

THE
STUDY
OF
MATERIA MEDICA
AND
TAKING THE CASE

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THIRD EDITION

(ENLARGED)



B. Jain Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
New Delhi (India)

THE STUDY OF MATERIA MEDICA

Our pathogeneses, in spite of showing many features due to the provers' idiosyncracies, the translator's command of idioms, clinical experiences and misinterpretations, are nevertheless excellent resumes which place the key-notes in their true light, as points of departure only, for their abuse distorts nature's image and often brings disaster which ends in skepticism or mongrelism. A concise view not only includes the time and order in which symptoms arise, but also the things which modify them—the modalities.

Boenninghausen saw and corrected the tendency of Homeopathy to pay too much attention to subjective sensations while it lacked the firm support of etiologic factors and the modalities, which afford so many objective and distinctly certain criteria. The triumphs of similia in the diseases of children and insanity certainly show how vastly important they may be, for no judgment can pay it a handsomer compliment than to speak of its especial adaptability to children and old people.

From a very few provings, in which he saw but a small part of the immense circle of similia, Hahnemann predicted, its amplitude, and finally gave us the immeasurable power of potentization; a scientific demonstration which rests therapy firmly upon experiment and dispenses with learning our symptomatology by rote.

Study shows every drug to be a living, moving conception with attributes which arise, develop, ex-

pand and pass away just as diseases do ; each holding its characteristics true through an ever widening scope, to its last expression in the highest potencies. The homœopathist is a true scientist, in that he spares no pains to learn the nature of this individuality ; it lifts him above doing piece-meal work and the restraint of nosological ideas. Everyday practice, too often, never gets beyond the simple lessons of students life and they remain the doctor's only resource. This is very wrong and acts as a constant handicap. The true physician is the man who knows how to make the best cures and the most expert healer is the man who knows best how to handle his materia medica. The faculty of mastering it is not dependent upon encyclopædic memory, but rather upon the inquisitor's ability to pick out from among the essential embodiments of each picture the things which show how it exists, moves and has its being, as distinguished from its nearest similar. That a mental variation should be the determining factor is therefore not strange, for are not minute differences the very essence of science ?

It is very useful to have an idea of the relative values of related remedies, for in essence each portrays a certain type, with variations which relate it to its complementaries, thus dovetailing into each other. The effect of material doses simulates acute diseases while the potencies bring out finer effects, although this is not an invariable rule.

A knowledge of many symptoms is of small value, while on the other hand learning how to examine a patient and then to find the remedy is of the

utmost importance. The common way of eliciting well-known **key-notes** and prescribing accordingly is a most pernicious practice, which has earned a deserved odium and is no improvement upon the theoretical methods of the old school.

To be ruled by clinical observations and pathological guesses is a most disastrous error which limits our action and only obscures the wonderful power of which the true similitum is capable. Such reports mostly lack individuality and at best describe only end products ; standing in strong contrast to those expressions which reveal the real mind, whether in actions, words or speech. The recital of cured cases only shows what can be done, but not how to do it.

To do the best work, nothing must prevent a full, free and frank presentation of the symptoms as they are, without bias, and although their comprehension necessarily involves judgment, the more clearly they follow the text, the greater is their similitude, hence usefulness. Hahnemann showed rare acumen in setting down each expression in a personal way, thus securing scientific as well as psychical accuracy.

The patient's relative sensitiveness is a very material help in separating remedies. The alertness of drugs like *Aconite* or *Coffea* is just the reverse of the dulness of *Gelsemium*, *Phosphoric acid* and the like, and yet fright may cause the oversensitiveness of the former as well as the depression of *Opium*. If stupidity be due to high temperature or an overwhelming intoxication we don't