

MERC. SOL. VS. MERC. VIVUS

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I had placed an order for Merc. vivus, 50 millesimal potencies with a definite purpose in view, but was shocked to find that I was supplied with Mercurius, which to my long cherished knowledge, was Merc. sol. But soon I discovered that all the names are often taken together (Merc. vivus, Argentum vivus, Quicksilver, Hg.) and "Mercurius means metallic mercury, . . ." On enquiry also I learnt that Hahnemann Publishing Co. are accustomed to supply Merc. vivus as Mercurius, but there is another view according to which Mercurius means Merc. sol. Thus disillusioned, I wanted to discover the origin of such discrepant views.

But before I write on this topic, let me mention that Merc. vivus and Merc. sol are "apt to be spoken of and used indiscriminately." According to Dr. Kent, Merc. vivus and Merc. sol are "two different preparations but not different enough to make any distinction in use."

But Dr. Burnett says, "gold preparations . . . do not fluidify organic tissues so powerfully as does Hg." Evidently Burnett selected the symbol Hg., the chemical formula of metallic mercury to avoid confusion.

In the *Lesser Writings of Dr. Hahnemann*, p. 870, it is recorded that on January 14th, 1843 (only a few months before his death, July 2nd, 1843), he took up the case of an actor, aged 33, who used to suffer from syphilitic sore throat alternating with protrusion of the haemorrhoidal vessels during efforts at stool. The chief remedy, Merc. vivus, 50 millesimal 0/1 was administered in various ways since January 18th. On March 3rd, a bloodless haemorrhoidal lump came down. This instance also corroborates the fact that Merc. vivus has really the power of fluidifying organic tissues.

Let us now return to the genesis of the two discrepant views on Mercurius. Dr. Hahnemann endeavoured long to

obtain pure mercury in such a condition that it should be more powerfully curative than all other known preparations.

This he did in 1787 and 1788. His *mercurius solibulis Han.* (*mercurius oxydulatus niger*) was preferred in almost all countries to all other mercurials hitherto in use, on account of its much milder and more efficacious anti-syphilitic virtues.

But this did not possess the highest degree of purity. Its dark black colour was due to an excess of caustic ammonia precipitating some murate and sulphate of mercury contained in the nitrate of mercury with excess of acid and this rendering it somewhat impure, imparting deleterious acridity, harmful irritation.

In order to avoid this, in the preface to *Mercurius* in the *Materia Medica Pura*, published in 1822, he directed the mode of preparing a perfectly pure precipitate of mercury, obtained by caustic ammonia acting on nitrate of mercury free from superfluous acid. This is of dark grey colour; it is a perfectly pure oxide of mercury like the powder obtained by prolonged succussion of the metallic mercury and called *aethops per se*.*

This perfectly pure preparation entails much care and labour, while homœopathy and common sense enjoin the simplest and shortest way to attain our aim. So, in the second part of the *Chronic Diseases*, p. 5, he gives directions: one grain of perfectly pure mercury (such as is employed for making thermometers) is triturated, as is done with other dry medicinal substances, with three times 100 grains of milk-sugar for three hours (as is described in detail in the place referred to).

"The preparation of *Merc. viv.* is to be preferred, as it requires less care and labour to make it, it is more stable and perfectly pure; and so Hahnemann abandoned the use of *Merc. sol.*, preferring in all cases to administer metallic mercury, or

* When solidified mercury is thrown into molten copper emitting blue flames, the two combine to produce gold emitting green flames—no authentic knowledge.

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in his trials and observations with endocrines specially the gonads (testes and ovary) with a view to publishing a second volume when the end came. That these remedies, with their prompt and penetrating effectiveness and comparatively less torturous ways of prescribing, considerably cut short the work of a physician, will remain unchallengeable. Dr. Ghosh had remarked to me on more than one occasion that his fondness for prescribing such remedies in many cases, kept away a large number of physicians, mostly conservatives, from consulting him.

A devoted and skilful Homœopath, a thoughtful organiser with progressive ideology, a brilliant teacher and a pious man to the core, Dr. Ghosh had set before himself a programme of work for lifting Homœopathy out of its present rut to inspire a renewed public confidence in this system comparable to what it was during the halcyon days of Mahendra Lal Sirkar, Beharilal Bhaduri, R. L. Dutta and others. It is upto the generation of coming Homœopaths to take up this mantle of work and see it through so that the ideals of Dr. Ghosh are realised truly and fully.

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Merc. viv. it would be as well for us to do so." (Dr. Willard Ide Pierce).

It is clear that those authors, who derived their knowledge from the earlier writings of Hahnemann, used the term Mercurius to mean Merc. sol., while others, who based their knowledge on his later writings, were definitely convinced that Mercurius meant Merc. vivus.

"Mercury in its fluid state has little dynamic action on man's health, it is only its chemical compounds that can cause great effects." (Hahnemann). But the same liquid Mercury, when it is triturated in the process devised by Hahnemann with milk-sugar "up to the million-fold powder-attenuation," loses its liquid quality, becomes soluble in dilute alcohol and being raised to higher and higher alcoholic potencies through dilution and succussion (dynamisation) renders the best services in healing diseases, when indicated and used in suitable minimum doses.