. I refused antitoxin and everything

else that went with it as far as I was able to do so, and Dr. Ward and Dr. Boericke said *Lycopodium* really saved my life.

*Dr. Sutherland*: I stated last night that I loved conventions and this is an example of why. I have had two outstanding experiences, the first was emotional and the second was intellectual. This is the intellectual experience, which I will never forget.

I am going home now and seek out the *Lycopodium* bottle and stick with it until I get out of my physical and mental slump.

*Dr. Farrington*: I want to commend this very scientific paper on homoeopathic principles. We homoeopaths have been prescribing psychosomatically for over a century. Whether this is one more indication that the old school are coming our way doesn't make much difference; but you know the older men frowned upon the explanation of symptoms. They said it was so uncertain that it was liable to lead us into errors. Yet scientific investigations and discoveries like this help us to explain symptoms and I think legitimately. Here we have the reason for temperaments which were condemned by the older men, as for instance Kent. It gives us the reason for the mental symptoms and helps us to correlate them with the physical. It tells us the reason why, for instance that the symptoms in *Lycopodium* begin from above and go downwards and those of other remedies begin below and the upwards. Not only does it help us to understand the nature of a remedy but, I think, is of assistance in remembering the characteristics and the general pathogenesis.

What the essayist said about the plant *lycopodium* and its habits coincides with actuality—a better word is that used by Dr. Grimmer, "correspondences". "Corresponds" is correct; it was not overlooked by our homoeopaths; it was not overlooked by the ancients who knew the science of correspondences. The old principle of *signatura rerum* is an example of this science.

There is a story in Greek mythology that the delicate little windflower, so frail, growing out on the hills where the wind blows, sprung from the tears of Venus. I have a letter from Dr. Timothy F. Allen to my father, that shows how deeply those men went into the various phases of *materia medica*. Even the morphology of plants was considered. They compared even the colour of the flowers with the pathogenic effects of drugs.

*Dr. Bonnell*: I don't know whether we all have our characteristics but this paper made me think of a family. I have seen one bryonia woman married to a *lycopodium* man, and I have been their family doctor for thirty-five years. When they left Oklahoma, to move to one of the southern states, they were nice to come around in the morning when they were driving through. He said, "Don't ever forget, you must remember what that remedy you always give me is." It was *Lycopodium*, "Don't forget my wife's remedy." It was *Bryonia*.

I did forget all about them and in two or three years I got a letter, "Please send me some of my remedy." I found out afterwards they hadn't had this remedy for two or three years; 5M or 100M or 500M, it doesn't

make any difference. I can just walk in and get that remedy.

I always think of them as my lycopodium and bryonia couple.

As a patient gives me the symptoms and the lycopodium man tells me "I am all pepped up sometimes, but I just work so long in the office and I get run down so," and he goes over these mental digestive systems and all. I think that some of these cases, as it has been brought out here, you associate with certain remedies. That may be a mistake of mine but I just can't get away from it.

*Dr. Hubbard:* I wish that Dr. Farrington and Dr. Grimmer would enlarge on that statement of Dr. Farrington's that Kent was against the temperaments.

*Dr. Grimmer:* Kent was very much opposed to temperaments. There was quite a controversy between him and Dr. Tomhagen. Dr. Tomhagen believed very profoundly in temperaments and used it very much in a broad sense. Kent said he had cured cases in the mulatto and the dark-skinned people with Pulsatilla and, *vice versa*, he had cured blonds with Lycopodium and otherwise true perhaps, but in a general way Dr. Tomhagen's use of the temperaments was not just to prescribe the remedy on one case or one symptom or one condition but he used it as a guide to certain types of remedies much as I use the polarity to classify a type. I think it was a great advantage. I really think the doctor here brought out that idea in a most superb way, because it is true; and he also clothed it in the language by which our colleagues of the old school can grasp and can get some idea.

I like that very much. It takes an artist and a man versed in both schools of medicine to bring that out and the doctor has certainly succeeded. I want to hear more of his work along those lines.

*Dr. Farrington:* I can't add anything to what Dr. Grimmer has said but I might add that this rates with pathology and other things in the science of medicine which are helpful but should be given their proper place. If we always gave pathology its proper place in relation to symptomatology, it would be of help to us in many instances and we won't be led astray by it; that is the important point.

*Dr. Hubbard:* In regard to the temperaments, I should like to add that it certainly is true in an acute condition that you may need to give a pulsatilla patient Nux vomica. Certainly in the chronic constitutional states, the temperament is a very important point, and I just couldn't bear to let it go in the records that Kent didn't believe in temperaments. That chapter on Ignatia is temperament all through.

*Dr. Dixon:* As a compliment to the essayist, I want to tell him and the audience that I have learned something today. When you can teach an old dog new tricks, that is good.

*Dr. Maclaren:* Dr. Farrington said we should only ask legitimate questions. I think that is right. I think this question I am going to ask now falls into that category.

Why did Hahnemann select *Lycopodium* to make a proving? We can understand why he could select many of the other drugs like *Valeriana* and *Nux vomica* and *Digitalis* and *Belladonna*—they have been used empirically for many years. *Lycopodium* was an inert power in which the old physicians rolled their pills. Why should he choose it? Why should he think there would be any additional force in what had always been considered an inert powder? If any person here knows the answer, I would be glad to hear it.

*Dr. Hubbard*: I don't know what answer he would have given, but I would think his knowledge of botany would make him interested in anything as ancient and as venerable as mosses, because the powers in those very old things are tremendous and he went after elements and fundamental things.

*Dr. Grimmer*: He was an initiate. He knew things in the spiritual side of life that few men did.

*Dr. Bryant*: I guess *Dr. MacLaren* didn't hear my paper yesterday or see my slides yesterday. The answer was in it. Simply because Hahnemann, knowing nothing of physics in his age, simply released atomic energy out of an inert substance—I don't think there is anything more inert than platinum, yet Platinum after it has been triturated to the third trituration, becomes soluble and from solubility it releases energy.

I looked up the definition of radioactivity. That is what these drugs are. They are radioactive, each in its own individual way, and radioactivity simply is release of atomic energy and that is what it is.

*Dr. Hubbard*: *Dr. Bryant's* remarks fill me with joy because these meetings of the International Hahnemannian Association to me are moments of solubility. We all suddenly become fluid and our inner energies are released and I am just sitting here purring.

—*The Homoeopathic Recorder*, March, 1947