

# THE HAHNEMANNIAN GLEANINGS

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## EDITORIAL\*

### STATISTICS AND HOMŒOPATHY

A charge of unscientificity of Homœopathy is often levelled by those of the orthodox school on the ground that there is a serious lack of statistical observations regarding the therapeutic efficacy of homœopathic remedies. The orthodox school glibly quotes exact percentages of cure of specific diseases by specific drugs. They want us, for example, to tell what percentage of cures in pneumonia cases, is effected by Bryonia or Phosphorus? Which is the better *i.e.*, more efficacious drug in pneumonia? Can we put forward our hospital records or records from our personal and private cases? They think that this stick of their argument is strong enough to smash our heads and to put Homœopathy in the wrong. Let us analyse the situation. The importance of statistical treatment of a given data lies in the fact that it gives us the average reading or result and its deviation and that it eliminates the errors of chance and accident. No one can dispute the value of statistics as infallible mathematics just as none of us would dispute that two plus two makes four. But this mathematics is the basis of physical sciences *e.g.*, physics, chemistry etc. From the things encountered in the material world, certain qualities, such as weight and spatial dimensions, have been abstracted. These abstrac-

tions, and not the concrete facts, are the matter of scientific reasoning. Thus physical sciences deal with abstractions and generalisations consisting only of equation of symbols. Such is not the position of biological sciences and particularly of medicine which is but a special department of human biology. Here we deal with concrete individuals which are characterised by uniqueness. To a physician is set a task very different from that of a man of science. The latter can confine himself entirely to the world of symbols. Physicians, on the contrary, have to face both concrete reality and scientific abstractions. They are asked to realise the impossible feat of building up a science of the particular. The distinctive outlook of Homœopathy is individualistic. According to Homœopathy what is needed is not a general remedy of a disease but a general principle, applicable to all the varying cases so that the particular remedy needed by each individual may be found. Homœopathic "Materia Medica" consists of remedies specific for each type of diseased individual and not specific for generalised abstractions which go by different names of diseases. So statistics are certainly not the last word in scientific evaluation of results in the phenomena of life.

Our serious objection against the statistical method of judging the therapeutic efficacy lies in the fact that its aim is too low. It aims to cure only a majority of cases of any disease; it does not provide for the minority that were not cured by this or that favourite drug. It makes no provision for the investigation of the reason why it was that the drug in question failed in a certain number of cases, although it succeeded in a majority. And yet this failure could not have been accidental. There are no accidents in nature. There must have been some good reason for the failure, a reason to be ascertained and so turned to account as to diminish the minority and finally altogether to eliminate the failures. The highest ideals of the so-called modern scientific system of medicine, then, would be to cure a majority of cases entrusted to them. Show of

majority may hold good in politics but not in medicine where life of each individual sick man is at stake.

This statistical method of ascertaining the efficacy of a certain drug in certain diseased conditions is also justly criticised by Dr. Otto Leeser, M.D. (in his book "Critique of Homœopathy") in the following words:—

"The sort of statistics which I deem not applicable to proving of drugs, searching for curative specifics, is the procedure of finding averages by the "great number", because it leads to assertions on frequencies of events only and not to precision and accuracy of description. It is the sort of statistics which is so often used as a drunken man uses a lamp-post, more for support than illumination. If corroborations by repeated tests be also called "statistics", then I beg permission to discriminate between the two sorts and to claim the repetition of experiments as a very valuable "statistics" for our "particular purpose".

So when the statistics present averages of a large series of observations it may be said that they have produced the evidence of truth; but when they neglect results outside the average they help mis-conception of truth. When statistics present conclusion on an observation which is unrelated to or is a minor part of an event, then they are nothing but miscarriage of truth. Somebody remarks, half in jest and half in earnest that "there are three degrees of liars, the first is a liar; the second, a damn liar, and the third is a statistician".

B. K. S.

What is a Homœopathic dilution and how Homœopathic medicine acts—By A. Berne, E.P.C.I. Director of the "Laboratoires L.H.M." (Translated from French by Dr. Rajkumar Mukherjee, M.A.) Pages 64, Price Rs. 1/4.

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