

Hahnemann's genius and intuition led him to discover this mysterious dynamical plane, the seat of health and disease—the two conditions which baffle all analysis and defy all attempts at naming and classifying. But, any way, a name has got to be given for this original diseased-condition for expressing and communicating our ideas and Hahnemann, according to the usage of his days, picked up the term "Psora" and used it with a special connotation and denotation to which we devoted so much time and so many pages in our journal.

B. K. S.

HOMŒOPATHY

FROM THE PATIENT'S POINT OF VIEW

The therapeutics of Homœopathy is of little concern to the patient, and it is well that this should be so. The practice of medicine is too intricate a science for the amateur, and the consequences of error may be so serious that it is always better for the patient to be the patient and to leave doctoring to the doctor; that is, of course, provided he is a properly qualified physician.

Even so, however, a patient may quite reasonably inquire into the difference between the homœopathic and orthodox systems of treatment.

These differences are discussed in great detail in many publications: most patients have neither the desire, nor possibly the knowledge, to make a proper appraisal of each individual point, yet may naturally want to know what are the main differences between the two systems.

One of the main differences is that orthodox medical practitioners aim at identifying the disease by which the patient is affected, and then applying the prescribed treatment for the particular malady.

Homœopathic practitioners do not treat disease as disease, but treat the condition of the patient. This may seem to be a distinction without a difference, but in fact the difference is very real.

There are two distinct stages in orthodox medical practice. The first stage is diagnosis, for the identification of the disease; and this is followed by the second stage, which is the application of the prescribed treatment for that particular disease.

To make a correct diagnosis may be a very difficult matter. Diseases do not necessarily come singly, and the symptoms of one may mask the symptoms of another also present. The age, sex, the idiosyncrasies of the patient, and an infinite number of other factors must be noted and considered if a correct diagnosis is to be made; yet in orthodox medicine the success of the subsequent treatment must necessarily depend on the accuracy of the diagnosis. It has been estimated that it is possible to make a correct diagnosis in less than 50 per cent. of cases.

In homœopathic practice two diagnoses are made; first, as in orthodox medicine, a diagnosis of the disease—where such is possible: this is followed by the considerably more important therapeutical diagnosis, in which the condition of the patient—which may have been caused by the disease, or of which the disease may be a manifestation or symptom—is ascertained, and treatment is given on the basis of the homœopathic principle of "like cures like". Homœopathic physicians lay great stress on the fact that it is the condition of the patient which is treated, and not the disease itself.

The reaction, or lack of reaction, of the patient to the drugs administered is an infallible guide to the correct line of treatment. All personal idiosyncrasies, allergies and other factors are automatically taken care of by the symptoms and reactions of the patient, and nothing affecting the patient's condition can possibly be overlooked. There is thus a total avoidance of "trial and error", and the most

advantageous course is infallibly indicated by natural means.

In orthodox medicine, the drugs prescribed are those which will have an effect directly opposed to the condition it is desired to cure. A fever, for example, which is an overheated state, is treated by drugs which tend to reduce the temperature. Thus any given condition is treated by drugs which would produce, in a healthy person, an effect opposite to that manifested by the disease. Various drugs are frequently combined, as in the familiar "prescription."

On the face of it, this seems perfectly sound and straight-forward, and undoubtedly gets results.

Homœopaths, however, claim that better results can be more quickly obtained by other methods.

About 150 years ago, Dr. Hahnemann, a famous German physician, was not satisfied with the state of the science of medicine, and advanced a new principle. "The law of similars"—that is, that any diseased condition should be treated by those drugs which, if taken by healthy people, would produce in them symptoms similar to those of the diseased condition under consideration.

Working on those lines, he further discovered that minute doses only were required to produce the desired results.

Hahnemann published the details of this new system of treatment, to which he gave the name "Homœopathy". This immediately aroused the hostility of the apothecaries of his day, who feared that the general use of minute doses would adversely affect their sales, and he eventually left Germany and went to Paris, where he practised homœopathy with great success.

This was the beginning of homœopathy, which has since attained a position of very considerable importance in the medical world, despite great opposition from many quarters.

That there should be opposition is not in the least surprising, more especially as vested interests of no small

magnitude might be affected by the universal adoption of homœopathy. It also seems to be a natural law that all progress must overcome opposition. To-day few would venture to question the great advantages of anæsthesia, yet when Simpson discovered the anæsthetic properties of chloroform and advocated its use, he was attacked on many grounds. It was even seriously claimed that artificially induced anæsthesia would be sinful, as it would rob the Creator of the loud cries of heartfelt agony which are His due!

Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood, Hargreave's invention of the spinning jenny, and innumerable other important discoveries have aroused great opposition. Hypatia was martyred for mathematics. Galileo suffered because he advanced the absurd theory that the earth moves round the sun, instead of the sun moving round the earth as any fool could see for himself!

The opposition of orthodox physicians is understandable. A student who has passed the necessary and severe examinations after years of intensive study, and who considers himself fully qualified, as, indeed, by law he is, to practise medicine, may well be disconcerted to find that the therapeutical rules which he has learned at the cost of so much time and study are being challenged by newer and more modern methods. Practitioners of longer standing, especially if they have with some measure of success employed the older methods, may be reluctant to adopt a new technique, and may also resent any suggestion that they should do so.

Homœopaths are well aware of this, and deplore the fact that no complete, impartial and official investigation has even been made to compare the relative values of both systems of treatment, more especially as there is no recorded instances of any qualified medical practitioner who has conducted his practice on homœopathic principles ever reverting to the older methods.

It has been stated that homœopaths are "against surgery", and that they claim that surgical intervention is wholly unnecessary. Such is not the case. Surgery and homœopathy are not antagonistic, but complementary. Surgery is entirely mechanical, while homœopathy has to do with the building up of healthy tissues. If a patient is unfortunate enough to break a leg or rupture an ulcer in the stomach, the leg must be properly set, the hole in the stomach wall must be closed. This is the domain of surgery, but homœopathy can assist after the operation in making the patient more comfortable, and the healing process more rapid.

No qualified homœopathic practitioner would have the slightest hesitation in recommending and arranging for any surgical operation which he considered necessary. This an unqualified or "irregular" homœopath could not do, because no surgeon or specialist would agree, or even be permitted, to co-operate with an unqualified practitioner.

Attempts have also been made to stigmatise homœopathy as disreputable and not far removed from quackery. This is sheer nonsense, as people in all walks of life have chosen this form of treatment. It is well known that our Royal Family are treated by homœopathic methods, and His Majesty the King has honoured with his patronage The Royal London Homœopathic Hospital, of which H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester is President.

It cannot be too clearly understood that in order to become a homœopathic physician, the first essential is to become a fully qualified and registered medical practitioner. Homœopathic knowledge is, and must always be, additional to, and in no case a substitute for, orthodox medical training.

*By kind permission of Mr. James Robertson, M.B.E., J.P., of Glasgow.

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