THE STUDY OF MATERIA MEDICA
P. Sankaran

The importance of the study of the Materia Medica and its enormous value to the homeopathic physician can not be adequately described. It has a predominant role in the field of Homeopathy. We can do no better than to quote the words of Clarke who says, “We must never lose sight of the fact that Homeopathy is Materia Medica and nothing whatever else. All other branches of medical study are Homoeopathy’s handmaidens buy take away Hahnemann’s Materia Medica and Homeopathy vanishes from the scene. So that in so far as we are homoeopathists, Materia Medica is our sold concern.

Books of Materia Medica and Repertories are the Road maps, Time-tables and Guide books of the powers at our disposal…”

The homeopathic Materia Medica is peculiar in its construction and differs very much from the orthodox Materia Medica. Whereas the orthodox Materia Medica traces the action and therapeutic uses of various drugs through physical and chemical properties, pharmacological action, etc., the homeopathic Materia Medica provides no such material. In truth, it is mainly a record of the effects of drugs on healthy human beings. The original basis for our Materia Medica is the records of provings* and poisonings (accidental or intentional), the former being experiments done to intentionally produce drug symptoms on healthy persons for the purpose of advancing medical knowledge. These symptoms are later confirmed and augmented by clinical experiences.

The Materia Medica Pura of Hahnemann is actually not a Materia Medica in the ordinarily accepted sense of the word but is purely a record of drug-effects. It is unfortunately rather dry to read and difficult to digest. If this Materia Medica Pura is put in the hands of a beginner, he is likely to be frightened away from Homeopathy for life**.
* The word Proving is derived from the German word ‘Profung’ meaning experiment.
** Since in his schema of symptoms, Hahnemann starts with symptoms of Vertigo and ends with Mental symptoms. Dr. Hughes had humorously remarked, “The Homeopathic Materia Medica begins with Vertigo and ends in Confusion.”
Meyer describes the difficulty in studying the homeopathic Materia Medica. He writes, “We shall probably not be contradicted when we affirm that the study of the Materia Medica is the most difficult in the whole range of medicine. Who is there of us who has not, in the beginning of his practical career, often taken up Hahnemann’s Materia Medica with the most energetic purpose and sincere intention of studying and mastering some one or other of the remedies there recorded by the hand of the master and has not, as often, thrown the book aside in despair and disgust? Our own experience will furnish the reason for this frequently repeated result. It is not from the absence of a scientific interest in the matter, nor from want of a steady perseverance; the difficulty lies in the Materia Medica itself. A single glance at a remedy presenting to us many hundred different symptoms is enough to shake the most earnest good intentions, and if we reflect further on the absolute want of connection between these phenomena and that at the most, the only link between them is the part of the body in which they make their appearance, it is not to be wondered at that so many remain mere bunglers in this department of our art, and that some, terrified by the apparently insuperable difficulties that beset the way should have rejected Homeopathy and sought a resting place in the arms of their less exacting allopathic mother. In both ways our therapeutics have received great injury, and many of promising genius have been led astray.”

This is testimony concerning himself of one of our most excellent homeopathic colleagues: “I am not ashamed to acknowledge”, say he, “that if when I commenced the study of Homeopathy, had I not had the most intimate conviction of the truth and excellence of the homeopathic fundamental law, such were the difficulties in the study of the Materia Medica that they would have been near repelling me from it altogether.”

If requires very great insight to look into each symptom and pick out the characteristic features of each drug. But thanks to giants like Clarke, Dunham, Farrington, Kent and others it has been possible to construct out of these seemingly unconnected and fragmentary pieces, living throbbing images of the drugs. Their labours have lightened our task considerably and we are now able to comprehend well the individuality of the drugs even without going through the records of provings. By repeatedly refreshing our memory from these books, we are able to have a good grasp of the subject.
Moore say, “Four requisites to an intelligent study and application of homeopathic Materia Medica should be recognised. First, a thorough knowledge and intelligent understanding of the philosophy of Homeopathy so far as this is revealed; second, such a familiar acquaintance with the names, appearances and properties of remedies as comes not only from a knowledge of practical homeopathic pharmaceutics, but from personal contact and handling of the remedies themselves…”

Weisselhoeft advises the following method, “Now take the Materia Medica and divide it up in that way. Learn one medicine at a time, and then you are over the worst of it, but do not try to learn it alphabetically. That is like trying to learn a language by learning the dictionary by heart. All these methods require work and most people do not want to do that. Most of us would like to have a machine that would put it right into the brain without any exertion on our part. Take the chemical groups, the lead group, the arsenic group, the gold group. If you know one of the group well, you know considerable about the rest.”

Delirium Mass writes, “To study the Materia Medica so that one will not fall into some rut and become one-sided and weak in his armour of defense against disease requires many methods of study.”

“It is to be admitted that for the first years of study, each remedy should be studied alone until a vivid picture is obtained of its general characteristics, so that the physician would readily recognise in the symptoms of the sick individual the corresponding Similia of the proven drug.”

“When we have to do with an art those end is the saving of life, any neglect to make ourselves thoroughly masters of it becomes a crime.

“Do no think that when you have finished your college work you are thorough with the study of your Materia Medica, if you have learned how to study you have done well. It is when in active practice that the greatest amount of careful systematized study should be done.”

“There are great opportunities for modernization. We admit without hesitation that we have a cumbersome Materia Medica, but we
also know that the real clinician is able to use it successfully. It is to be modernized first by literary research and analysis. The value is there, but we must subject the mass to modern methods to develop that which is of value."

Different authorities suggest different methods of studying the Materia Medica. In general, all are agreed that the whole Materia Medica can not be memorized. The Pulfords say, “We all know that it is impossible to memorize our Materia Medica. On the other hand, we all know how necessary it is to have an individual grasp of each drugs used.”

But many authors suggest that at least the leading characteristics of remedies should be memorized. Seibbert says, “We are called to the bedside of a patient, possibly a new family or an influential old family. We face a different proposition than books, quiz or society. We are facing a life and death situation. Under these circumstances it would be extremely hard to choose a remedy by totally relying entirely on memory.

“I can call to mind cases in which I thought half our Materia Medica was indicated according to symptoms given, and then by chance, some leader would present itself and lead to the correct prescription.

“For this reason I believe we should always keep leaders first in our memory, even at the expense of totalities.”

But yet, the process of study and simplification of the Materia Medica has not been taken to its logical conclusion, for, notwithstanding the coherent picture given by Kent and others, students and neophytes find themselves struggling hard to grasp and retain in the memory the essential features of each drug. When we stepped away from the structure of Hahnemann’s Materia Medica Pura and compiled a regular descriptive Materia Medica so that students may understand easily the action and uses of the various drugs, we have taken only the first step towards the goal of simplification. Further steps must necessarily follow. The idea is explained below.

We do not conceive of drugs as mere inert material substances to be used in diseases on the basis of previous experience. Our conception is that drugs are living, vibrating personalities, each full of its own specific energy and capable of influencing life in all the three planes, viz. the physical, mental and moral (or spiritual). Each drug
performs a specific type of work of a specified degree. We may even conceive drugs as constituting a separate world of their own specified field and function, just as we have in our society doctors, lawyers, teachers and so on. As in our human world, no one individual is completely similar to nor can completely replace another. Similarly no drug can be a completely satisfactory substitute for another. It should, therefore, be our object to study drugs as individuals and completely grasp their full individual characteristics so that at the right time we may call upon the right individual to do the right job.

Symptoms evoked by a drug in the proving may seem unrelated to each other and even bizarre in nature. Yet, they have been produced by the particular substance owing to the impact of its own individuality on a particular organism which had been functioning in a coordinated and harmonious manner before the proving was one – the set of symptoms have been produced on account of an organized disturbance caused by the drug. Therefore, even though the symptoms appear to be parts of a jig-saw puzzle, if the essential personality of the drug is grasped, the various features will fit into a harmonious pattern. Therefore, the study of the action of the drug, viz., the Materia Medica should be done in an intelligent and imaginative manner.

Pulford writes, “We must not merely teach our students to simply read the Materia Medica so that they may get just what little out of it they can but we must teach them how to study it, just what they must look for in a drug and how to find it. Our Materia Medica is vast, and the worst of it is that it is only a very small portion of what is to follow when the unfolding of Homeopathy is completed; no single mind can grasp it; it staggers all newcomers who approach it, and it means no more than a vast amount of words to them, meaningless in their import, and thus a barrier. But with a charted map one can traverse the paths of what seems a vast tractless wilderness, with some degree of intelligence surely, and benefit.”

Diechmann says, “And we do not want to get the remedy diagnosis from physiological consideration but from the drug picture. Yet in modern medicine we must construct on the physical data, then the facts of the Materia Medica will stick more firmly in our minds and sometimes with very similar drug pictures it may be made easier to choose the right direction. It remains a matter of personal inclination how one creates order and lucidity in the compartments of one’s brain.”
Schwartz writes, “To study the Materia Medica so that one will not fall into some rut and become one-sided and weak in his armour of defence against disease, requires many methods of study.

“It is to be admitted that for the first years of study each remedy should be studied alone until a vivid picture is obtained of its general characteristics, so that the physician would readily recognise in the symptoms of the sick individual the corresponding Similia of some proven drug.”

In our efforts to study and understand the complete individuality of the drug, we should naturally proceed as we would do when we deal with a sick individual, for to the homeopath the drug-picture and disease-picture are only counter-images of each other.

Individuality comprises of the special inherited characteristic features moulded, altered or added to by the particular circumstances and influences to which each person is exposed. We have to study, understand, unravel and interpret the congenial and acquired attributes of the individual, subsequently modified by the circumstances. Every individual is to be studied in his own surroundings, in his own background, his actions and reactions being interpreted in that light. In absolutely the same way, we have to know, study and understand every facet of the make-up of each drug, to see if that could offer some clue to explain the peculiar activity of that drug.

Such aspects as the morphology; habitat, physical and chemical properties, family relationships, group tendencies, elective affinities, the identity of substances, the sources and origin with particular reference to the nature of and behaviour of the original substance (mineral, plant or animal), traditional uses, physiological and toxic effects, medicinal and non-medicinal uses, etc., should be considered and analysed. Every piece of information that may enhance our understanding of the drugs should be collected and collated.

The morphology may offer some clue towards the action of the drug is a most ancient idea, from which arose the doctrine of signatures. This doctrine has been sufficiently ridiculed but, perhaps, it was not entirely baseless. The shape of the plants and animals, their size, colour, structure, etc., reflect their individuality. Even the crystals of various minerals ultimately assume the same shape and pattern with the result that we are able to recognise the original substance by looking at one microscopical part of it. So also is their individuality
reflected in their actions (effects). If such is the case, if the shape and pattern as well as the actions reflect the individuality, is it not possible that the two are inter-related in a way we are unable comprehend or explain? The aspect of the Thuja patient, who has the waxiness and build resembling the plant, is but a crude instance of such a conception.

Boger, writing on this subject, say, “The doctrine of signatures has been derided and is said to rest upon pure fancy but I know of no accident in nature and everything has an adequate cause; hence we should not be too ready to attribute such things to mere coincidences. Such correspondences are too numerous as well as too striking to be lightly passed over. It seems rather a case of not knowing just what they mean or what the real connection is.

“At the risk of seeming to ask hard questions we may inquire why the time of the honey bee’s greatest activity corresponds closely to that of the Apis aggravation? Why the poison of the sleepy surukuku snake is most active a little while after falling to sleep? Why Kali bichromicum crystals become tough on exposure to the air? Why the twining Convulvulus cause twisting intestinal colics, etc., etc.”

The juice of Chelidonium is yellow, resembling bile, and it is one of the well-known remedies for jaundice and liver diseases; Corallium rubrum, the red coral cures red chancres.

Boger further writes: “In the life history of every substance there is a mark which points towards its application. The doctrine of signatures is not all fancy even if correspondences have mostly been found in forms, a little understood subject. Striking things have their counterparts and their mutual connection is made clearer through symptomatology. While the indications include subjective, objective, anamnesic and environmental effects, drug symptoms are also made up of much more than has been recorded and we read much between the lines.”

Clarke says, “Every mineral, every plant and every animal has its own living principle embodied in its form. The form is the expression of the principle. In a number of cases, the nature of the principle can be read from its form, and has been thus read correctly by primitive people from time out of mind. The common names of plants embody these character-readings; “Worm wood”, “Worm seed”, “Squaw root”, “Snake-root” are a few samples. Arnica had been named “Fall Kraut” before Hahnemann discovered its power to produce bruises, and
Bellis perennis, our Daisy (Day’s eye), had been named “Eye bright”, and Symphytum (which in Greek means: grow together) commonly known as “Comfrey” (from “confirm”, which is the Latin counterpart of the Greek name, and means the same thing) had received its name “Bone-set or Bone-knit” – all before Hahnemann’s time. Konig remarks, “The more we attempt to enter into the often impenetrable maze of the homeopathic materia and try to bring order into the abundance and apparent random choice of all the symptoms, the more we feel the need for a new doctrine of signatures.”

Habitat has a great part in such moulding. Members of the animal and vegetable kingdom acquire certain properties by virtue of the soil and climate wherein they flourish, the quantity and quality of nourishment, water and sunlight they receive, etc. In this respect, they may be compared to human beings whose characteristics, habits and reactions are often moulded by the circumstances and environment of their life. Animals and even plants develop special methods of sustenance and self-protection suitable to the areas wherein they reside. One would almost think them to be human and that their behaviour is as much the result of intelligence as of instinct. All these inherited and acquired virtues and defects go to make up the individuality of the substance which is reflected in its actions and reactions. It is also considered by some that substances available on the spot are usually found most suitable to diseases arising in that area, as for example. Arnica montana which grows in mountainous areas, is useful for exertion and after-effects of mountain climbing, as also for the injuries sustained by climbers from falls. Aconite grows in dry soil and its symptoms are worse in dry weather. The idea is that the influences which go to produce the diseases peculiar to the place, also go to mould the drugs peculiar to the place which may prove useful for such types of diseases.

The physical and chemical properties of a drug may be reflected themselves its symptoms. The yellow and red colour of Phos. reminds us of its action on the liver producing jaundice and its haemorrhagic properties. You must have observed that most substances with a strong smell like Ambra grisea, Asafoetida, Crocus, Moschus, Nux moschata, Valerian, etc., are hysterical remedies*.
The chemical composition of substances often explains their action, e.g. the action of Spongia resembles that of Iodum closely, the latter being a constituent of the former substance. Both are better by eating. Ledermann says that the iodine component of Spongia can account for its effect on swellings of the testicle and epididymis. Lycopodium contains Sulphur and hence much of its similarity to Sulphur; the close relationship of Pulsatilla and Kali-s, arises from the fact that Pulsatilla contains potassium sulphate. Lycopodium contains both Silica and Aluminium and has symptoms of both the drugs such as diffidence, constipation with soft but difficult stool, etc.; Antimonium crudum contains Sulphur and it has similar aversion to and aggravation from bath and heat. Allium cepa also contains Sulphur and has similar acrid discharge. Both Graphites and Petroleum contain carbon and have similar symptoms like Carbo vegetabilis. Graphites contains in addition 3% of iron and has several symptoms of Ferrum in its pathogenesis. Kreosote also contains carbon and has black, offensive, burning discharges. Nux vomica contains copper and has all the spasms and cramps of Cuprum. Both Nux-v and Ignatia contain strychnine and produce similar convulsions. Belladonna contains Magnesium phosphate, and has similar symptoms like Carbo vegetabilis. Graphites contains in addition 3% of iron and has several symptoms of Ferrum in its pathogenesis. Kreosote also contains carbon and has black, offensive, burning discharges.

The word “Hysteria” came from the word “hystero” meaning uterus. In olden days, it was believed that the sensation of a ball moving in the abdomen and ascending into the throat that patients of hysteria experienced was due to the movement of the uterus.

Elizabeth Wright Hubbard

Lapis albus is nothing but Calcium silico-fluoride and so covers tumours of bones. Pulsatilla contains Iron and both Pulsatilla and Ferrum have many common symptoms and are indicated in anaemic patients who are better by slow motion. Borax being Sodium Biborate belongs to the Natrum family and has similar aggravation from noise. Causticum, being a potassium compound has the weakness of the Kali group, extending to paralysis. Grimmer says Merc-s contains traces of Nitric acid; both are aggravated at night and are prominently anti-
syphilitic. Analysing the action of salts Stonham says, “The analysis showed that in all cases the basic element predominates in its salt. The salt is more than the sum of the qualities of the elements that compose it. We may perhaps infer that the chlorides work in the direction of the arterial system, the bromides of the sexual organs, the iodides of the lymphatics and glands, and the phosphates of the skeletal and nervous systems, while the sulphates have a more general influence on the system generally. It may be that when we have a more certain knowledge of the correlation of the physiological action of drugs with their chemical structure, we shall be able to make a better prediction of the therapeuetic value of their combinations.”

The family and group tendencies are also prominent, such as the sadness of the Natrums, the weakness of the Kalis, the neuralgic pains of the Magnesium family, the sluggishness of the Carbons, the glandular affections of the Halogens, the prostration of the Acids and so on.”

Further, a unique phenomenon exists in the field of chemistry, which Dr. Otto Leeser has explained in his book, that when all the elements of the mineral kingdom from Hydrogen onwards to Uranium are arranged in the order of their atomic weights (periodical table), every seventh element falls into the same group and exhibits similar chemical properties. The members of these groups of elements also exhibit similar drug effects in their provings.

Under elective affinities, I wish to draw attention to the fact that most substances seem to have a strong affinity for certain tissues or locations. For example, Apis and Thuja seem to act well on ovoid organs like the kidneys, ovaries, testes, etc. Argentum metallicum acts on the cartilages, Bryonia on serous membranes, Cactus on circular muscle fibres, Capsicum on the mastoid process, Ceanothus on the spleen, Chelidonium on the liver, Digitalis on the heart, Euphrasia on the salivary and sweat glands, Kali-c on the lumbar region, Lachnanthes on the sternocleidomastoid muscle, Manganum on the ears, Nitric acid on mucocutaneous junctions, Onosmodium on the female organs, Phytolacca on the mammary glands, Quercus on the spleen, Ruta on the periosteum, Sabal Serrulata on the prostate, Staphysagria on the sphincters and genitalia, Terebinth on the kidneys, Ustilago on the hair and nails, Vipera on the veins, Xanthoxylum on the nervous system, Yohimbin on the sexual organs, Zincum on the brain and so on.
By the identity of substances is meant the knowledge of what they actually are. Sometimes the homeopathic Materia Medica is studied without a proper knowledge of the identity of the substances studied. One who has seen the jelly-like content of Aloe leaves will remember the identical nature of the discharges produced and removed by the drug; one who has eaten the root-tubers of the Arum plant (Yam) especially in the raw or partly cooked state, will not forget the terrible rawness accompanied by great itching that it produces in the throat. Mercury on being dropped, scatters itself in a restless manner reminding us of the restless patient requiring Mercurius solubilis. Can we not understand the lachrymation and Coryza of Allium cepa when we know it is the onion that has made cooks lachrymose? Similarly, we can appreciate the foetid discharges of Asafoetida; the pride under Platinum, a most expensive, and therefore proud, metal; the aggravation from petrol fumes and car sickness of Petroleum; the burning redness and pungency of Capsicum, the Cayenne pepper, etc., etc.

Sources and Origin

Knowledge of the source and origin of substances helps much. Sulphur comes from burning lava of the volcanoes and produces much burning. Amphisboena is prepared from the jaw bone of the lizard and acts markedly on the jaw. For substances of animal origin, quite often the behaviour and habits of the animals give a clue to their actions and uses. It is said that the Lachesis snake coils itself always from left to right, in which direction the symptoms of the drug also travel. One who has read about the habits of the Tarentula spider and its toxicological effects will easily comprehend the cunningness and quickness of the spider reflected in its symptomatology. Persons bitten become more or less insane every spring and then, on hearing the least musical sound, start dancing wildly. Though the music thus aggravates their condition at first, later they feel greatly relieved after they continuously dance for three or four days and become thoroughly exhausted. This is why, in homeopathic repertories, this drug is given under the rubrics “Agg. from music” and “Amel. from music and dancing”.

The fact that the halogens, Bromine, Chlorine, Fluorine and Iodine as well as Spongia come from the sea explains their common characteristics and the influence of the sea on their symptoms. So also is the effect of the sea-shore exhibited in drugs like Nat-m, and Sepia,
which originate from the sea. We can also appreciate the fact that animal poisons (like *Lachesis* and *Apis*), poison the mind and produce suspicion and doubt; that substances found together in nature like *Carb-v* and *Kali-c*, *Selenium* and *Sulphur*, *Arsenic* and *Phosphorus*, *Cadmium* and *Zinc*, are similar in symptomatology; that *Belladonna* grows in Calcareous soil and hence the close relationship between *Belladonna* and *Calcarea*. The very touch of the Spanish fly *Cantharis* produces a blister and it is thus a remedy for burns.

The nature of the drug is also very useful. *Drosera* is insectivorous plant. Whenever any fly sits on the leaf, the leaf slowly closes, imprisons the fly and secretes a juice which is able to digest the fly. It is also able to similarly dissolve bones and glands as in tuberculosis. Further, sheep eating *Drosera* leaves develop a nocturnal cough and die. *Dro.* is a well-known remedy for cough at night and for tubercular glands. The plant *Rhus tox* is said to be most poisonous in rainy weather and the symptoms of that drug are worse in that weather. *Pulsatilla*, also known as the wind flower, is a remedy for women who are reputedly changeable like the wind. *Nat-m* being salt produces a lot of thirst. Potassium has a toxic effect on the heart and *Kali-c* presents many heart symptoms.

The traditional and other uses of drugs also give much information. *Bellis perennis* (Daisy) is used as a remedy for injuries. Even after being trampled upon, the flowers come up smiling. *Aloe* has been traditionally used for inducing abortion because it is able to bring out everything involuntarily, including the stools and the rectum. *Bufo* has been made use of to produce impotence by women who find their husbands sexually overactive. *Stramonium* has been given to produce insanity. *Opium* has been used to produce constipation and a sense of well-being and when these symptoms are found in the sick, it is able to cure. *Coffee* is taken to produce insomnia, e.g. by students preparing for examination, and it is our children quiet and drowsy while they go away for work. *Cannabis indica* is taken by addicts to experience glorious delusions and phantasies. *Carb-v* is used in modern medicine for flatulence since it has the capacity to absorb 40 times its volume of gas. *Mercurius solubilis* is used in the thermometers and barometers to indicate the changes of temperature and weather; *Merc-s* patient also react as quickly to such changes.
Belladonna (Bella = beautiful, Donna = lady) was being used by women to produce brightness of the eyes and red cheeks so that they may look attractive. It produces all these symptoms in the sick, along with hot head and cold extremities. The dilated pupil* results in photophobia and the patient sees also visions as in Calcarea carb. Calc-c is the chronic complementary of Belladonna and it also has dilated pupils, hot head and cold extremities. Curare the famous arrow poison is used to catch animals alive since it paralyses the hind legs of running animals.

Coca is a well-known remedy for the effects of mountain climbing. One traveler gives a remarkable incident showing the stimulant effect of the narcotic. He says, “An Indian was employed by me for very laborious digging; for five days he never tasted a mouthful of food nor took more than two hours of sleep at night, but at intervals of two to three hours he regularly chewed about a half ounce of coca leaves. Following this he travelled for two days across the high plains, keeping up with my mule, only halting to take his coca. At the end of this time he expressed himself willing to engage for a like amount of work and that without food if I would furnish him sufficient coca leaves. The village priest affirmed that he was sixty-two years of age and had never been known to be sick a day…”

Even when a knowledge of these various properties and features is unable to give us a comprehensive idea of the action of a drug, the essential symptoms of a drug may be remembered by an association of ideas and through hypothetical explanations. Such association of ideas and hypothetical explanations may not stand the test of scientific scrutiny but to the extent they may enable us to remember the symptoms, they will prove useful.

For aiding the memory while learning, memorizing or teaching the Materia Medica, we can freely make use of mnemonics, e.g. Bry. Is Dry (i.e. it has much thirst). Opium which comes from Poppy has P.P.P. (i.e. pin-pointed pupils). Podo, has Profuse, Putrid, Painless, Prostrating diarrhoea with Prolapse. Rhus-t is like a rusty hinge, i.e. worse on beginning motion; Apis and adipsia; Capsicum (the chilli) has generalized chilliness with local burning.

* Incidentally, when men see beautiful ladies, their pupil dilate.
Apis is derived from the honey bee. The queen bee is a most jealous creature, so jealous that after cohabitation with a male bee, it kills the drone because it cannot tolerate the idea of the drone having relationship with some other female bee, with the result that it is itself widowed. Apis is a remedy for the effects of jealousy and for widows. About the interpretations and explanations of the general actions of the drugs and their manifestations in various parts of the body, we no doubt find many precious hints, descriptions and explanations scattered in the writings of various authors, esp. Kent, Dunham, Farrington, Tyler, Wheeler, Neatby and Stonham, and Otto Leeser. Farrington writes:

“We include all the symptoms that we observed. Then what have we? A mass of symptoms seeming to have no connection at all. They come from an organism that is all order and perfection, and all the parts of which are in perfect harmony. When even one of these parts is out of order, then there must be a certain clue to string these effects together and picture a form of disease.”

So it is the stringing together that would help the beginner much but a task that is not completely done.

To quote Dr. Wheeler, “Homeopathy is primarily concerned with practice. If a symptom can be held to be the result of a drug-effect on the human body, then that symptom appearing in disease is an indication for the remedy. We may explain symptoms in various ways but their worth as pointers to a good prescription remains unaltered.

“But to attempt to explain the possible mechanism of symptoms has value in that it may show relationship that makes possible symptom groupings. The memory is aided and it is conceivable if (or when) a fuller knowledge is available that a realization of relationship will take the place of much more laborious symptom matching by enabling one or two observations to imply the whole picture. But while that day is far off, no apology is needed for an attempt to explain the why and wherefore of characteristic drug-symptoms.”

Thus Wheeler proceeds to explain the symptoms and attempts to give them a physiologico-pathological basis so that the medical student can comprehend the picture fully. I shall also adduce some examples.
Conium has symptoms such as “Great aversion to light without redness”, “Agg. by seeing moving objects” and “Seasickness”. Now if one can remember that Conium produces paralytic states, the whole thing is apparently explained. The paralysis of visual accommodation might be the cause of photophobia (without redness), and the inability to quickly accommodate to different distances may result in the aggravation from seeing moving objects (and also looking out from moving vehicles) and aggravation by turning the head quickly; the sickness at sea may also be added to by looking at the constantly moving waves.

The constipation of Opium in the provings is not surprising when one knows that the drug produces profound depression of motor and sensory nerves and inhibits secretion. The inhibition of secreting glands may result in dryness of the alimentary tract and even when the rectum is full there may be no sensory impulses sent to the central nervous system; and again the expulsive power is lacking. The urinary suppression, and retention are also explained by the lack of secretion, insensibility, etc. The pathogenesis of Ip. And Ant-t contains dyspnoea, cough, vomiting, etc., possibly because they affect the vagus nerve, which supplies the respiratory passages and lungs, stomach, diaphragm and heart. The great congestion of the pelvic organs in Sepia must be responsible for the aggravation before menses, during coition, pregnancy, abortions, puerperium, menopause, etc., all of which produce congestion of pelvic organs. The ptosis of the organs owing to the atony of the muscles and ligaments result in prolapses and may be responsible for the sense of internal emptiness.

Lachesis has agg. from touch and amel. by pressure. Hence in throat conditions swallowing of liquids and saliva aggravates, while deglutition of solid food causes relief owing to the pressure exerted.

In Stramonium there is both agg. and amel. from light because the dilation of the pupils results in photophobia but in the mind there is a terror of darkness. This is why it has been described that the patient prefers to lie in a lighted room with his eyes turned towards the darkest corner.

Besides the use of the above data, we may even remember the symptomatology of a drug by imaginatively interlinking its symptoms and by visualizing the underlying pattern. Let us take the example of Silica.
Silica forms the major part of the earth’s crust, up to 120 miles deep down. Just like the earth’s crust, the *Silica* patient also gets heated and cooled easily and is agg. by heat and cold. The *Silica* patients are also characterized by deficiency somewhere and excess somewhere else. The head and abdomen are big and the body and limbs emaciated. There may be defective growth of bones, e.g. rickets, but there may also be exostoses; defective healing or excessive granulation; softening or liquefaction of hard tissue like bones, e.g. caries, or hardening of soft tissues like glands; weakening of fibre resulting in shyness and timidity, but strong will-power causing stubbornness. In this last, it resembles their hair, which looks thin and yielding but is actually very strong, and of which Silica is a constituent. As the patient is stubborn, so do we find stubborn suppurations, ulcerations, sinuses, fistulae, etc.

*Silica* has a peculiar lack of grit, the inability to carry out any task fully. This is even reflected in the constipation, where the rectum expels the stool but not fully, so that the stool recedes back. This has been called the bashful (shy) stool.

Still more examples may be adduced to show how the personality of drugs can be comprehended by widening our horizon and trying to study all aspects of the drugs. But sufficient has been said to convey the idea. Such valuable hints, clues and pieces of information lie scattered all over homeopathic literature, and it would take quite a long time for one to go through all these sources. If these details could be collected and presented in an interesting manner*, the beginner will have less difficulty in grasping the individuality of the drugs.

*I have tried to do this in my booklet Random Notes on some Remedies.*
To the eager reader who wishes to follow this line of study of the Materia Medica, I may suggest the following literature:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boericke William</td>
<td>Pocket Manual of Materia Medica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boger C.M.</td>
<td>Synoptic Key of the Materia Medica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarke J.H.</td>
<td>Dictionary of Practical Materia Medica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farrington E.A.</td>
<td>Clinical Materia Medica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent J.T.</td>
<td>Lectures on Homeopathic Materia Medica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neatby &amp; Stonham</td>
<td>A Manual of Homoeo-Therapeutics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesser Otto</td>
<td>Text Book of Homeopathic Materia Medica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierce W.I.</td>
<td>Plain talks on Materia Medica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyler Margaret</td>
<td>Homeopathic Drug Pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheeler C.E.</td>
<td>An Introduction to the Principles and Practice of Homeopathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wright Elizabeth</td>
<td>A Brief Study Course in Homeopathy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides the above, I would also suggest to the reader to go through the various Materia Medica studies of Otto Leeser and D.M. Gibson in the British Homeopathic Journal, of William Guttman in the Journal of the American Institute of Homeopathy and Hubbard and Whitmont in the Homeopathic Recorder.