

## THE CACTACEAE—ANNOTATIONS

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Pelikan has described in a most revealing way the particular genius or character of this strange family of American plants. A few comments may not be out of place and may help to indicate the value of his depiction for understanding and developing the materia medica as well as the processes of disease.

Two members of the family enter into medical consideration at present. The mescaline-containing Peyotl (*Anhalonium*) and the night-flowering *Cereus* (*Cactus grandiflorus*). They present a striking contrast in form, habitat, and action. The one growing in the dead wastes of Mexico, the other climbing up limestone cliffs on West Indian islands. The one a compressed, bulbous form on a substantial root, the other growing extended, snake-like, up the cliffs, with aerial roots springing forth at intervals. The one with almost exclusively mental symptoms resembling schizophrenia, the other with almost exclusively somatic symptoms of cramps in various organs, typically in the heart. It is also striking that it is the cramped form of the Peyotl which gives rise to hallucinations and the more freely growing *Cereus* that gives rise to cramps. The two phenomena obviously belong together as extreme limits of a spectrum.

Pelikan shows how the *Cactus* represents essentially a stem into which leaves have been withheld. As a stem it is naturally related to the rhythmic processes in man and particularly to the heart. Pelikan also indicates how from one side the heart gives a clue to the hallucinatory phenomena of mescaline. But there are other connections as well and we may succeed in bringing them out by consideration of other hallucinogenic substances.

L.S.D., as it is usually known, is derived from ergot, *Claviceps purpurea*, which grows as a fungus on rye, replacing a normal grain with its substitute growth. From it a wide range of active substances can be isolated. Our *Secale* acts mostly on the peripheral arteries of fingers and toes, giving rise to gangrene and sometimes helping remedially in such cases. It is a cramping of the arteries. Then ergometrine and ergotoxin act on smooth muscle, with contractions, cramps, of for instance the uterus. Ergotamine tartrate has come to be used in migraine, whether because of its cramping action on blood vessels in the head or not is not certain. Finally lysergic acid produces a full-blown hallucinatory psychosis.

Both ergot (*Secale*) and *Cactus* belong to the group of remedies which Paterson found associated with the bowel nosode *Proteus* which he characterized by the keynote Brainstorms. The main metal in this group is *Cuprum* which is characterized by cramps throughout its symptomatology and by violent rages. *Chamomilla* also comes in, together with *Ignatia* and *Natrum*

mur. With Coffea, also in this group, and the chemically related barbiturates we enter into the sphere of sleep and awaking forces. The relationship of Coffea and the barbiturates to urea is one of many indications relating this group of remedies to the kidney processes which in an extended sense can be seen together with the suprarenals and the kidney radiation described by Steiner. These are the forces through which the metabolic stream of substances are "astralized", awoken, raised to the level of sentient substance from a merely living, plant-like state. Some aspects of their action have been brought to light through all the work done in recent years on suprarenal functions. It is these same forces which entering too strongly and directly into the physical organism give rise to cramps. Further Treichler in his studies of schizophrenia has been led to see in these kidney radiations the dynamic source of some hallucinatory phenomena. So we are led to the realm of inter-relationship of the kidney and heart functions. Here it seems to me that Hyoscyamus and the other related plants throw light. Pelikan has also described the cramping of the growth of these plants by a deep intrusion of astral forces into their development. They do, I believe, belong to the *Proteus* group of Paterson though not specifically mentioned by him, but Hyoscyamus can also act as a remedy into the cardiac sphere.

I hope that these brief notes may help to bring a number of phenomena within a common viewpoint.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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#### NOTICE

As in the past years, the April 1979 issue of THE HAHNEMANNIAN GLEANINGS will be published as Hahnemann number to commemorate the 224th birth anniversary of Hahnemann. Articles highlighting Hahnemannian thinking are invited for publication in the special number so as to reach us before 20th February 1979.

—EDITOR