

Arsenicum Album

There is one aspect of Arsenicum Album which is a point of great likeness to Lycopodium, and it will be helpful to mention it first. Both remedies show a very definite miserly tendency, but each from a different cause.

The Lycopodium patient is always supposed to be a bit miserly and to take care of his money, in case he does not have enough to live on afterwards. I had a boy of eighteen who put away any money he got and saved it up. His mother said to him 'I wish you would spend your money sometimes', but he replied, 'What would happen to you if father died and there was nobody to look after you?' I also remember another patient with this same peculiar Lycopodium Symptom, in hospital with a broken nose and a broken jaw and various other Symptoms. One day I went into all his history because of his indigestion. Later he came to see me as a patient at my house and said, 'I did not know you thought I was a miser'. I said, 'I did not know you thought you were either'. 'Well', he replied, 'Lycopodium is a miserly person. And I think you are quite right. I love sweets and chocolates, and if I have some chocolate to eat, I don't eat it if the last bit is there. I wait till I get some more to take its place.' I thought that was a good description of miserliness.

The Arsenicum miserliness is different, although it is sometimes easy to mix them up and one needs to be warned. The Arsenicum patient may have a fear of failure or losing money, and then they can be over-careful. Much more often it is that they are really covetous of someone else's possessions. They admire beautiful things and have a good understanding of them, and would like to possess them. I had one old lady in my practice who used to have to defend herself from a friend's daughter who would come to see her and ask for this or that particular object. The old lady got out of giving away a lot of beautiful ceramics and other things by saying that they were in the family trust. In reality it was that this girl longed to have them. Sometimes, if you are considering Arsenicum you may not think of that particular

Constitutional Prescribing

Symptom. They can be afraid of failure, afraid of losing money and really covetous, but it is desire for possession much more than a dread of poverty.

In appearance the typical chronic Arsenicum is the person who is quick, alive, restless, who comes quickly into the room, sits down and begins her history. I have seen many Arsenicum patients who have started giving their history before they had given their name - it is quite characteristic of them. They have a story to tell and they are so anxious to tell it. They are intelligent and rather finely made. They are pale and thin, and I always think when I look at a chronic Arsenicum that they have much too much energy ever to have time or to put on any fat.

They are nervous and fuss about all sorts of things. They fuss about their health, imagine all kinds of diseases, and quite often go from one doctor to the other. They fuss about their family and they are never happy unless they have some specialist they are going to, some X-rays or blood tests they are going to have done.

They love to have more than one iron in the fire. I once looked after a patient for several years, but never knew whether I was her doctor or not. She would say, 'Last week I went to see Dr So-and-so'. I would ask, 'Well, what did he say about you?', and would be told. She was also an awful fussy, and made her husband's life a misery. Her husband really was a permanent patient of mine. He smoked, certainly too much, but she made him cut down. Finally, to please her, he cut down to twenty a day. Well, if he got down to twenty why could he not cut down to ten? - she gave him no peace at all. As I did not then think it was doing any harm, I was not going to enter into the fuss of having the poor man cut out his cigarettes, particularly as he once said to me, 'I could not stand my wife's fussing unless I smoked a bit'. I did so sympathise.

They also like their families to go to other doctors. The woman I am speaking of had no children but had lots of nieces and nephews to whom she was very good. They came to see her and she would tell them to go and see either me, if I was her doctor at that time, or some other doctor. 'You must get other advice. I feel quite worried about this'. Off they would have to go to yet another doctor and had a most miserable time. She was extremely unpleasant if they did not go. I would say, if she pays for it it did not really matter. 'Oh,' they would reply, 'She does not pay for it,' - and this is the point - 'she expects us to go because she has advised it'.

Arsenicum Album

They are very fastidious. If you go into a house of an Arsenicum patient it is very orderly, surprisingly so sometimes. I always remember a typical chronic Arsenicum patient who had hundreds of books in different parts of her room. She used to collect books - she was a great reader and used to like to read first copies of this and that and the other. They were all piled neatly along the back of the sofa, or else they were all one on top of the other on a table. If they were the same subject they were all put together. I was amazed at how neatly they were piled, when I thought a room could not even look tidy with that number of books. It did look orderly - but not comfortable - you could not sit on anything because there would be books on it. The pictures were all straight. I have even known an Arsenicum patient straighten a picture in my room on coming in - they nearly always glance round the room - and sit down after that. They also always like to be prepared for things. If their grandson is coming for the weekend they like to know when he is coming, what time he will arrive, whether anyone is coming with him, and they like to have time to prepare everything.

The chronic Arsenic patient will call himself a fussy person. They are oversensitive to all sorts of things, particularly to touch, smell, light and cold. The chronic Arsenicum does not like the dark. I remember a patient who had had a great deal of trouble, and lived in one end of a large house all by herself. There certainly were other people in the house but they were a long way away. She might just as well have lived alone, because nobody was in reach or within call. One day I said, 'If you feel like that why don't you have a night light?', and the next time I saw her she said that the night light had made all the difference to her life. 'I really find it such a comfort that I could not tell you'.

I often find that they really do like the comfort of some light, otherwise they hear a noise, or think they hear one. They think there are burglars and get thoroughly worked up and nervous. They have a very vivid imagination anyhow, so that it does not take much for them to think that something awful is going to happen. They are also very sensitive to tobacco, especially if they are not well. I always remember that when I went up to the women's ward with Dr Borland he always had a cigarette between the ground floor and the second floor. But he used not to light a cigarette if there was an Arsenicum or Sepia patient in the ward because he knew that they would be upset by the smell.

They are rather upset by food. Nine people out of ten can take radishes and be perfectly alright. The tenth, your Arsenicum patient,

Constitutional Prescribing

will be upset by them if they are not completely fresh. They are upset sometimes by other fresh vegetables and very juicy fruits, or sometimes by any fruit at all. They do get quite a lot of diarrhoea from a food upset - Arsenicum is the second great diarrhoea remedy. (Phosphoric Acid is the first.)

They have a fine skin and very fine hair, and tend to sweat. Alternatively, and equally commonly, they have a rough skin which gets scaly, coarse and unhealthy and tends to crack with no sweat. On exertion they get hot and flushed with an acute congestive headache. So, with the 'skin' of an Arsenicum you cannot definitely say that the remedy has one particular kind of skin. Sometimes you are surprised at how rough the skin is of a patient who is otherwise so neat and who may have, say, silver pins in her hair. I always remember a patient who had nearly two dozen silver pins to pin back every little Strand of hair that stuck out. She must have had twenty showing, but everything was neatly done. They are also bad sleepers and wake at any noise. They are apt to wake between 1 and 2 a.m. They feel nervous and restless at that time and find it extremely difficult to get off to sleep again. They make tea, move about, have something to eat, and then perhaps they try and sleep again and finally do so.

Arsenicum children are definite entities. They are nervous and precocious and develop very quickly. They are very likely to be pushed at school and often by their families too, and are disturbed by awful night terrors. This terror of the dark and being alone really worries them. As a rule they are very fine-skinned, not like the Arsenicum adult. They flush up easily, are restless, and never sit still. They have a burning skin, never an itching rough skin, but rather inclined to burn.

I had a good instance of this in a schoolboy of twelve. He was very clever and getting to the top of his primary school, but I felt a little worried about him, thinking that he was being pushed too hard. He finished at that school with excellent results and went on to his next school, which had the highest academic Standards. I was even more worried about him now, because I thought he would certainly be pushed, and if he was pushed it would ruin him. I asked his father whether I might write to the headmaster and just beg him not to push him too hard, to which he readily agreed. The headmaster wrote a nice letter back to say he would do his best, and that he had told the boy's housemaster that he was not to be pushed.

However, the housemaster pushed him as hard as he could. The boy did all the things he was meant to do and came out brilliantly with a scholarship to Cambridge. When he got to Cambridge he wrote me a