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HOMŒOPATHY, THE SCIENCE OF THERAPEUTICS

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I. SAMUEL HAHNEMANN, THE FATHER OF
HOMŒOPATHY

"It can be incontrovertibly proved, that every opponent of Hahnemann has been guilty of misrepresentation or error, of ignorance and mendacity, in his representation of Homœopathy — there is no exception to this." *Ameke.*

In determining the truth of a new idea, a new interpretation of something already known, the trustworthiness of a new system of philosophy, or a new system of medicine; some knowledge of its author is of great assistance. What has been his background? Is he conservative or inclined to jump at a conclusion? Has he in view the good of his fellow man, or his own personal aggrandizement? How do his ideas and conclusions compare with those arrived at by others during his time or, as in the case of Samuel Hahnemann, a century and a half afterwards?

Homœopathy is a system of therapeutics based on a law of nature, embodied in the formula, *similia similibus curantur*, "likes are cured by likes." This is not confined to medicine, for it is employed in certain phases of psychotherapeutics, electronics, molecular and atomic physics or thermodynamics.

No one knows when the Law of Similars was first used in the treatment of disease. Ancient Hindu manuscripts record its application in this field, it was known to Aristotle

and made use of in a crude way by Hippocrates in 400 B.C. Thus Hahnemann did not discover the Law, but was the first to give it practical application.

Samuel Friedrich Christian Hahnemann was born in Meissen, in the electorate of Saxony, April 10th, 1755. In his brief autobiography, he says: "My mother and father taught me to read and write whilst I was playing. My father, without being deeply versed in science, was a porcelain painter and the author of a brief treatise on water color painting. He had found for himself the soundest conceptions of that which was good. These ideas he implanted in me, to act and to live without pretense or show, and impressed me more by his example than by his words. Should I not follow him?"

"In his deeds he differentiated between noble and ignoble to so fine a degree of correctness and practical delicacy of feeling as was highly creditable to him; in this he also was my teacher. His ideas on the first principles of creation, the dignity of mankind and its lofty destiny, seemed consistent in every way with his mode of life. This was the foundation of my moral training.

"I spent several years in the Town School of Meissen and when about sixteen years of age I attended the Prince's School of the town." Here he proved himself an apt pupil and gained not only the respect of his fellow pupils and his teachers, especially that of the principal, who, as he says, "loved him as his own child." He was given practically free hand in the attendance at classes by the latter and authorized to teach the rudiments of the Greek language to some of his classmates. He was proficient in others of the ancient tongues, a fact which, as we will see later, was of great use to him in the years to come and led indirectly to his re-discovery of the Law of Similars and his momentous contributions to medicine.

"My father," Samuel continues, "did not want me to study at all. He repeatedly took me away from the town school for more than a year at a time, so that I might pur-

sue some business more suited to his income." But young Hahnemann was of a different mind, and studied surreptitiously by candle-light in an unused room of the house, often until the early morning hours.

But the elder Hahnemann was, unwittingly, partly responsible for his son's ardent desire to learn. Practically every evening, at the same hour, he would excuse himself from the friendly gathering at Frau Weber's and, when asked one night why he did this, the porcelain painter arose, his face smiling with the light of the high truths they had been considering, and with a parting bow, said, "Mein Herren, I must go and give my boy his lesson in thinking." Moreover, on Sunday afternoons and holidays, he took his son on long walks over the fields and through the woods, making nature his textbook. Dr. Samuel Jones, in his delightful little book, "The Porcelain Painter's Son", describes these outings in poetical vein, saying, "From flower and leaf, and bird, and beast, he had gotten his fresh and faithful designs for the pictures he painted on the porcelain vessels; and from long communion with nature he had learned something of the rare art of seeing. This he would fain teach his boy, leading his fresh young mind the while from the wonders of the created thing to the grandeur and Glory of the Creator. The boy's grave thoughtfulness, his curious questions and depth of thought and insight, filled his father with thankfulness."

The father's objection to his son's matriculation at the Prince's School was due chiefly to his inability to pay the tuition. For, after learning that all fees were to be remitted, and a long and rather stormy interview with Magister Mueller, in which the boy's sympathetic mother took a part, he gave his consent.

Nearly the whole village turned out to hear the porcelain painter's son read his graduation thesis, "On the Wonderful Construction of the Human Hand." They looked at one another, and at the young man, almost with incredulity to think that this was the boy who had grown up under

their very eyes, and yet could tell them so much about their hands of which they never dreamed! His father and his fellow porcelain painters staged a special celebration at the Wirthshaus. Truly he had taught his son to think, and had proved that he himself was not the typical German autocrat he seemed to be.

In the Spring of 1775, Samuel matriculated in the medical department of the University of Leipsic, where again he distinguished himself as a scholar and won the affection of his teachers, despite the fact that he frequently rejected their teachings and did not hesitate to say so. He had left Meissen with a meagre 20 thaler in his wallet, the last that he was to receive from his father. But Doctor Poerner, Counsellor of Mines at Meissen, was so pleased with the young man's graduating thesis, that he wrote to the faculty at Leipsic, recounting the unusual qualifications of the new matriculate and every one of the professors remitted his fee. By giving private lessons in Greek and French, and translating books for the booksellers, Samuel was able to meet the cost of lodgings and other necessities.

Since the Leipsic University had no clinical facilities and the lectures did not accord with his way of thinking, he remained there only two years, and journeying to Vienna, he entered the Hospital of the Brothers of Mercy in Leopoldstadt. Here again he won the affectionate regard of his superiors, especially of Dr. von Quarin, physician-in-ordinary to the family of the Prince. He was the only one who was allowed to accompany the doctor on his rounds. Thus he acquired the practical knowledge that Leipsic could not give him.

Later, in 1777, we find him in Hermannstadt where he remained another two years, meantime earning his livelihood by serving as family physician and librarian of Baron von Brukenstahl, governor of Transylvania, a position he obtained through an introduction to Quarin by the latter's son, also a student of medicine. Finally, after attending

the Summer Term at Erlangen, in 1779, he received his diploma of doctor of medicine.

It is not necessary to follow Hahnemann in his wanderings during the next ten years, except to say that he practiced in Hettstadt for nine months, only to find that this small town had little need for a doctor, and when he was offered the position of District Physician in Gommern, he accepted it, and moved there the latter part of 1781. Within a year, he married Henriette Kuechler, the step-daughter of a Dessau pharmacist and soon began to raise a family, for in 1783 she presented him with a daughter. Nine more children were to follow, the last two being twins; one of them died early in life. But his modest stipend as District Physician at Gommern was not sufficient to support his growing family, so he moved to Dresden. Next we find him in Leipsic, then in Gotha, Georgenthal, Molschlegen, Goettingen, Pyrmont, Wolfenbuettel, Brunswick, Koenigs-lutter, Hamburg-Altona, Moellin, Machern Eilenburg, Dessau and then to Torgau, always with the burden of poverty on his shoulders like "the old man of the sea," always thinking and studying, searching for that open sesame for the cure of the sick. For, as he wrote in later years, "The Lord is too merciful to allow his children to suffer without providing the remedy and I do not know what that remedy is."

As health commissioner at Gommern, Hahnemann had more time for writing, study, and the translation of books. His contribution to the science of chemistry, which was then in its infancy, won the praise of a number of noted physicians and scientists. His papers, published for the most part in Hufeland's *Journal*, were widely read and appreciated. He was elected honorary member by more than one noted society. He was instrumental in the establishment of more humane treatment of the insane, who, up to that time, were chained like convicts to the floor in filthy dungeons. But, despite his growing reputation as scientist and physician, he continued to go from place to place.

Enroute from Gommern to Dresden, with his household goods, his wife and eight children, the wagon upset and rolled down an embankment into a creek. His infant son was so severely injured that he died a short time afterwards; an older daughter broke her arm, and as if this were not enough, some of the precious household goods were badly damaged by water. They were taken by some peasants to a nearby village where they remained until the little girl could travel again. This was in 1789.

In commenting on this period of Hahnemann's life, Jones exclaims, "O ye who would go smoothly through this earthly existence, swim with the tide, spread your sail to catch the trade winds; ask no troublesome questions; let others do the deep thinking and the challenging of the old beliefs. The porcelain painter's son had asked too many questions and still each day brought a new one, deeper reaching and more perplexing—Day after day his doubts grew stronger, and in vain did he say to himself: 'It is not I who am at fault; it is the art of medicine that is wrong—If I think that the sick will fare better without our haphazard medicines—and in my heart I do so think—why do I practice? Am I honest in so doing? I know that I can prescribe as skilfully as the best of those who now give medicine; but if I am convinced that the sick will do better with no medicine at all—God help me! I will practice no more.'" The porcelain painter's son was indeed in deep despair. Many years afterwards he wrote: "I became very uneasy in my conscience about treating the unknown diseased conditions with these unknown medicines-powerful agents which, if they did not exactly suit the case, might change life to death. It is to me a most fearsome thought that I might in this way become a murderer or endanger the lives of my brethren." (Extract from a letter to a noted physician). Thus Hahnemann arrived at the decision to give up practice and to occupy himself "merely with chemistry and writing." But it was translating that showed him the way to the question that he had asked himself a hundred times

—the answer that he had sought throughout all the years of his vicissitudes and the underlying cause of his wanderings over the face of the earth. He was convinced that Providence had intrusted him with a mission and that it was his duty to fulfil it. But there was another duty of almost equal importance, the care and support of his family. He moved from pillar to post, seeking the location that would yield an income for the support of both.

The fame of William Cullen as a physician was second only to that of the great anatomist, Hermann Boerhaave. In 1790, while Hahnemann was still in Leipsic, an enterprising German publisher placed in the hands of his "hack," the Scottish professor's latest work, entitled, "Treaties of the Materia Medica." Hahnemann at once began to translate it into German. As was usual, every paragraph received his most careful scrutiny; and one especially, gave him food for thought. It gave Cullen's attempt to explain how the bark of the cinchona tree, (from which quinine is now extracted), cured malaria. In the author's opinion, it strengthened the stomach and thus gave the body the power to throw off the disease. To the keen mind of the translator, this seemed fantastic. And then the idea occurred to him, that he might be able to disprove Cullen's theory, if he tried the drug on himself. When it produced on him almost a perfect picture of malarial fever, another and brighter idea, as if by inspiration, entered his mind, namely to test other drugs in the same way. They too produced each its own peculiar artificial disease. By his unusual linguistic attainments he was able to make an intensive survey of the entire realm of medical literature. He found that Arabian, Greek, Roman and Jewish literature recorded cure after cure by the use of the very same drugs that had produced in him the likeness of the diseases they had cured. In addition, he discovered that Hippocrates had made use of the same formula that he had himself reached by pure, Baconian investigation; that the distinguished Haller had advocated the testing of drugs on healthy indi-

viduals and Paracelsus and a few others had had some knowledge of it.

Words cannot express Hahnemann's joy; his question had at last been answered. The fulfilment of his mission lay before him. "Then," he says, "dawned to me the first ray of that method of curing which was soon to brighten into the most splendid day."

But Hahnemann's joy was not altogether unalloyed, for in the same year his mother passed into the other world. But he could not forget his grief for the time being in the work that lay before him. Securing the consent of a group of his friends and some of his family to act as "provers", he added a few more remedies to his rather meagre armamentarium, and immediately began putting it to the test.

Does Hahnemann prove up to the qualifications of a conscientious and self-forgetful discoverer? If we could have any doubt about it, his future proves that he does. It is to his everlasting credit that he did not announce his new method of treating disease from the house-tops, but again took up the practice of medicine with a new and unwanted zest. It was six years before he wrote his first thesis entitled "Essay on a New Principle for Ascertaining the Curative Powers of Drugs." It gave more or less of a general outline. Not until 1805 did he find himself prepared to publish a more complete account of the rules and principles of his new system, which he did in an issue of Hufeland's *Journal* of that year under the caption "The Medicine of Experience." His crowning work, the *Organon of Healing* was not published until 1810, five years later. His great work on *The Nature of Chronic Diseases*, was published serially in five parts, beginning in 1829. It dealt with what he called the three chronic "miasms," psora, due to the suppression of skin diseases and the root of all chronic diseases, and constitutional taints from centuries of the driving in of the social diseases, syphilis and sycosis. It added much to homœopathic philosophy and technic.

Hahnemann was grieved and disappointed when his associates of the old school refused to adopt his new system of medicine ; but he failed to realize that, under the circumstances and due to the revolutionary character of his opinions, he could not but share the fate of all innovators and champions of new ideas. He had been the "medical rebel," as Gumpert called him, ever since his student days and had to take the consequences. His growing reputation as an author and physician excited the envy of his fellow practitioners. His sharp criticism of polypharmacy, of blood-letting, blistering, setons and other barbarous practices then in vogue, stirred the ire of those who used them. They attacked not only his doctrines, but by lies and misrepresentations, branded him a charlatan, imposter and swindler. From the appearance of Hahnemann's first essay in 1796, these attacks grew more and more vicious, reaching their acme after the publication of the *Organon* in 1810. Naturally, the apothecaries were among the most malicious of Hahnemann's enemies for they realized that, if his method of treatment were generally adopted, they would be forced out of business. When he was in Leipsic, in 1820, they haled him into court on the plea that it was unlawful for any physician to manufacture and dispense his own medicines. When he defended himself successfully, they joined with the city council in the passage of a law prohibiting the practice, a law which remains in effect at this day. But within a year Hahnemann moved to Koethen. Here, at last, despite continued attacks by his enemies, he lived in peace and enjoyed a happy life with his family for nine years. Then in March, 1830, his wife died. Undoubtedly he was deeply grieved, for Frau Hahnemann, whom Brunnow had called a "chiding Xantippe," had many good qualities ; she was a loving mother, an efficient housewife, and a loyal supporter during their long years of wandering and abject poverty.

Four years later a beautiful French woman came into Hahnemann's office. She had read a French edition of the

Organon and decided to try Homœopathy for treatment. The doctor was deeply impressed by her keen mind and very evident interest in medicine. Gradually friendship and mutual interest ripened into love. They were married in June, 1835. It was not difficult for the beautiful woman of, perhaps 35, to persuade the old man of 80 to leave his fatherland, his old friends and loyal disciples, yet where he had suffered so much humiliation and shameful persecution, and take up his abode in Paris. And how different it was! Instead of the frugal life, the incessant toil, the burning of the midnight oil, he now lived in comparative luxury, in a richly furnished mansion with numerous servants at his command, and in time, the curbstone in front of his residence was lined with the carriages of the elite, who had accepted him as one of their own, with whom he attended concerts, theatrical performances and social gatherings. His work was made less burdensome by his gifted wife, who acted as his assistant and very efficient secretary. He was received with open arms by the homœopaths in Paris. Melanie, through her influence in upper circles, obtained a royal decree giving him the right to practice in France.

Hahnemann died on July 2nd, 1843, at the ripe old age of 88.

—*The Layman Speaks, March, 1954.*

MERCURIUS CYANATUS

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The Homœopathic Pharmacopœia of the United States :
Description.—Colorless, odorless prisms, having an extremely bitter, metallic taste. Soluble at 15°C. in 12.8 parts of water and in 15 parts of alcohol. When submitted to heat it decomposes into metallic mercury and cyanogen gas, burning with a purple flame. Maximum dose 1/8 grain.