

HAHNEMANN—THE REBEL AND THE REFORMER

DR. B. K. SARKAR, M.B., D.M.S., Calcutta

Hahnemann's discovery is primarily a therapeutic method, a method of scientific study and therapeutic practice; secondly, the facts discovered by the method; and thirdly the theories that have been propounded to explain and correlate those facts. Hahnemann is a discoverer of truth and not merely of some facts. "For a mere fact is a blind lane, it leads only to itself, it has no beyond. But a truth opens up a whole horizon, it leads to the infinite." (Tagore). Thus it is that Hahnemann, while discovering a new method of drug therapy has discovered some truths relating to the mysteries of disease production which are of outstanding importance.

What is the distinctive mode of Hahnemann's approach to the study of disease and drug actions? It is the clinical method of approach. Though each of the aspects, physico-chemical, biological (vital), psychological and spiritual which the human organism presents, is relatively important, it is the vital aspect which is the most relevant for us as physicians. Similarly, it is the clinical aspect of disease-conditions, as distinguished from the other aspects, eg. etiological, pathological, diagnostic and prognostic, which is the most relevant for us as therapists, whose only and high mission, as Hahnemann puts it, is to heal the sick. Clinical science had to wait for ages and ages till it received its due recognition from Hahnemann. Hippocrates, the father of modern western medicine, was a master clinician but even he could not dream of its applicability and potentiality in the art of therapeutics. Hahnemann found a law of relation between diseases and drugs which will be curative thereof. The validity of the clinical aspect of diseases for therapeutic purpose was questioned by his contemporaries but he pointed out that it is the merit of Homœopathy that in it medicine assumes its true place in being an art—the art of healing. He realised that clinical phenomena are those which render themselves perceptible to our senses as a resultant of actions and reactions of the forces, physico-chemical, vital and

psychological, operating in and through the human organism. These advanced ideas of Hahnemann proved too hard for his contemporaries to understand—so he was misunderstood and villified. The opposition he met, was not scientific. Flushed with a little knowledge of anatomy, physiology, pathology, etc. they despised the clinical aspect of disease as mere nothing to gain from. They thought that they could explain all the mysteries of life and drug-actions with the help of physico-chemical laws.

The unpardonable crime of Hahnemann was to accept the conception of a vital force working in and through the human organism. The unpardonable crime of Hahnemann was to express the grandest truth in the simplest language, to take advantage of phenomena of diseases and drug-effects which were too commonplace to be scientific, which were too near the eyes of a physician from time immemorial to escape their notice and to turn it for the first time into a practical applicability in discovering a Law of Cure. The unpardonable crime of Hahnemann was to throw out his new discovery as a challenge to his contemporary medical profession, asking them not to condemn it before giving it a fair trial.

A lesser mortal would have recoiled most ignominiously against the multitude of odds that threatened the very existence of Hahnemann. But he was made of sterner stuff. He lived through the changes of a world's century; saw his system of healing rise from contempt to honour; suffered untold hardships and died in luxury when he, the recluse, the scholar, the thinker, became in old age the fashionable physician in the gayest city of the then world.

He was a scholar whom scholars respected and honoured. He was a philologist whom philologists dreaded to dispute. He was a chemist who taught chemists. Above all he was a philosopher and profound theist whom neither adversity nor honour had power to change.

Such was Hahnemann, the great human benefactor. On his 209th birthday which falls on the 10th April, we join with all, throughout the world, in paying our homage to the great departed.
