

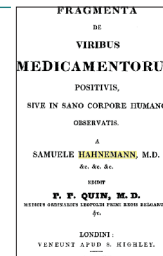
BOOK REVIEW

Fragmenta de viribus medicamentorum positivis sive in sano corpore humano observatis

Author: Dr. Samuel Hahnemann

Language: Original published in Latin

Published by: M/s Sumpter Joan Ambrose Barthi, Leipzig



Dr Samuel Hahnemann, contributed to the homoeopathic profession many writings that are of immense value and medical interest. One such writing is "Fragmenta de viribus medicamentorum positivis sive in sano corpore humano observatis" which is the first pharmacographic work of Dr Samuel Hahnemann written in Latin and published by M/s Sumpter Joan Ambrose Barthi, Leipzig in 1805. In the same year, few other important books; i.e. 'The Medicine of Experience' and 'Aesculapius in the Balance' were also published by Hahnemann.

Fragmenta de viribus medicamentorum positivis sive in sano corpore humano observatis is the first collection ever made of provings of medicines upon the healthy body, and contains the records of the symptoms produced during drug proving by Hahnemann and fellow provers. Thus, it became the an original source of reference for homoeopathic for drug proving studies.

After the discovery of the healing principle in 1796, Hahnemann collected the effects of injurious medicines and poisons from all old and recent literatures that were available in his time. He collected the information published between 1796-98 and prepared a fairly usable materia medica, and began to treat patients according to his newly

discovered therapeutic principle. However, soon he realized that the exact reports of others were inadequate, inaccurate and unreliable. He started the trial on himself to prove several drugs on the healthy human beings. He began to test other contemporary drugs such as *Belladonna*, *Camphora* and *Aconitum* on himself, and on his family members. This tireless, constant effort resulted in the publication of this work. In *Organon of medicine*, § 109 footnote 3, it is mentioned- 'The first fruits of these labours, as perfect as they could be at that time, I recorded in the *Fragmenta de viribus medicamentorum positivis, sive in sano corpore humano observatis*, pts. i, ii, Lipsiae, 8, 1805 ap. J. A. Barth.'

The meaning of the title of the book is 'Fragmentary observation relative to positive power of medicine on human body'.

The book is divided into two main parts. First part (*Pars Prima*) - *Materia Medica* has 8 pages of introduction and 269 pages TEXTUS or main text. Part 2 (*Pars Secunda*) - *Repertory or Index*- with 6 pages of preface and repertory of 470 pages (Word-index).

Pars Prima has undergone two editions in Latin. First - was published by *Typis Observatoris Medici per socium mirandum dianctis*, Neapoli in 1824, and second, edited by Fredric Hervey Foster Quin, MD in England was published in 1834. which has 214 pages.

Few translations of the book were also made in German and French. *Fragments sur les effets positives des medicaments observes chez l'homme sin*, *Pars Prima* was translated by Champaeux and Milcent in French in 1855 and it was published at Brussels.

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Quick Response Code:	Website: www.ijrh.org
	DOI: 10.4103/0974-7168.141742

This translation was reprinted in 1958. Marion Wetterman translated this into German in 2000, as "*Fragmenta de viribus medicamentorum*"- the first homeopathic materia medica, Faculty of Medicine, Eberhard-Karls- University, Tübingen.

This book contains the pathogenesis of 27 medicines. The source of symptoms of these drugs being the symptoms observed partly by proving on Hahnemann himself and collected from toxicological observations of others. In the *Pars Prima* (Materia Medica), at first, observation of Hahnemann is mentioned followed by observation of other authorities is given under each drug. The 27 drugs listed in *Fragmenta* are *Aconitum napellus*, *Acris tinctura* (Causticum), *Arnica montana*, *Atropa belladonna*, *Laurus camphora*, *Lytta vesicatoria* (Cantharides), *Capsicum annuum*, *Matricaria chamomilla*, *Cinchona officinalis*, *Menispermum cocculus*, *Copaifera balsamum* (Copaiva), *Cuprum vitriolatum* (Cuprum), *Digitalis purpurea*, *Drosera rotundifolia*, *Hyoscyamus niger*, *Ignatia amara*, *Ipecacuanha*, *Ledum palustre*, *Helleborus niger* (Melampodium), *Daphne mezereum*, *Strychnos nux vomica*, *Papaver somniferum* (Opium), *Anemone pratensis* (Pulsatilla), *Rheum*, *Datura stramonium* (Stramonium), *Valeriana officinalis* and *Veratrum album*. Of these, 24 drugs are from vegetable kingdom, 1 from animal kingdom and 2 are from minerals. Dr Hahnemann recorded maximum symptoms in *Pulsatilla* (280) and minimum in *Copaifera balsamum* (17). Out of the 27 drugs, 22 were incorporated into *Reine Arzneimittellehre*. Of the remaining 5, *Cuprum* and *Mezerium* appeared later in the second edition of *Die Chronischen Krankheiten* Vol. 3 (1837) and Vol. 4 (1838) respectively, whilst *Cantharis*, *Copaiva*, and *Valeriana* were not furthered by Hahnemann.

In 1796, Hahnemann writes, 'A complete collection of such observation, with remarks on the degree of reliance to be placed on their reporters, would, if I mistake not, be the foundation stone of a materia medica, the sacred book of its revelation'. The more obvious and striking symptoms must be recorded in the list; dubious symptoms should be marked with the sign of dubiety, until they have frequently been confirmed. He also stated that if some little circumstance happened during the experiment, which could be expected to interfere with the effect of medicinal action, the symptoms subsequently noticed were enclosed within brackets as not certainly pure. The above mentioned concepts were applied in this book and the following typography was used:

- 0 – Symptom enclosed in (parenthesis), indicates degree of uncertainty
- 1 – Symptom in normal type, means rarely found
- 2 – Symptom in CAPITALS, means of certainty.

This system of grading, the proving symptoms, had two significant benefits. Firstly, as a meaningful index, particularly for new medicines, their reliance for one or other complaint could be weighted according to such initial gradation of their proving symptoms. Secondly, a symptom could be adjusted to accommodate future confirmation (upgraded), either from further proving or from clinical success. There is no mention about the use of doses in this book. Symptoms observed have been placed in the scheme mentioned below.

- Symptoms are numbered on each page
- Various times and circumstances of appearance of symptoms are recorded in numerous footnote to the symptoms
- Used differentiating score (0, 1, 2) to indicate degree of symptoms certainty
- At the end of each drug, separate listing of effects recorded by previous observers in cases of poisoning as 'observata aliorum' with their literature sources has been clearly indicated.

The *Pars Secunda* (Repertory part): Before the start of the repertory, at first, some medical terms with their corresponding meaning are mentioned. Here total 64 word meanings are given. Out of 64, only 3 words were without any meaning and 61 words with meaning. Symptoms are not arranged in anatomical order, rather they are alphabetically arranged.

Each rubric with mostly single medicine was given in italics. Very few rubrics contain two medicines. Some symptoms and some medicines were also mentioned in parenthesis. The first rubric in *Fragmenta* is *Abdito in Loco ejulatus lacrimatorius* - Camphor 48, 11 (48 denotes the page no. and 11 denotes the symptom number, as written in *Pars Prima* part). The last page in Repertory contains- error with page number, line number with correction and also contains errors in *secunda* with correction.

Most of us are familiar with the name of this book, but extensive interrogation to understand this fine work has not been done so far. Only Scattered information about this book is available in books such as 'Life and letters of Hahnemann' (TL Bradford, 1895); 'Samuel Hahnemann - His life and work' (R Haehl, 1922); 'The lesser writings of Hahnemann' (RE Dudgeon, 2002); 'In

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search of later Hahnemann' (R Handely, 1990); 'Divided legacy: The conflict between Homoeopathy and the American medical association' (HL Coulter, 1973); 'The adventurous career of a medical rebel' (Martin Gumpert) and many others. Thus, incorporating this scattered information in one place will provide a versatile knowledge about this book which will help the profession.

As this book was published in Latin and never translated into English, it is difficult to understand the narrations and terminologies used in this book. Each noble work of Hahnemann should be clearly understood by the professionals and others, so that Homoeopathy finds an inimitable place in the History of Medicine. Therefore,

there is an urgent need of English translation of this book so that this rare treasure of our Master can be clearly understood. Esteemed publishers, authors and translators are requested to come forward to enlighten this noble work of translating the book in English. This book can be downloaded from the web at <http://books.google.com>

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