

THE HAHNEMANNIAN GLEANINGS

Vol. LI

APRIL 1984

No. 4

EDITORIAL

HAHNEMANN AS MEDICAL OBSERVER

Every year we celebrate Hahnemann's birth anniversary in the month of April and all of us will celebrate it this year too.

Most of us have read his life, his struggle in the process of truth seeking and in alleviating human sufferings. What we have to say may not be something unheard of but, we feel that it is necessary to highlight the real quality of Hahnemann as an observer, which we all should try to acquire and emulate in our practice.

Before entering into homoeopathic practice Hahnemann had already made a mark as a reputed chemist-physician.

He contradicted Cullen's opinion that china (cinchona bark preparation) helped in intermittent fever because it was a tonic and good for the stomach. He experimented on himself and took four grains of good cinchona twice daily for several days, till he produced the symptoms of intermittent fever. He thus formed his own opinion and judgment on intermittent fever. Similarly, he tried other substances like arsenic that was capable of causing a kind of fever which, he found, also alleviated the fever. His observation led to the most important maxim *similia similibus curentur*.

Much before this, he had also observed that many of the chest complaints of the people of a locality were the result of bituminous coal that was burned, from which the people of other area where wood was burned were free. He said that a peculiar oil bergol was in the coal, which was responsible for those chest complaints. He had suggested that the same oil could cure those conditions. Jenner had observed that cow-pox could produce immunity against smallpox. On the same matter Hahnemann had observed: "In conformity with my well-known assumption, cow-pox, a rash where pustule erupt on the sixth day following inoculation and are surrounded by pink inflammation accompanied by swollen and painful axillary glands, back and lumbar pains and fever. This is a disease similar to smallpox and can be used as an important preventive remedy for smallpox."

Hahnemann was a reputed chemist and had a lot to say in the matters of chemistry during his times. He mentioned that chemistry could never be

banned from the field of medicine, though everyone was trying to make use of chemistry, as discoverer of healing powers of medicine, especially those derived from plants. With the help of chemistry, palliative remedies for relief of pains caused by gastric acid or for swallowed poisons could be found. Sulphur could be a useful remedy for metallic poisons. Chemistry could also be able to produce clean air, and its effects on the body could be determined by physiologists and clinicians. He claimed that temporary remedies could be useful to alleviate the obstacles of convalescence until nature could take over on its own, as long as no rapidly effective cure was to be had. Hahnemann claimed that so-called antiseptic remedies did not prove to be as antiseptic in the body as they were in the test tube. He had shown that for instance, nitrate which had such an antiseptic effect outside the body was harmful when applied in putrid fever.

He also criticised those physicians who claimed that disorders of the body were because of lack or excess of oxygen, caloric or hydrogen, etc. and in the hope of curing these various conditions of diseases applied the corresponding corrective measures. He finally insisted that the general practitioner should be capable of thinking and acting independently. He added that the physicians were not only to get detached from popular old fashioned elixirs as they could be procured in the apothecaries, but were also to record all their observations during the treatment to be able to account for any success or failure in their therapy at a later date.

Because of these radical views he was driven from place to place by apothecaries. But he stuck to his own thinking and practised truthfully.

The views and opinions expressed by the authors of articles published in this journal are not necessarily those of the editor and publishers.