

## GROSS MISTAKES MADE IN DIAGNOSIS

BY J. ELLIS BARKER

All men are fallible. The greatest experts may, and often do make mistakes. The doctors, both homœopathic and orthodox, are guided in their treatment by their diagnosis, and their diagnosis may be mistaken, even if the greatest care is used. A busy doctor often has not the time for a thorough investigation and he may prescribe provisionally the white mixture and cascara sagrada if he is an allopath or *Nux vomica* if he is a homœopath, and if the original prescription has benefited the patient, the original routine treatment may be continued for weeks and months, although the patient may suffer from a very serious disease, let us say cancer of the stomach, which produces indigestion, incidentally.

Diagnosis is largely instinctive. An experienced doctor sees at a glance that a man is tuberculous, has heart trouble, is toxic through constipation, is anæmic, is jaundiced through some liver complaint, has bags under the eyes, and the peculiar tell-tale complexion of kidney disease etc.

There is a profound difference in orthodox and homœopathic diagnosis. Orthodox diagnosis is chiefly instrumental and is becoming more so with the yearly increase of scientific appliances. As they are very expensive they have to be used constantly, and there are the laboratories which clamour for work. Homœopathic diagnosis if carried out in strict accordance with the principles of Hahnemann, is almost non-instrumental. We get all the symptoms and sensations of the patient and, instead of diagnosing the diseases, as the allopaths do, diagnose the indicated remedy. Of course, we may by mis-chance select the wrong remedy or remedies. Besides, a good homœopath will not disdain to use instruments which were not known in Hahnemann's time. Hahnemann had

no stethoscope, no clinical thermometer, and none of the numerous "scopes" with which our insides are now explored.

The attitude of homœopaths and of orthodox doctors towards the patient is very different. The homœopath enquires whether his patient puts his arms above his head in sleep (*Pulsatilla*), whether he is very untidy (*Sulphur*), or ultra-tidy (*Arsenic*), etc. The allopath takes no notice of any of these symptoms and hardly listens to such "silly" statements. There are allopaths who take no notice of such symptoms and of the complaints of the sick because they wish to diagnose *scientifically*, which means instrumentally.

Homœopaths, who are guided in their treatment exclusively by symptoms and who do not possess vision or instinct, may be misled, perhaps deliberately misled, by patients. A patient of mine told me only after six months treatment that she had had diphtheria badly when small, another one told me only after four years treatment that she had had syphilis. We cannot be careful enough in studying our cases, and we must impress upon every patient the necessity of helping us get at *all* the facts. A patient who is a slave to alcohol or to tobacco will not mention this fact. Otherwise his favourite indulgence might be stopped altogether. I have seen patients self-poisoned by salt, by mustard, by strong boiling-hot tea, by overeating, and who carefully withheld the facts, although knowing that their over-indulgence might be the cause of their illness. Such an individual will say: "You can give me any diet you like, but I *must* have a tablespoonful of mustard, or of salt, every day" or "I cannot live without boiling-hot tea—which killed Edgar Wallace—I must have at least six cocktails or fifty cigarettes", or "I cannot sleep before 3 o'clock in the morning and I must dance, drink and smoke to keep going."

—*Heal Thyself, March, 1948.*