

CALCAREA CARBONICA OR OSTREA EDULIS

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Calcarea carbonica was first prepared by Hahnemann from the soft, snowy white calcareous substance which is found between the internal and external layers of the oyster-shell. It is conceivable that so great a chemist had not some reason for using the natural source rather than preparing the remedy from pure chemical substances. In a recent article in *Beiträge zu einer Erweiterung der Heilkunst nach geisteswissenschaftlichen Erkenntnissen* W. Chr. Simonis lists the oyster, or *Ostrea edulis*, with *Sepia* and *Murex* as one of the three remedies originating from the molluses. In recent issues of the *British Homœopathic Journal* remedies have been looked at and studied from the point of view of the Doctrine of Signatures as well as from the more traditional and usual angles. The object of this short essay is to see how and whether a study of the oyster would lead to a deeper understanding of the remedy known to us as *Calcarea carbonica*, whether in fact one could not make a case for re-naming the remedy *Ostrea edulis*, and so grouping it with *Sepia* and *Murex*.

Poppelbaum in his study of the being of animals places the oyster between the snail on the one side and the cuttlefish on the other. The adult oyster is sessile, and lives in colonies on the rocky bottom of the sea. It is a bivalve. The two shells are hinged laterally, and close through the action of powerful muscles attached near the periphery of the shell. The calcareous substance is executed by the mantle and laid down as pearly white, finely crystalline calcium carbonate. The appearance of this middle layer is not unlike that of the growing end of bones. The shell is thus formed by a centrifugal excretion of calcium carbonate, to form a protection for the soft body in a manner very similar to that in which the skull surrounds and protects the human brain. If one may take analogies a little further, it is possible to see a correspondence between the osteoblast, with its dense nucleus, the light protoplasm excreting calcium to

form a bony matrix. When at peace, the two halves of the shell are agape and the mantle edge protrudes a little. As soon, however, as there is the slightest agitation of the water, the shell closes tightly and the onlooker sees only an irregular, rough, greenish-brown ringed oval, giving no indication of the intense activity immediately before, or the possible agitation still going on inside.

The drug picture of *Calcareo carbonica* is well known. One can distinguish three types, one resembling rickets, one not unlike the classical picture presented by the coeliac syndrome, and thirdly the leuco-phlegmatic adult, plethoric, slow to move, and apathetic. Dr. Typer says of the *Calcareo* child that it just sits apparently stuck wherever its mother puts it down. Now it is interesting to note here that the key mental symptom is one of fear, most particularly the fear that others might see his or her mental state. Thus the expressionless apathetic face hides a turmoil of anxious activity. Like the oyster it gives away nothing.

On the level of physical manifestations the *Calcareo carbonica* subject suffers on the one hand from catarrhal affections, in particular catarrh of all mucous membranes, while on the other laryngeal, arterial and muscle spasm ranks high in its symptomatology, showing itself chemically as laryngismus, asthma, angina, vaginismus, and peripheral muscle cramps. In all these conditions one is reminded of the reaction of the oyster to disturbing stimuli. The two shells close tightly as a protest against the intrusion of foreign bodies, or to protect the soft inner body from destruction. So also does the human organism defend or protect itself from foreign intruders, be they physical or psychological. The larynx close against air as does the bronchial tree lower down, shutting out that most important food which, as every physician knows, may lead to suffocation and death. The heart and vagina apparently do the same. Severe muscle cramp could be interpreted as a refusal to touch or desire to withdraw from the outside world. Again the physician is not unaware of the fact that all these clinical conditions are associated with fear, anxiety, strain, or in other words inability of the patient to digest rightly the impressions coming in

from the outside world; impressions in this context include food, air, and psychic stimuli. As the physical body reflects on an organic level the behaviour and maladjustment of the other bodies or organizations of man loosely often referred to as the soul or psyche, as in other words the patient is a psychophysical or psychosomatic phenomenon, one can see that these nameless terrors and anxieties of the *Calcarea carbonica* subject might manifest on a physical level as spasm.

Mechanistically the calcium metabolism is intimately bound up with the causation of muscle spasm. A reduction of the ionizable calcium in the plasma gives rise to increased sensory and motor irritability, a condition ultimately leading to tetany. The other spheres of influence of calcium are bone formation and fluid balance. Retention of tissue fluid even to the extent of clinical oedema is found in gross disturbances of the calcium balance; hence the lymphatic or leukolymphatic constitution. Whether calcium plays a similar role in the oyster to that which it plays in man the writer does not know. Speculations along those lines might be interesting. The young oyster is mobile, and apparently less apprehensive. It has at that stage in its development only a horny outer shell. As it matures and begins to excrete calcium, laying down the two inner layers of what is to become the adult shell, it also develops in other ways. From being mobile it becomes sessile and from then on the slightest agitation of its surroundings will call forth closure of its shell. W. Chr. Simonis raises the question whether the calcium content of the mature oyster is lower than that of the young. In this context one might well wonder whether the increased sensitivity or increased irritability of the neuromuscular mechanism is due as in the human organism to a reduction in the ionized calcium. The development of sense organs and mechanism of transmission of impulses is relatively primitive, but one cannot fail to see a marked similarity. Each of the three main regions of the body—"head", foot, and viscera—has a pair of ganglia and two long nerves run from the head ganglion to each of the other two pairs of ganglia. The sense organs are rudimentary. Near the foot ganglia is a hollow vesicle containing limestone concretions and thought to represent a balancing organ.

On the visceral ganglia a patch of yellow epithelial cells is found, which are believed to be sensitive to chemicals in the water, and sensory cells are found scattered over the mantle, most abundantly along the small projections along the edges of the mantle. These probably respond to touch and light. When stimulated, the foot and mantle edge are withdrawn and the two valves close tightly, or, as one would say, "shut up like a clam".

One has to tread lightly if one wants to penetrate further into the mystery of homœopathic remedies, or they will, like the oyster, shut up and not betray their secrets. Then one can only approach with a knife, prising open the tightly closed shells, so killing the live organism within. The dead matter may serve as food for the gourmet, but it will not reveal its nature this way. I wanted to bring forward in these paragraphs arguments in favour of considering *Calcareo carbonica* as an animal remedy, and hope to have succeeded in showing that it is not impossible to do so. *Calcareo carbonica* or *Ostrea edulis*? Which is it to be?

—*The Brit. Homœo. Journl.*, Jan. '60.
