Chapter XVII

SUSCEPTIBILITY

Everything that has life is more or less influenced by circumstances and environment. This is true in the natural growth and development of the vegetable kingdom. Certain flora develop fully only in certain altitudes and when swept by the constant moisture of the ocean ; they will take on an entirely different form under other circumstances and environment. The trees in the open show the constant effect of pressure from prevailing winds. Years ago Connecticut horticulturists raised quantities of peaches ; then suddenly all the peach trees died, and for about fifty years no peaches were grown in the state. Then Mr. J. H. Hale discovered that peaches throve only in soil rich in potash. Returning to Connecticut, he analysed the soil where peaches had failed, and found there was very little or no potash in that soil. If potash is supplied, luscious peaches will grow abundantly.

The same susceptibility to influences is true in the animal kingdom. Animals from certain parts of the earth's surface develop peculiarities of their own which are entirely different from their close relatives elsewhere. They can withstand certain influences and hold their own under adverse conditions which would be fatal to another of the same species developed under differing circumstances. In other words, they develop a protective immunity against their environmental conditions. The polar bear is immune to the rigours of the Arctic, but is susceptible and soon succumbs to the influence of warm climates. The Bengal tiger thrives in the humidity of the Indian jungles ; other members of the tiger family have adapted themselves to the altitude and rarefied atmosphere of the slopes of the Himalayas and the searching winds of those heights ; either is susceptible to the ravages incident to a change of temperature.

We may define susceptibility primarily as the reaction of the organism to external and internal influences. While we may point out striking illustrations of susceptibility in the

vegetable kingdom or among the lower animals, the best illustrations are to be found among those human beings with whom we come in contact. We see very frequently the susceptibility to climatic conditions, as well as all other phases of environment. One person will thrive in a rigorous climate where another will become seriously ill; one will thrive in dampness to which another would succumb. Altitude affects some individuals kindly and some adversely. The seashore improves one man's condition while it makes another man ill.

The power of assimilation and nutrition is one of the phases of susceptibility. One easily assimilates a certain kind of food while another finds the same food indigestible. "One man's meat is another man's poison."

Human beings are susceptible to infection and contagion in varying degrees. One man will become infected in contact with diseased individuals while another will experience no ill effects whatever. One person is made ill by noxious plants while another man can handle them with impunity. Certain people are capable of making a wonderful proving of a drug, whereas others will show no reaction whatever.

All these reactions have to do with susceptibility.

In analysing susceptibility, we find it is very largely an expression of a vacuum in the individual. This is illustrated by the desire for food. The vacuum attracts and pulls for the things most needed, that are on the same plane of vibration as the want in the body.

Contagious diseases thrive in childhood because of the extreme susceptibility of the miasmatic influence; this susceptibility has an attractive force which draws to itself the disease which is on the same plane of vibration and which tends to correct this miasmatic deficiency. After having drawn to itself this other disease manifestation, the child becomes immune to further onslaughts of the same condition; his system has become somewhat cleared by this attraction of what Hahnemann calls a "similar disease" condition.

Susceptibility varies in degree in different patients, and at different times in the same patient. Homœopathic application of a remedy is an illustration of meeting the

susceptibility and filling the vacuum that is present in the sick individual. In other words, the vibrations of the sick individual call aloud for something to meet the need. The proving of the remedy on a healthy individual gives us the basis of similarity of remedies to sick individuals because in a proving the remedy produces an artificial susceptibility similar to the susceptibility of the sick individual. The application of the homœopathic remedy in sickness satisfies this natural susceptibility. No matter how little reaction of the remedy develops in the proving on a healthy individual, the susceptibility is greatly accentuated in sickness. The indications for a remedy show the susceptibility in a marked degree and the patient will respond, because the similar potentized remedy is always stronger than the susceptibility so that it fully satisfies the morbid condition. This satisfaction is based on a universal law governing the symptomatically similar remedy. A patient may be susceptible to a number of remedies, but the greatest susceptibility is manifest in the most similar; in other words, the *simillimum*. They would be influenced somewhat, however, by the nearly similar.

Susceptibility can be increased, diminished or destroyed. It therefore becomes a state of lowered resistance or attraction.

Dr. J. J. Garth Wilkinson, in *Epidemic Man and His Visitations*, says :

> One man catches scarlet fever from another man, but catches it because he is *vis minor* to the disease, which to him alone is *vis major*. His neighbour does not catch it ; his strength passes it by as no concern of his. It is the first man's foible that is the prime reason of his taking the complaint. He is a vacuum for its pressure. The cause why he succumbed was in him long before the infector appeared. Susceptibility to a disease is sure in the individual or his race to be (come) that disease in time. . . . Susceptibility in organism, mental or bodily, is equivalent to *state*. State involves the attitude of organizations to internal causes and to external circumstances. It is all the resource of defence or the way of yielding. The taking on of states is the history of human life. . . . In health we live and act and resist without knowing it. In disease we live but suffer ; and know *ourself* in conscious or unconscious exaggeration.

It is incumbent upon us to recognize, conserve and utilize normal susceptibility, to physical environments, to foods, to remedies and to toxic agencies. It should be our aim never to use any agent or anything of any nature, or to adopt any procedure, that would in the least diminish or destroy this power of susceptibility and the reaction of the organism in its normal manner. Upon this normal susceptibility and reaction depends the status of health. To do anything to diminish or destroy the normal reaction is not the province of a physician ; rather it is the province of the physician to conserve natural susceptibility, for without a recognition of this power all our efforts as physicians would be worthless. It is just as much the province of the physician to exercise conservation of susceptibility in the organism that it may act defensively against a toxin, contagion or infection, as it is to have this susceptibility react constructively to food and drink or to the curative remedy. Again, it is just as natural and important for the organism to react pathogenetically to the size and power of a dose of poison as it is for it to react to the demand for food.

We must lay particular stress on demanding the conservation of normal susceptibility in the care of the sick, for in sickness susceptibility is exaggerated and we must be very careful to do nothing to impair it, for it is through this exaggerated reaction that we find our clue to the similar remedy. In sickness it is essential to remember that it is only in the administration of the similar remedy that susceptibility is satisfied. All our efforts must be gauged by this one question : *Does the remedy satisfy the demands of this exaggerated susceptibility ?*

We cannot stress too much the necessity of adhering strictly to the law of similars in meeting these susceptibilities. Many medicines or preparations are introduced into the organism either by mouth or by injection into the blood stream, that have no basis of similarity to the susceptibility of the patient, and which are therefore destructive to the restoration of normal susceptibility. When such procedures are adopted on any other basis than symptom similarity, the results are either palliative or suppressive, and the ultimate

result is that the patient is worse than before, or complete destruction takes place.

Professor James Ewing, of Cornell University Medical College, is quoted by Dr. Stuart Close as making the following statements in 1909 in a lecture upon *Immunity*:

The effort to produce passive immunity against the various infections by means of sera may fail in spite of the destruction of all the bacteria present in the body, by reason of the endotoxins thrown out in the process of bacteriolysis resulting from the serum injections.

The action of endotoxins of all kinds is similar: there is a reduction of temperature but an active degeneration of the organs—a *status infectiosus*. Thus sterile death is produced where cultures from the organs and tissues show that the bacteria in question have all been destroyed; *but the animal dies.*

This problem of the endotoxins is at present the stone wall of serum therapy. . . .

An animal whose serum is normally bacteriolytic may, on immunization, lose this power; the bacteria living in the serum, but not producing symptoms. Thus, a rabbit's serum is normally bacteriolytic to the typhoid bacillus, but the rabbit is susceptible to infection. If, however, the rabbit is highly immunized the serum is no longer bactericidal, the typhoid bacilli living in the serum, but the animal not being susceptible of infection. The animal dies.

It seems therefore that the effort must be made in the future to enable the tissue and the bacteria to live together in peace rather than to produce a state where the serum is destructive to the bacteria.

In Professor Ewing's illustration he shows the destruction or impairment of susceptibility of the organism to react to the stimulus of either sera or bacilli. Total destruction of the reactivity of the body means death. Partial destruction or serious impairment may render the patient a chronic invalid with impossibility of cure. With the destruction of the reactivity the corresponding destruction of the bacilli is not accomplished and the patient is in a deplorable condition of chronic invalidism.

Another attempt to forcibly regulate body reaction is through the use of antiseptics, which is another means of destroying bacilli, but which at the same time destroys

normal susceptibility. The *Boston Surgical Journal* has shown that antiseptics used in cases of tonsillitis increase the inflammation, prolong the disease and retard convalescence. It is demonstrated that in the effort to diminish bacteria in the crypts, which generate toxins, the period required for the formation of the requisite amount of antibodies was unduly prolonged. In other words, it was demonstrated that living organisms, even if diseased, have some means of self-protection; and that, other things being equal, the automatic formation of antitoxins or antibodies goes on at about an equal pace with the generation of toxins. However, in the use of antiseptics other things are not equal, and it is impossible for the body to exert its normal powers of self defence, since its normal susceptibility is lowered. This destructive action of antiseptics on the living cells and phagocytic leucocytes of the patient was also pointed out in the *Boston Surgical Journal*, as contra-indicating their use. In destroying these bodies we are destroying the physical basis of life itself, since antiseptics powerful enough to destroy cells of one type must certainly have an equally destructive effect on other cells. The investigation further demonstrated that the depression of the vitality thus caused resulted in fever and cervical adenitis due to an increased absorption of the toxins. Increase of fever is a manifestation of the vital reaction and resistance toward disease on the part of the organism; this normal reactivity shows an increase in leucocytes and an increased production also of antibodies and antitoxins. This normal process should never be interfered with, because it represents the normal reaction and resistance of the vital energy, and it is Nature's method of protecting the organism.

The human economy has inherited many tendencies from the accumulations of its ancestral heritage. These tendencies show themselves in child life in the great number of so-called children's diseases, which are nothing more nor less than an inward turmoil of bringing to the surface and expelling certain conditions; again, these eruptions are a lack of ability on the part of the patient to create a similar state within his own economy to satisfy the susceptibility. In other words, by the lack of the applied similar remedy, the

susceptibility is not met ; therefore Nature steps in with the laws of susceptibility and an influence is attracted which blooms forth as an infectious or contagious disease, so as to most fully satisfy this susceptibility. When the susceptibility of this particular state has once been satisfied by an expression of the similar condition, a partial cure has taken place and they can no more develop the reaction to a similar infection.

This tendency of human economies is brought out still further by the susceptibilities of whole families toward certain types of diseases. This is often seen when whole families succumb to certain types of diseases that leave their neighbours untouched. This again is governed by the law of susceptibility, which attracts unto itself and has particular affinity for certain diseased conditions because they are similar to the constitutional condition. Just as certain traits of susceptibility are manifest in family groups, so we find the tendency predominates in certain racial groups, one race being particularly susceptible to certain diseases which touch another race but lightly. It is because the similar condition has remained unsupplied through generations, and the laws of attraction and susceptibility are manifesting their powers.

Thus we see that susceptibility and reaction are basic principles, and are very closely allied to the problems of immunization. A proper concept of these principles is something that the homœopathic physician must seriously consider ; the interplay of these principles must become as second nature to him, if he wishes to use well the forces of nature in healing the sick. THE SIMILAR REMEDY, OR THE SIMILAR DISEASE, SATISFIES SUSCEPTIBILITY AND ESTABLISHES IMMUNITY.