

—do we not recognize in this phenomenon the greater principle of non-violence ?

How violence with necessity destroys everything and finally itself, the history of our days has demonstrated, when violence and force in their most brutal embodiment could rise to leadership of a whole country, to drown the world in an ocean of tears and blood. May we on this way, when representatives of many nations bow their head before a great genius of this country, the word of one of Hahnemann's greatest disciples, Constantine Hering, illuminate the path of all true followers of Hahnemann, the word he gave to our science as its motto, in which we can hear the very heart throb of Homœopathy :

“The mild power is great”.

—*The British Homœopathic Journal, April '56*

AMERICAN HOMŒOPATHY

A Study Of The Times, the Personalities And The Development
Of Homœopathy In The United States.*

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To present a comprehensive, detailed historical analysis of American Homœopathy in four short instalments is manifestly impossible. We shall be able only to skim the surface and hope to explore the depths at some later time. In the first place, although it is comparatively easy to list the outstanding personalities who shaped its course, it is quite another matter to select the individuals for our biographical study. It becomes apparent immediately that much of the credit for its rapid spread is due to countless faithful, inspired, but lesser known doctors and laymen whose courage and persistence helped to push the frontiers of Homœopathy to all corners of the United

States. Our present biographical research, therefore, must be limited to a few of the men who contributed something tangible to the growth of Homœopathy in this country—those who forged some link in the unbroken chain from its beginning to the present. So if some beloved personality known to us or our families is omitted it does not imply that he was not a fine, or even great, physician.

When we try to put the historical events—the spread of Homœopathy, its institutions and its organizations—in logical sequence, the problem is even more difficult. As far as can be discovered, there is no chronological record available, and perhaps in the very nature of its appeal there could not be one. The most accessible, and possibly the best, history of Homœopathy in America is *King's*, which is in our Hahnemann Hospital Library and doubtless in other similar repositories of homœopathia. Unfortunately its presentation marches forward and then doubles back on its tracks to such an extent that the reader reaches the year 1900 on one page only to discover two pages later that he is now in 1836—which is somewhat disconcerting. It is fascinating, but also frequently frustrating, to attempt to rearrange this hop-scotch of facts into a consecutive and complete record.

This month we shall take a quick look at the early pioneer era which began in 1825 when Hans Burch Gram settled in New York and commenced to practice this new and revolutionary method of treating sick people. He started quietly and circumspectly and soon gathered around him a small group of men who were convinced of the value of Hahnemann's teachings—among them Dr. John F. Gray, who later became a leader in establishing Homœopathy throughout the state. What Gram was to New York, Henry Detwiller was to Pennsylvania, but whereas Gram lacked the organizational ability needed to establish institutions for medical education and the dissemination of information, the first Pennsylvania group—Detwiller, Wesselhoeft, Freytag and later, Hering—succeeded in this, so that it is customary to think of the latter state as the birthplace of organized Homœopathy in the United States.

All of the Pennsylvania stalwarts were of German origin.

They spoke very little, if any, English at this time and probably settled there in the first place because the German language was so widely used in the upstate sections. Another consideration may have been the fact that in those more remote parts, far from the large cities, they were less subject to animosity and persecution. Together with other equally far-sighted physicians and laymen, these men conceived the idea of founding a school of homœopathic medical instruction. The earliest homœopathic organization of record in this country was The Hahnemann Society, founded on Hahnemann's birthday in 1833 by Hering, Wesselhoeft, a few other doctors and some laymen. This was followed the next year by the New York Homœopathic Society, and in Pennsylvania by the Homœopathic Society of Northampton and Adjoining Counties, with twelve members, including three clergymen who dispensed homœopathic medicines to their parishioners. From this latter group came the men who met with Constantine Hering in Philadelphia in 1834 to plan and later establish the first school of homœopathic medical instruction in the world—the North American Academy of the Healing Art, familiarly known as the Allentown Academy because of its location—which was duly incorporated by the State Legislature after a really terrific battle. Dr. Hering, by general consent, now assumed the leadership of this little group of pioneers, his labors earning him the undisputed title of "Father of American Homœopathy." The original teaching staff of the Academy included Hering, Wesselhoeft, Detwiller, Freytag, Romig and Joseph Pulte, and apparently they were students in each other's courses, for all received degrees from the school. Samuel Hahnemann was elected the first honorary member of the Faculty, and Madame Hahnemann was granted a special diploma. Books and lectures were in German, which was a major error in judgment as it discouraged many prospective students. The language barrier and the failure of the bank which handled the funds of the Academy were largely responsible for its closing after seven years.

By this time Dr. Hering had returned to Philadelphia to practice, and in 1844, with the Pennsylvania group and others from New York and elsewhere, he took an active part in orga-

nizing the American Institute of Homœopathy for the purpose of "reforming and adding to the *Materia Medica* and restraining unqualified homœopathic practitioners." Four years later the wisdom of this move was evident and the vital importance to Homœopathy of an efficient organization of national scope was amply demonstrated. In 1848 the American Medical Association came into being and there was good reason to believe that one of its major objectives was to put the homœopaths out of business by defeating the movement to start a homœopathic medical college and then denying these "irregulars" admission to "regular" schools. Nevertheless, in this same year the homœopaths succeeded, over violent opposition, in getting an Act of Incorporation through the Pennsylvania Legislature and the Homœopathic Medical College of Pennsylvania opened its doors in Philadelphia with fifteen students, among whom we find the names of Raue, Luyties, Humphreys and Engle.

During these early years—1825-1850—the homœopathic art of healing spread rapidly over the country. The first small groups in nearly every community included lay students, and unfortunately, too many of these attempted to treat sick people without benefit of medical training or educational background. Thus the qualified homœopathic physician, always on the spot in his handling of cases, had to contend not only with the unjustified charges of the regulars but also with the more easily sustained charges of quackery and charlatanism so widely brought against this type of homœopathic prescribing. Homœopathic physicians had to suffer insult and indignities and were frequently subjected to arrest on the flimsiest of trumped-up charges. The situation was particularly bad in New York State, where it was necessary to be a member of an orthodox medical society in order to be licensed to practice.

A few statistics of this era might be interesting. Homœopathic books and medicines were first sold in Pennsylvania by J. G. Wesselhoeft, who opened a store on Broad St., Philadelphia, in 1833. Others followed suit and before 1850 there were eight stores dispensing homœopathic supplies in that city. One of these was bought in 1869 by Dr. Francis Boericke, who took Mr. Adolph Tafel into partnership and established the

pharmacy so familiar to all of us. The homœopathic fraternity has produced an almost incredibly long list of magazines, most of them short-lived and quickly followed by a successor. The first of these, the *American Journal of Homœopathia*, was published in 1833, a year before the New York Homœopathic Society was organized, but was discontinued after four issues.

In 1825, when Gram introduced Homœopathy in New York, there were probably not more than one hundred homœopathic physicians in all the world. By Hering's arrival in 1833 there were ten in Pennsylvania. In 1859 there were around 125 there, 54 of them in Philadelphia, and many more had migrated from that state and its well-known medical colleges to other sections of the United States. In New York State there were 235 homœopathic doctors by 1850, 86 of them in New York City—and this was when a homœopath was an all-out, enthusiastic follower of Hahnemann, not a timid sampler or an eclectic.

In the pioneer period men fought with conviction and zeal to establish Homœopathy in the United States, and from this group we have selected four for special study.

HANS BURCH GRAM

MRS. RAYMOND THOMAS

Hans Burch Gram can rightly be called the pioneer in Homœopathy in America for, as far as is known, he was the first to practice it in this country.

He was born in the United States in 1786 of an American mother and a Danish father who came from a wealthy seafaring family of Copenhagen. At the age of eighteen he went to Denmark to claim an inheritance and acquire an education. Through an influential uncle who was physician to the King of Denmark, and through his own ability, he rose rapidly in medicine and obtained a position in the medical service of the Royal Army, receiving high honors in his field. Gram practiced some Homœopathy in Copenhagen for a number of years and then decided to pioneer Hahnemann's methods in America where he had been born. He settled in New York in 1825 and was successful in his practice and in converting some of his colleagues to Homœopathy. He was a quiet, modest man, never

forcing his opinions on others but always ready and willing to discuss and explain Hahnemann's teachings when asked to do so. Against a cultural background of science and art, history and philosophy, his conviction and enthusiasm helped to persuade many to investigate. Among his converts was Dr. John F. Gray who, unable to read German and understand Hahnemann's works, which had not been translated at that time at first turned over his incurable and most discouraging cases to Dr. Gram. Later, however, he mastered the German language and became a successful homœopathic physician and able organizer.

Dr. Gram was president of the New York Medical Philosophical Society, where he was liked and respected by his colleagues of the regular school until his uncompromising resentment of an indiscretion by Dr Channing, a fine and friendly man who inadvertently let slip the fact that Gram was a homœopath, turned them against him. This led to a growing hostility which soon developed into persecution of him and his beliefs. Their animosity extended to all who adopted his philosophy and for many years followed his successors and hampered them in their work.

Gram died in 1840 at the early age of fifty-four, his death undoubtedly hastened by the insanity and death of his only brother, to whom he was greatly devoted. A monument to him, proposed by Dr. Gray, was never erected.

HENRY DETWILLER

MRS. RAYMOND THOMAS

Henry Detwiller was born in Switzerland in 1795 and received his education there and in France. He came to America as a ship's physician on the old three-master "John," which also carried on board the refugee General Vandame, one of Napoleon's officers. So many of the passengers were sick when they reached Philadelphia that he was assigned by the Port authorities to care for them. During this enforced delay he was persuaded to remain in Pennsylvania and settled in Allentown. There he practiced successfully as an allopath until

he met Dr. Wesselhoeft, who interested him in some books on Homœopathy and a box of homœopathic medicines he had received from Dr. Stahl in Germany.

To Dr. Detwiller belongs the distinction of administering, in 1828, the first dose of homœopathic medicine in Pennsylvania, and the speedy and complete cure which resulted converted him to the new method of treatment. He was on the medical faculty of the Allentown Academy and he assisted in organizing The American Institute of Homœopathy as well as the Pennsylvania State Homœopathic Medical Society. He was the only one of the large throng present at the dedication of the Hahnemann College and Hospital in 1886 who had met and spoken with Hahnemann. He was a Mason—as were Hahnemann, Gram and many of the early homœopathic physicians.

Dr. Detwiller was a kindly, courteous man whose devotion to his professional responsibilities earned him the respect of all with whom he came in contact. He had a great love of the outdoors and accumulated a fine collection of birds, mammals, reptiles, etc., representing the entire fauna of Pennsylvania. He led an active life for three quarters of a century, for he lived to the ripe old age of ninety-two and continued in his practice up to a few days before his death in 1887.

WILLIAM WESSELHOEFT

MRS. RAYMOND THOMAS

William Wesselhoeft was born in Germany in 1794 and was a contemporary of such famous men as Goethe, Schiller and Jean Paul. Goethe was a friend of his father and of his uncle, and instructed William Wesselhoeft in drawing. He received a very fine education in art, the classics, natural history, botany, transcendental physics and meteorology, finally studying medicine and becoming a licensed physician. Imprisoned for his political beliefs around the year 1818, he escaped after two months and remained in hiding for some time. Soon after this experience he decided to come to America, where he settled in Pennsylvania, attracted perhaps by the large German population there.

His natural thirst for knowledge and the urging of German physicians abroad with whom he corresponded sparked his interest in Hahnemann's *Organon* and *Provings* and led him to careful examination of the *Materia Medica*. Convinced by its scientific origin and presentation, he threw himself wholeheartedly into experimenting with the medicines and urged others to do likewise. He was a director of a Provers' Union in Philadelphia and after considerable initial skepticism about infinitesimal doses he became a great advocate of the higher potencies, but he preferred the word "dynamization" to "dilution," believing that it better expressed the theory of dynamic force in relation to vital force.

In 1833, Constantine Hering, newly arrived in this country, sought him out, and together with others of like mind they founded the academy at Allentown. Both eventually became disappointed by the attitude of some of the directors, who seemed to be primarily interested in making money and were inclined to admit unqualified students. When Hering left to take up private practice in Philadelphia, Dr. Wesselhoeft tried for a while to carry on, but the school was doomed and after its failure he decided, with his brother Robert who had joined him for a year's instruction in Allentown, to go to Boston, where he believed he would find open-minded, respectful and sympathetic doctors who would want to know about Homœopathy and would listen courteously to a man of his outstanding background and experience. When he found quite the contrary to be true he was not discouraged but determined to "practice down" opposition. His major efforts were directed toward the education of his own and his brother's sons in strict Hahnemannian principles. He sent them to the "regular" medical schools of Boston because he believed there was value in studying there if only as a means of learning orthodox thought and treatment in order to oppose them intelligently. The descendants of these men served Homœopathy well down to contemporary times.

Dr. Wesselhoeft was indefatigable in his search for truth. He was honest and direct in speech, and in spite of an innate sweetness and sympathetic understanding, he was often given

to the use of extremely forceful language. Commenting upon this characteristic, Dr. Hering remarked later that nevertheless, he was certain Dr. Wesselhoeft had found a place in the highest heaven—if not, he himself would not care to go there at all! Due largely to overwork and a complete disregard of the limits of his physical strength, Dr. Wesselhoeft died in 1858 at the age of sixty-four.

CONSTANTINE HERING

PRISCILLA CORNISH

Constantine Hering, a titan among men, came into this world with the dawn of a new century. He was born on the first day of January, 1800 of well-educated parents in the little town of Oschatz, Saxony, where his father was organist in the local church. The elder Hering was actually in the church playing the organ when news was brought him of the birth of a son. He immediately burst into a hymn of praise, "Nun Danket Alle Gott." So the child was ushered into this world with praise to God and even today we seem to hear echoes of that thanks for a great soul and teacher.

His early education was superior for the times, in that his associations were with friends of his father, whose position as organist and as a doctor of philosophy brought him into contact with the best minds of the community. He had a great love of mathematics and also enjoyed the study of plants, insects, stones, etc. He grew up during the Napoleonic conquests and developed an ardent belief in freedom for all people. When some of Napoleon's army marched through his village to their disastrous rout in Russia, they demanded that he give them bread, but when he offered them good, black bread baked by his mother they threw it on the ground in disgust. He told them God would punish them for throwing away good bread. When the dreadful retreat from Russia commenced, the remnants of the same squad straggled by, once again begging bread, and an officer who recognized the boy remarked that the curse of which he had warned them had now been fulfilled.

In 1820 young Hering went to Würzburg to study medicine, and graduated with highest honors although his examinations

were made particularly difficult because his growing interest in Homœopathy had become known. His first contact with Hahnemann's teachings was an assignment to write against them, but the more he investigated his subject the more sense it made to him. During this period his finger became infected following an autopsy. All the customary treatments—leeches, calomel, caustics—failed and amputation was recommended. An older disciple of Hahnemann offered to give him medicine internally and although it seemed to him an absurd way to treat an infection of this sort, he consented and was cured by a few doses of *Arsenicum*. Of this experience he said: "I owed to it far more than the preservation of a finger. To Hahnemann who had saved my finger, I gave my whole hand, and to the promulgation of his teachings, not only my hand, but the entire man, body and soul."

While practicing in Germany, he also became a teacher of mathematics and natural science, and was chosen by the Government to go to Surinam on a botanical and zoological expedition. He sent back many unusual specimens, at the same time continuing his practice of medicine there and proving many remedies, among them *Lachesis*, the snake venom. Hering married in Surinam but lost his wife in childbirth. Bereaved and unhappy, he decided to go north to America to practice and spread Homœopathy. He landed at Martha's Vineyard in January 1833 after a stormy voyage and from there made his way to Philadelphia, where there were many Germans.

There were then ten homœopathic doctors practicing in Pennsylvania. Dr. Hering quickly established himself, in spite of prejudice and opposition from old school physicians, and within a year he was asked to head the new homœopathic academy in Allentown, which was started with such high hopes on April 10, 1835, the anniversary of Hahnemann's birth. He served in this capacity until it became evident that this first attempt to found a homœopathic medical school was doomed, when he returned to Philadelphia to teach and work for Homœopathy. It is said of Hering that he never turned a young student from his door, often working with them clear through the night. He wrote and translated many books and articles—some

of them satires on the old school of medicine—proved many remedies and taught at Hahnemann College. He gave up this last work in 1869 in order to devote more time to writing and compiling of Homœopathy's greatest works—*Hering's Guiding Symptoms*. As his reputation grew, he was consulted by other doctors from all over the United States. After Hahnemann's death he declined an offer from Madame Hahnemann to go to Paris and take over Hahnemann's practice, because he felt that his life work was in this new country of his adoption. Hering was always extremely interested in our form of government and was an adrent supporter of Fremont for president. Believing whole-heartedly in our way of life, he nevertheless remained strongly German in his sympathies, and gave a big party to celebrate the German victory in 1871. He had always insisted that Alsace and Lorraine must be returned to Germany.

Hering was very philosophical, and steadfast in his beliefs, certain that with continued work, reliance upon truth, and absolute honesty, Homœopathy would triumph. His was a positive, dynamic personality. Very sure that he was right in all his pronouncements and decisions, he did not spare those who disagreed with him or deviated from the line he walked.

In Philadelphia he became interested in the Swedenborgian Church and when he died peacefully in 1880 a minister of that denomination conducted the services. He was widely and sincerely mourned. Memorial addresses from all over the country have been collected and printed in a small book by Calvin B. Knerr, M.D., but for those who would like a more intimate picture of this great homœopathic leader, a later and more comprehensive book by Knerr, *Life of Hering*, published in 1940 by The Magee Press, Philadelphia, is well worth reading.

—*The Layman Speaks*, Feb., '57
