

HERING'S PREFACE TO HAHNEMANN'S *CHRONIC DISEASES*

Introduction

Hering was first and foremost Hahnemann's most ardent follower in America. At the same time, being of independent mind, he was also from time to time critical of Hahnemann and so helped Hahnemann develop his theories. This was all done by correspondence, I do not think that they ever met. But so much were they closely aligned that Melanie Hahnemann invited Hering to Paris after Hahnemann's death, to take over his practice, but he declined. His great preface enhances the theoretical introduction to the *Chronic Diseases* of 1828, published in 1845 so soon after Hahnemann's death in 1843 that they must have corresponded about the innovatory rule of the direction of cure.¹

The following sketch by American physician and historian Dr Thomas Lindsay Bradford (who received his degree from the Homoeopathic Medical College of Pennsylvania (HMCP) in 1869 under the tutelage of Adolphus Lippe) was published in the *Hahnemannian Monthly* shortly after Hering's death.

About Dr Constantine Hering (1800–1880)^{2,3}

Suddenly, at half past ten o'clock, on the evening of July 23rd, Dr Constantine Hering departed this life in the eighty-first year of his age. Thus departed one to whom Homoeopathy in America – yea, in the whole world – will ever remain a debtor. During the past decade the doctor has at times suffered quite severely from asthma, though for several years past the attacks have been less severe, so that he has been enabled to attend almost daily upon a large circle of patients.

East, West, North, and South, Europe and America, have among their busy practitioners many who look toward the home of this truly great man as toward the home of a father. Hundreds have shared with him the entire wondrous store of knowledge which he possessed. Many came; none were

sent empty away. Their capacity to receive, rather than in his willingness to give limited the amount bestowed. Blessings will ever attend name.

Constantine Hering was born at Oschatz, Saxony, on Jan. 1. 1800. From earliest childhood he evinced an extreme desire to investigate all things. Apt as a scholar, he soon mastered the preliminary studies, and was prepared at an early age to enter the Classical School at Zittau. Here he continued his studies from 1811 to 1817. He completed his medical studies, and received the degree of Doctor of Medicine from the University of Wurzburg, March 23, 1826. Soon after his graduation he was appointed by the king of Saxony to accompany the Saxon legation to Dutch Guiana, there to make scientific research and prepare a zoological collection for his government. He continued in this capacity for some years, but his love for the new truth which he had learned impelled him to further study, and finally to the practice of medicine according to Hahnemann's doctrines. Such was his success that he gained great favour with the governor of the province, whose daughter he cured of an affection which the resident physicians had declared incurable.

During his residence at Surinam he was an occasional contributor to the *Homoeopathic Archives*, for which journal he had written as early as 1825, while still a student of medicine. The court physician, learning of this, wrought upon the king sufficiently to cause a notice to be sent Hering, directing him to attend to the duties of his appointment, and let medical matters alone.



Figure 4.1 Constantine Hering in his early years

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His independent nature rebelled at such intolerance, and led him promptly to resign his appointment. Dr George H. Bute, formerly a Moravian missionary at Surinam, and a pupil of Hering, had settled in Philadelphia, and was engaged in the practice of homoeopathy. Learning from Dr Bute that Philadelphia offered a good field; Hering left Surinam and landed at Philadelphia, January 1833. Here he remained for a short season, when he was induced by Dr W. Wesselhoeft to assist in the establishment of a homoeopathic school at Allentown, the North American Academy of the Homoeopathic Healing Art. He laboured in this field until financial embarrassments necessitated the abandonment of the institution.

This led to his return to Philadelphia, where he engaged in practice with Dr Bute, locating on Vine Street, below Fourth. Here he soon acquired a large and lucrative practice.

Though conducting a large practice, he found time to write much, and to superintend the work of many younger and less experienced. His Saturday-night meeting, held for the instruction of students and young practitioners, were prized as a boon. Here he imparted golden truths, reaped from fields of ripe experience such as but few have enjoyed.

Hering's Law of the direction of cure

This law is one of the more mysterious concepts of homeopathy to those who have not studied it, and I have not found any published work that verifies or challenges its existence. Yet to a homeopath it is the benchmark by which to assess the progress of a patient before treatment, and at the second or subsequent follow up consultation. It is mysterious in that most homeopaths learn it from a teacher or a book at two or twenty-two times removed from the original. We are taught that cure comes from the top down, from the inside out, from more to less important organs, and in reverse over time. We are not usually taught that cure is only confirmed when the symptoms are observed to return to the surface with a palpable skin lesion. This is because the essay by Hering had disappeared from the literature. Hering's original explanation appears in this chapter.

We have no evidence that Freud knew of the rule of the direction of cure, but he wrote on the case of Anna, with reference to 'hysteria':

Thus it was necessary to reproduce the whole chain of pathogenic memories in chronological order, the latest ones first and the earlier ones last; and it was quite impossible to jump over the later traumas in order to get back more quickly to the first, which was often the most potent one.⁴

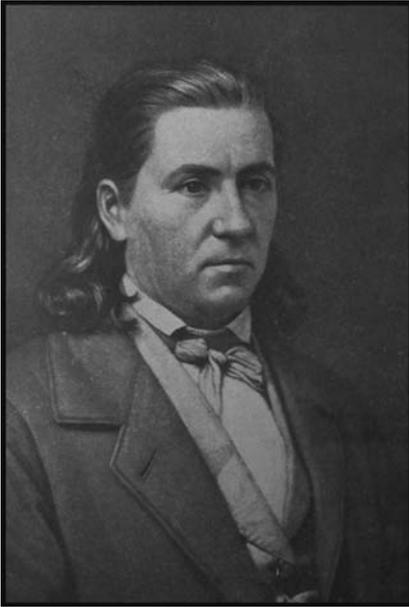


Figure 4.2 Constantine Hering in his later years

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Hering presumably wrote his observations at some point between 1828 and 1845, when they were published in a translation of the first edition of Hahnemann's *Chronic Diseases* – 1828 – in English. In 1896 a second edition omitted these observations and the original statement faded from view. As the major scholar and leader of North American homeopathy until his death in 1880, his writings were important and are still used today. He proved the first nosodes, medicines from the products of diseases, of anthrax⁵ and of rabies.⁶ One can assume that Hahnemann knew of this observation by Hering as they were close correspondents. An account of Hering's life follows,⁷ and the story of the direction of cure is here in its original formulation. I should like to see the creation and implementation of a test to verify the truth of this observation, which would also satisfy the supporters of evidence based medicine.

Dr Hering's Preface to *The Chronic Diseases; their specific nature and homoeopathic treatment* by Samuel Hahnemann, 1828⁸

The following article has, been kindly furnished by Dr Constantine Hering of Philadelphia, in German. The Editor (Charles Hempel) is responsible for the translation

Text of preface

Hahnemann's work on chronic diseases may be considered a continuation of his *Organon*; the medicines which will follow the present volume may therefore be

considered a continuation of his *Materia Medica Pura*. As the principles and rules of general therapeutics have been developed in the *Organon*, so does Hahnemann develop, in the present treatise, the principles and rules which ought too prevail in the treatment of chronic diseases, whose name is legion. In the *Materia Medica Pura* Hahnemann describes to us the symptoms which the general remedies that he tried upon healthy persons are capable of producing; the present treatise, on the contrary, will be succeeded by an account of those remedies which Hahnemann especially employed in the treatment of chronic diseases, and which he therefore called *antipsorics*. In the *Organon*, Hahnemann tries to establish the fact that the principle "similia similibus curentur" is the supreme rule in every true method of cure, and he shows how this rule is to be followed in the treatment of disease; whereas in his treatise on the chronic diseases, which is based upon the *Organon* and does in the least, modify or alter its teachings, Hahnemann shows that as most chronic disease originate in a common source and are related amongst each other, a special class of remedies designated by Hahnemann as "anti-psoric" should be used in the treatment of those diseases. The common source of most chronic diseases, according to Hahnemann, is *psora*.

The shallow opponents of homoeopathy – and we never had any other – pounced upon the theory of the psoric miasm with a view of attacking it with their hollow and unmeaning sarcasms. Taking *psora* to be identical with itch, they sneeringly pretended that according to Hahnemann's doctrine the itch was the primitive evil, and that this doctrine was akin to the doctrine of the original sin recognised by the Christian faith.*

As it would be absurd for a philosophical Christian to reject the doctrine of original sin, so it is absurd for any one who professes to have a clear perception of homoeopathy to reject the doctrine of hereditary morbidic miasm. Both these doctrines must stand and fall together, and, as truth is one and indivisible, they both hold and illustrate each other. If we admit with Rousseau that everything which leaves the hand of God is perfectly holy, then the first created man must have been perfectly pure, and must have appeared in the image and likeness of his maker. It seems to me absurd to suppose that something perfectly pure can, of itself, by its own free and orderly development produce things impure and evil. We do not know how far God permitted an *adaptation to evil* to co-exist in the first man together with an adaptation to goodness. But we certainly know that the evil fruits must be the result of evil forces. In a certain moment man or God through man, permitted the adaptation to evil to prevail in his nature; and instantaneously the forces of evil, be they called serpent, devil, or otherwise, invaded man's nature, engrafted themselves upon it, and have up to this moment perpetuated their existence in it. This is, relatively speaking, a fall, although this fall, having been the first necessary phase of human development, may, in reality, be considered a progress. Man's destiny consists in reuniting himself again with the Divine Life through the

dyspepsia, liver-complaint? Does it avail the patient any to be able to repeat his doctor's *ipse dixit* "that he is bilious, nervous, etc." Do these words mean anything definite? Are there yet physicians foolish enough to believe that their speculative explanations mean anything? Does not every body acknowledge that they are mere *ignes fatui* flitting to and fro upon the quagmire of the old decayed systems of pathology?

Assuredly, a physician of modern date, who has not remained altogether ignorant, would be ashamed of assuring his patients, with the air of a deep thinker, that one has a disease of spine, another consumption, a third a uterine affection. Every tyro in pathology knows that all this means nothing definite, and that it is only to very ignorant persons that such assertions, can be given as science. Every tyro knows that the question is, to find out what are the symptoms and the nature of that disease of the spine or the uterus. It is moreover known that this more precise knowledge is necessary as respects prognosis, and for the purpose of regulating the mode of life of the patient; but it is also settled that to know merely the variety, to which the disease belongs, is not sufficient to cure it. All the successful and celebrated practitioners of the old school have been such as have constantly modified and individualised the treatment of disease. This is all that Hahnemann has tried to accomplish; with this difference, that he has individualised every case of disease with much more precision than any of the older physicians had done. Hahnemann had courage enough at once to face the contradictions which constantly existed between practice and theory; he declared that the speculative knowledge of physicians was merely learned dust which they were in the habit of throwing into the people's eyes for the purpose of blinding them and inducing them to consider the ignorance of the doctors and the insufficiency of their knowledge as something respectable. Hahnemann dared to lay down this maxim: that, in treating disease, he had nothing to do with its name.

Hahnemann teaches that the remedies should be chosen according to the symptoms of the patient. The physician should be governed by what is certain and safe, not by that which is more or less uncertain and unsafe, and which is changed according to fashion. Both in the *Organon* and in his treatise on the chronic diseases, Hahnemann insists upon the remedies being chosen in accordance with the symptoms.

It is not an easy matter to choose a remedy according to symptoms. This may be inferred from the manner in which tyros in homoeopathy, and physicians in the old school who came over to us, go to work. They constantly rely upon names, giving a certain remedy in scarlet fever, because someone else had found it useful; or a certain remedy in pulmonary inflammation, because it had been successfully exhibited upon a former occasion; whereas Hahnemann teaches that because a remedy has helped before this is no reason why it should help again in a similar disease. The symptoms and not the name are to point out the remedy.

of science there will be those great days of harvest, when the tares shall be gathered in bundles and thrown into the fire.

It is the duty of all of us to go farther in the theory and practice of homoeopathy than Hahnemann has done. We ought to seek the truth which is before us and forsake the errors of the past. But woe unto him who, on that account, should personally attack the author of our doctrine; he will burden himself with infamy. Hahnemann was a great servant, inquirer and discoverer; he was as true a man, without falsity, candid and open as a child, and inspired with pure benevolence and with a holy zeal for science.

When at last the fatal hour had struck for the sublime old man who had preserved his vigour almost to his last moments, then it was that the heart of his consort who had made his last years the brightest of his life was on the point of breaking. Many of us, seeing those who are dearest to us engaged in the death-struggle, would exclaim why should'st thou suffer so much ! So too exclaimed Hahnemann's consort: "Why should'st thou who hast alleviated so much suffering suffer in thy last hour? This is unjust. Providence should have allotted to thee a painless death."

Then he raised his voice as he had often done when he exhorted his disciples to hold fast to the great principles of homoeopathy. "Why should I have been thus extinguished? Each of us should here attend to the duties which God has imposed upon him. Although men may distinguish a more or less, yet no one has any merit. God owes nothing to me, I to him all."

With these words he took leave of the world, of his friends, and his foes. And here we take leave of you, reader, whether our friend or our opponent.

To him who believes that there may yet be truths which he does not know and which he desires to know, will be pointed out such paths as will lead him to the light he needs. If he who has sincere benevolence and wishes to work for the benefit of all be considered by Providence a fit instrument for the accomplishment of the divine will, he will be called upon to fulfil his mission and will be led to truth evermore.

It is the spirit of Truth that tries to unite us all; but the father of Lies keeps us separate and divided.

Constantine Hering, Philadelphia, April 22, 1845

* **Editor's Note:** I beg pardon of my distinguished and learned friend for annexing a few remarks to this passage. In doing so I merely anticipate what I intend to express more fully on this subject some other occasion.

References

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- 2 Bradford, TL. *Pioneers of Homoeopathy*, Philadelphia, Boericke & Tafel, 1897.
- 3 Cleave, E. *Biographical Cyclopædia of Homoeopathic Physicians and Surgeons*, Philadelphia, Galaxy Publishing, 1873
- 4 Freud, S. in: Strachey, J. ed. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Vol. XI*, Hogarth Press, London, p. 18. (*First Lecture on Psychoanalysis in his Five Lectures.*) 2001. I am indebted to Annette Gamblin RSHom, for drawing my attention to this statement.
- 5 Allen, HC. *Materia Medica of the Nosodes*, Philadelphia, Boericke & Tafel. 1910, 'The first preparation was made according to Hering's propositions [laid down in Stapf's Archives, 1830]'
- 6 *Ibid.* 'Introduced and proved by Hering in 1833, fifty years before the crude experiments of Pasteur with the serum.'
- 7 Knerr, CB. *Life of Hering*, Philadelphia PA, Magee Press 1940; see also: Raue, CG, et. al., 1884.
- 8 Hahnemann, S. (trans. Hempel, C.) 1828, *The Chronic Diseases, their Specific Nature and Homoeopathic Treatment 1828*, New York, William Radde, 1845. This Preface was omitted from the 2nd edition: *Chronic Diseases, Their Peculiar Nature and Their Homoeopathic Cure 1833* (trans. Tafel, LH.), Boericke & Tafel, Philadelphia, 1896.