TWO

Samuel Hahnemann

Samuel Christian Hahnemann, the founder of homoeopathy, was by any standards a glorious eccentric, and his restless life story is mirrored in the turbulent history of the medical heresy that he fathered. In order to understand him and his ideas we must set him in his historical context, for his life and career span a critical period in the development of European medical and scientific thought, in which ways of looking at the world and at man that still owed much to classical and mediaeval ideas were giving way to those with which we are familiar today. This is reflected in Hahnemann, who at times sounds almost modern and at others appears to be living in a conceptual universe so remote from our own as to be scarcely comprehensible.

Hahnemann was born at Meissen, in south-east Germany, on 10 April 1755, at approximately midnight. So, at least, Hahnemann himself always maintained; but the entry in the church register in Meissen records the birth as having occurred on the morning of the 11th April, and this later date was adopted by some later homoeopaths and gave rise to disagreement about the right day on which to celebrate the Master's birthday. It is curiously appropriate that the inventor of homoeopathy should have arrived in this world already equipped with a future occasion for controversy.

Hahnemann's father was a craftsman who worked in the famous Meissen pottery trade. He was not very well off, so that it was with some difficulty that the young Samuel persuaded him to allow him to become a medical student.

As a boy he was briefly put to work for a Leipzig grocer. In 1775, however, he entered the University of Leipzig, where he quickly became self-supporting by means of teaching and translation. Growing dissatisfied with the standard of medical education at Leipzig he departed in 1776 for Vienna, but before completing his studies there he left to take a post as librarian and family physician to the Governor of Transylvania, Baron von Brukenthal, at Hermannstadt.

In 1779 Hahnemann left his employment with Von Brukenthal to complete his medical education at the University of Erlangen, about ten miles north of Nuremberg, where he was finally awarded his doctorate in medicine in August 1779.

We do now know what Hahnemann did in the year after qualifying, but in 1780 he established his first medical practice in the small mining town of Hettstedt, where he recorded his disillusionment with the medical treatments of his day, especially blood-letting. Soon afterwards he moved to Dassau, where he began to take an interest in chemistry. This was an exciting period for chemists; in Hahnemann's lifetime the phlogiston theory of combustion was disproved, a number of gases were identified, the composition of air and water were discovered, and the atomic theory was placed on a surer footing. Hahnemann felt the excitement of this spirit of discovery and carried out some chemical research of his own, though the atomic theory seems not to have entered his conceptual framework.

The sense of intellectual excitement was not confined to chemistry. This was the period when German writers and philosophers were developing the ideas of *Naturphilosophie* – a semi-mystical view of science and the world that underlies much of Goethe's thought. It is almost certain that the young Hahnemann would have encountered these ideas at university, and though he does not refer to them explicitly in his writings their influence can be detected in his religious and metaphysical outlook. *Naturphilosophie*, as ex-

pounded by its leading philosopher, Schelling, is based on a sense of the Divine as underlying the manifest universe and as giving form to it, but the nature of truth is to be apprehended by thought and intuition rather than through revelation. *Naturphilosophie*, therefore, is deistic rather than theistic, pagan rather than Christian.

Hahnemann, likewise, though a deeply religious man who believed himself to be God's chosen instrument for the healing of mankind, was hardly Christian in outlook; nowhere in his writings does he refer to Christ or Christianity. His religion is essentially a matter of faith in, and devotion to, the Father. This religious attitude found itself at home in Freemasonry; Hahnemann became a Mason while at Hermannstadt and preserved his interest in the craft all his life.

In 1782 he married Johanna Kuchler, an apothecary's daughter. A year later their first child, a daughter was born – the first of a large family. Still Hahnemann did not settle down, but continued to move about. In 1785 he was in Dresden, where he worked as *locum tenens* for the Medical Officer of Health. On the death of the incumbent Hahnemann applied for the substantive appointment, but he was unsuccessful and set off once more on his travels.

He seems then largely to have abandoned medical practice for a time and to have concentrated his energies on translation, by which he supported his family and himself for a number of years. He also continued his chemical research; he published a test for the fraudulent adulteration of wine with lead which was officially adopted in Prussia, and he described a method for detecting arsenic in forensic material. It is said that while in Dresden he met the famous French chemist Antoine Lavoisier, later to be guillotined during the Revolution.

In 1789 Hahnemann and his family moved to Leipzig. This was Hahnemann's third sojourn in that city. He did not practise medicine there but continued to write, translate, and study. His family now consisted of six persons, and he found himself hard pressed financially. There is a touching story that gives a vivid picture of the tribulations

undergone by the Hahnemann family. At one time money was so short that Hahnemann used to weigh out a portion of bread daily for each member of his family. When one of his daughters fell ill she was unable to eat her ration, and so stored it away in a box until she should recover. But she began to feel worse rather than better, and fearing she would die she called her favourite sister and handed over to her the store of dried-up bread as a legacy so that it should not be wasted.

To have been brought up in the Hahnemann household seems to have been something of an ordeal in various ways and it left its mark on those who underwent the experience. Tragedy dogged the family. Two daughters were probably murdered and three were divorced, while the elder son Friedrich seems to have been half-mad. He deserted his wife and child; his ultimate fate is unknown, but there is a curious story of a wild-looking man called Hahnemann who appeared in America during a cholera epidemic, cured a large number of people, and then vanished into the far West, never to be seen again; this was probably Friedrich. Hahnemann's other son died as an infant in 1799, when Hahnemann was forced to leave Königslutter owing to the hostility of the pharmacists of that town. On the way to Hamburg the carriage in which the family was travelling was overturned; Hahnemann's son received fatal injuries and one of his daughters broke a leg, so that the party had to interrupt their journey for over six weeks.

The role of Frau Hahnemann amid all these vicissitudes is uncertain. No doubt she had a difficult life, but there are suggestions that she was something of a Xanthippe to her philosophical husband. In the circumstances it is perhaps hard to blame her.

Between 1789 and 1805 the Hahnemann family lived in literally dozens of places in east Germany. Hahnemann was unable to settle anywhere, but was driven on by his restless spirit and by the need to make a living. All this travelling was a far more difficult, indeed hazardous, affair then than it would be today. The roads were bad and often

unsafe, and moreover the period was one of continual civil unrest. Hahnemann's youth was marred by the Seven Years' War between Prussia and Austria, while later, at Leipzig, he was to find himself caught up in the Napoleonic Wars.

Although Hahnemann was not practising medicine at this time he still had strong views on the subject, which he repeatedly expressed forcibly in print. The prevailing medical theories of his day were based on crude mechanical and hydraulic analogies as explanations of physiological processes. Thus diseases were classified in terms of tonicity or relaxation (our use of the word 'tonic' derives from this theory) or were ascribed to supposed intestinal inflammation. There is no need to discuss these long-discredited theories in detail, but it is important to notice their practical implications for medical treatment.

The main resources of orthodox physicians in Hahnemann's day were large doses of drugs, habitually given in complicated mixtures, and bloodletting, often carried to horrifying lengths – indeed, to the point of complete exsanguinity, so that the final drops had literally to be squeezed from the unfortunate patients.

Hahnemann rejected both the theories and the practices of orthodox medicine. It was, he held, inherently impossible to know the inner nature of disease processes and it was therefore fruitless to speculate about them or to base treatment on theories. As for complex drug mixtures and blood-letting, both were dangerous and unjustifiable. Hahnemann had not yet thought of homoeopathy but he was a firm advocate of environmental measures to promote health – fresh air, good food, and exercise. In these opinions he was certainly in advance of his time, and the same is true of his enlightened ideas about the right way to treat the mentally ill.

In Hahnemann's day the practice was to treat lunatics with great harshness: they were given purges and emetics and were tied up, starved, and flogged if they complained, soiled themselves, or became violent. Hahnemann strongly

attacked this crude form of behaviour therapy and instead advocated kindness and patience. In 1792 he had an opportunity to put his ideas into practice, for he was invited by the Duke Ernst Von Sachsen-Gotha to come to Georgenthal to manage an asylum for the insane. The Duke magnanimously placed part of his hunting-castle at Hahnemann's disposal for the purpose.

Unfortunately only one patient was ever admitted. This was a Hanoverian government minister named Klockenbring. Hahnemann left his patient free and gradually built up a rapport with him; he also gave him medication though we do not know much about this. Under this treatment Klockenbring recovered and was discharged, though he relapsed and died two years later.

After this no new patients were forthcoming and Hahnemann had to leave the castle. There is a suggestion that Hahnemann, always a difficult man to get on with, had fallen out with his patron the Duke. He had certainly gained a reputation as an eccentric: the Sheriff of Georgenthal, when asked how many patients Dr Hahnemann had in his institution, replied drily: 'One – himself.'

Hahnemann therefore recommenced his wanderings once more. His family now consisted of ten persons and financial pressures were greater than ever. He tried to support himself by admitting mental patients to his home, but this was not a success and he had to fall back on his old trade of translation. He also made two unwise attempts to remedy his fortunes by other means. In 1800 he published an announcement of his discovery of a cure (belladonna) for scarlet fever, which he promised to reveal to anyone who paid a gold piece for his book on scarlet fever; and in 1801 he mistakenly believed that he had discovered a new chemical compound of possible medicinal value, details of which could be obtained on payment of a fee. This substance turned out to be common borax. These unprofessional announcements earned Hahnemann a good deal of derision and opprobrium.

There is something almost touching about these naive

attempts to make money. Hahnemann's interests at this time, in any case, were as much philosophical as financial, for he was deeply preoccupied with medical speculations.

The germ of homoeopathy had been planted in Hahnemann's mind by an experiment he carried out in 1790. It was suggested to him by translating the *Materia Medica* of the Scottish physician Cullen. Among the herbs described by Cullen was the Peruvian bark cinchona (quinine), already in use as a treatment for malaria. Cullen followed orthodox opinion in attributing its effectiveness to its 'tonic effect on the stomach'. Hahnemann (who was never content to remain a mere translator but frequently added his own opinions in notes) attacked this idea strongly, on the very reasonable grounds that the taking of much more astringent substances than cinchona did not cure fever, hence the therapeutic effect of cinchona must be produced in some other way. Not content to leave the matter at the level of theory, Hahnemann proceeded to experiment.

> I took for several days, as an experiment, four drachms of good china (cinchona) daily. My feet and finger tips, etc., at first became cold; I became languid and drowsy; then my heart began to palpitate; my pulse became hard and quick; an intolerable anxiety and trembling (but without a rigor); prostration in all the limbs; then pulsation in the head, redness in the cheeks, thirst; briefly, all those symptoms which to me are typical of intermittent fever, such as the stupefaction of the senses, a kind of rigidity of all joints, but above all the numb, disagreeable sensation which seems to have its seat in the periosteum over all the bones of the body – all made their appearance. This paroxysm lasted for two or three hours every time, and recurred when I repeated the dose and not otherwise. I discontinued the medicine and I was once more in good health. (Haehl, vol. 1, 37)

Critics have objected that quinine does not in fact produce the symptoms of malaria, but this seems rather beside the point. What matters is that Hahnemann believed that it had done so in his case and that this suggested the idea of

homoeopathy to him. (The clinical thermometer had not been invented in his day, so the diagnosis of 'intermittent fever' was necessarily based entirely on the symptoms.) Nevertheless, many years were to elapse before the germ of homoeopathy grew into a full therapeutic system. Not until 1796 did Hahnemann publish anything on the subject, and even then the essay he wrote was theoretical rather than practical and it seems that he had not yet had much opportunity to try his idea out on patients.

In 1805, after several more moves, Hahnemann settled for a time in Torgau, where he remained for an unwontedly long time – nearly seven years. We know little about his life at this time, but it seems that he was practising medicine according to his new system. His finances now improved, and he was at last able to give up translating and concentrate on his own writing. Numerous articles by him appeared, the most important of which was an essay, 'The Medicine of Experience', which came out in 1806 and was the forerunner of his definitive theorectical work, *The Organon*.

'The Medicine of Experience' was published, like many of Hahnemann's writings on medicine, in *The Journal of Practical Medicine*, edited by Hufeland – an eminent physician who, though he never became a homoeopath, was sympathetic to Hahnemann's ideas. Although Hahnemann did not use the word homoeopathy in print until the following year, we find set forth in this essay the main features of his method, which may be summarized as follows.

1. Medicines are to be chosen solely on the basis of the patient's symptoms, without reference to the supposed disease process underlying them. For Hahnemann, the symptoms *are* the disease, and once they have gone the disease is cured.

2. The effects of drugs can be known only by means of experiments on *healthy* people. It is no use relying on what is found in patients because the symptoms of the disease will be difficult to distinguish from those of the drug.

3. Medicines must be chosen for the similarity of their effects to the symptoms of the patient. This *similia principle* is of course the kernel of the homoeopathic method.

4. Medicines are to be given in single doses instead of complex mixtures.

5. Medicines are to be given in small doses to prevent 'aggravations'. (Hahnemann believed that a correctly chosen medicine would *always* produce some slight worsening of the patient's condition, no matter how transient; this could be reduced to a minimum by judicious reduction of the size of the dose.)

6. Medicines are to be repeated only when recrudescence of the patient's symptoms makes it apparent that this should be done.

These principles constituted homoeopathy as it stood when first fully formulated by its originator. As a system it was very different from the orthodox medicine of the day, but from a modern point of view it could fairly claim to be more scientific and certainly a lot safer. At any rate, it quickly brought success to Hahnemann, who henceforth was not to find himself penurious. What is remarkable is that he had taken some fifty years to arrive at his system, and he was to go on adding to it almost up to his death in his eighty-ninth year. He was indeed a late developer.

As well as 'The Medicine of Experience', Hahnemann published while in Torgau a book, in Latin, on pharmacology. In it he described 27 drugs, giving the symptoms they produced in the healthy human body. It seems that he had already tested these drugs on himself and on his long-suffering family and the book is therefore the first published record of 'provings'. Unfortunately he gave no details about the doses he used or the manner of administration, a reticence that was to characterize all his later writings on drugs and to detract from their value. Among the drugs described by Hahnemann were *Aconite* (monkshood), *Arnica* (leopard's bane), *Belladonna* (deadly nightshade), *Chamomilla* (chamomile), *Nux vomica* (poison nut), and

Pulsatilla (windflower), all of which are still widely used in homoeopathy today.

In 1810 Hahnemann published the first edition of his major theoretical work, *The Organon of Rational Healing* (later retitled *The Organon of the Healing Art*). Further editions of this continued to appear at intervals throughout his life, while the sixth and last did not come to light until 1920.

The Organon is the Bible of homoeopathy, and anyone who wishes to study the subject seriously must read it with close attention – a somewhat daunting task. It is arranged in numbered paragraphs, to which are often appended voluminous footnotes that rise up out of the page and sometimes displace the main text altogether. The style is difficult – long involved sentences that the most authoritative English version, that of R. E. Dudgeon, does not render wholly pellucid. In the course of his life Hahnemann was to have second thoughts about many ideas in *The Organon*; these he incorporated in the text of each successive edition, often, however, without cancelling what he had written previously, so that he frequently contradicts himself. Coming to terms with Hahnemann's thought therefore involves the reader in some fairly detailed textual criticism, and it is perhaps not surprising, if regrettable, that many later homoeopaths have shirked the task and consequently have had an over-simplified view of what the Master actually taught.

The Organon initially excited rather little interest, either hostile or friendly. Perhaps this was because of distractions from public events, for the Napoleonic Wars were now raging. Napoleon himself entrenched outside Dresden in the winter of 1810–11 and constructed fortifications at other towns, including Torgau, further down the Elbe. Feeling understandably unsettled by these preparations for war, Hahnemann decided to move to Leipzig, which he did in 1811; an unwise choice as it turned out, for Leipzig was to become the site of one of the most decisive battles.

This was the fourth time Hahnemann had gone to Leipzig: the first had been as a grocer's boy, the second as a

medical student, and the third as a struggling physician. None of these visits was a happy precedent, but on this occasion – at least to begin with – things went much better for him.

His first venture was to try to set up an Institute for the Postgraduate Study of Homoeopathy. However, no physicians enrolled for the course and Hahnemann therefore applied to be allowed to deliver lectures at the university. Candidates for this honour were expected to present a dissertation and to defend their thesis in the mediaeval style against a respondent. With unwonted tact he avoided the contentious subject of homoeopathy and instead presented a learned paper designed to prove that the white hellebore of the ancients was the same as the modern *Veratrum album*. The respondent was his son Friedrich. The subject proved acceptable, the occasion went off well, and Hahnemann was free to begin his lectures.

In the same month Napoleon began his calamitous retreat from Moscow. By August 1813 he was back with a new army in Saxony; he defeated the Allied Armies at Dresden and then moved north-west to Leipzig, where he encamped outside the city accompanied by his unreliable ally the King of Saxony.

On the 18th October Napoleon fought a major battle against the Allies, who were commanded by Prince Karl Schwarzenberg. Next day Napoleon's Saxon allies turned against him; he was defeated and had to leave Germany, never to return. Leipzig celebrated the defeat of the French, but the city was full of wounded men and civilians. Hahnemann took part in treating the casualties and the victims of the epidemic that broke out in the city.

Gradually life in Leipzig returned to normal and Hahnemann was able to resume his lectures. At first these were packed, large numbers of students turning out for what they expected would be a rag occasion. Hahnemann himself took matters with extreme seriousness, but even his closest friends and disciples felt that the solemnity of the setting left something to be desired.

Hahnemann, his few remaining white hairs carefully curled and powdered, and wearing formal clothes that even then belonged to a bygone era, would sit down ceremoniously, take out his watch and lay it before him on the table, and after clearing his throat read a passage from *The Organon*. He would then dilate upon the ideas it contained, becoming more and more excited and flushed, until at last he broke out in a 'raging hurricane' of abuse against orthodox medicine and orthodox practitioners. This, of course, was what his audience was waiting for.

Once the entertainment value of the lectures had become exhausted, however, attendance dwindled rapidly and soon Hahnemann was reduced to lecturing to a few devoted disciples. But his lack of success was not due solely either to his subject matter or to his eccentricities of dress and delivery; he was the target of serious opposition from the Professor of Medicine, and even those students who would have liked to come over to the new school of therapy found it unwise to do so.

Yet if Hahnemann failed to make his mark as a lecturer his sojourn in Leipzig was immensely fruitful in another way, for it was at this time that he carried out his main series of 'provings' with the help of his small band of disciples.

The little group of enthusiasts was worked hard by the Master. Not only did they have to try out the various drugs on themselves and record the results with extreme conscientiousness; sometimes they had to collect the substances, especially the herbal ones, themselves, learning to recognize them in the field and to prepare the tinctures for proving.

Hahnemann did not leave us any details of the doses he used or his manner of giving the drugs, but from chance remarks elsewhere in his writings and from the accounts of his provers we have a pretty fair idea of what went on.

All the provings at this time were carried out with tinctures (extracts) of herbs or, in the case of insoluble substances, with 'first triturations' (one part of substance ground up with nine parts of sugar of milk [lactose]). That

is, Hahnemann used *actual material doses* for the provings. I emphasize the point, because it is often believed by homoeopaths that he used high dilutions ('potencies'). In fact, he did not do so until much later.

His usual practice seems to have been to give repeated doses until some effect was produced; the actual amount was calculated on the basis of his own previous experience. The provers were expected to record their symptoms with the utmost care, and on presenting their notebooks to Hahnemann they had to offer him their hands – the customary way of taking an oath at German universities at that time – and swear that what they had reported was the truth. Hahnemann would then question them closely about their symptoms to elicit the details of time, factors that made them better or worse, and so on. Coffee, tea, wine, brandy and spices were forbidden to provers and so was chess (which Hahnemann considered too exciting), but beer was allowed and moderate exercise was encouraged.

The results of the Leipzig provings were published between 1811 and 1821 in a major six-volume work, the *Materia Medica Pura*. As he had done earlier, Hahnemann supplemented his researches with reports of poisoning and over-dosage, and the resulting compilation was a unique contribution to pharmacology; nothing like it had been attempted before, and the information it contains (together with that in *The Chronic Diseases*, which I shall discuss later) still forms the basis of homoeopathy practice today.

Not many modern homoeopaths, however, actually make use of the *Materia Medica Pura*; instead they rely on secondary or tertiary sources. This is because Hahnemann unfortunately chose to present his findings in a way that makes them virtually unreadable. Instead of giving narrative descriptions of the experiences of the provers he recorded their symptoms in an anatomical scheme of his own devising, so that what we are left with is a series of disconnected snippets that cannot be put together in the mind to yield a whole picture. As the nineteenth-century homoeopath Robert Dudgeon remarked, it is as if a portrait

gallery of family pictures were arranged by features – all the noses in one place, all the eyes in another, and so on. For this reason Hahnemann's original provings are seldom referred to today.

A further problem from our point of view is that Hahnemann's method of conducting his provings, though extremely meticulous and painstaking, did nothing to eliminate the effect of suggestion. The subjects knew what medicine they were taking (indeed, they had often gathered the herbs themselves) and they therefore knew what effects they might experience. It is unfair to criticize Hahnemann for not recognizing the importance of suggestion, for this was not properly understood until many years later, yet it has to be kept in mind in assessing his findings. In spite of any reservations one may have, there is no doubt that Hahnemann's Leipzig provings are a fascinating piece of work and represent a serious scientific attempt to investigate the properties of drugs.

It would be reasonable to expect that this achievement would represent the summit of Hahnemann's career, and that he would now remain in Leipzig, surrounded by his small but devoted band of followers, while his own fame and that of his system spread ever further and won new converts. After all, he was now in his sixties, and he had made a name for himself professionally; it was hardly likely that he would now contribute any new ideas. And yet, much still lay in the future.

Hahnemann's very success made him the target of much hostility, not only from doctors but also from his old enemies, the apothecaries, who resented the fact that Hahnemann made up his own medicines and advised his disciples to do likewise. For a time their criticisms were silenced by the arrival in Leipzig of the victorious Prince Schwarzenberg, the hero of the Battle of Leipzig, who came for the express purpose of being treated by Hahnemann. Unfortunately, after an initial improvement the Prince died, and there was no lack of voices to accuse Hahnemann

of having precipitated the Prince's demise. The apothecaries now obtained an injunction to prevent Hahnemann from dispensing his own medicines, and since they were unwilling to keep them themselves his practice could not continue. He was therefore forced to leave Leipzig.

The Duke of Anhalt Köthen, a small German principality some 36 miles away, was an ardent admirer of the new system, and he offered Hahnemann a post as court physician in the tiny capital of his dominions. Hahnemann had no choice but to accept.

The move to Köthen took place in 1821. A considerable change came over Hahnemann in his new home. He was now virtually cut off, not merely from mainstream medicine, but even from his own disciples. He became in effect a recluse, hardly venturing outside his house. But he was by no means inactive; patients suffering from various forms of chronic disease came to him from all over Europe, and he continued to think, write, and develop his system, which now began to take on new characteristics. While he was in Köthen he published a third, fourth, and fifth edition of *The Organon*, and also a second and third edition of the *Materia Medica Pura*. It was in Köthen, too, that he elaborated his famous theory of dynamization, which I shall describe in the next chapter. In 1827 he summoned to Köthen his two oldest and closest disciples, Stapf and Gross, and informed them that he had discovered the cause of all chronic diseases together with a completely new series of medicines for the cure of such diseases. These new discoveries were set forth in *The Chronic Diseases*, which appeared in five volumes. The theory of chronic disease was to excite great controversy both at the time and subsequently.

The hostility that homoeopathy evoked from orthodox physicians and from apothecaries is easy to understand, but matters were undoubtedly made worse by Hahnemann himself. It may indeed be the case that, had he not been so eccentric and obstinate, he would not have thought of homoeopathy in the first place or have had the determina-

tion to defend and propagate his ideas in the teeth of opposition. But this independence and prickliness were to create many needless difficulties for the new movement, which took on many of the attributes of a religious sect. As so commonly happens in such sects the most virulent controversy occurred, not with outside critics, but within the ranks of homoeopathy itself. For much of this dissent Hahnemann was himself responsible. Eventually, indeed, it became almost impossible for even his most loyal disciples to remain in his good books. Gross, for example, had the misfortune to lose a child, and wrote to Hahnemann to say that his loss had taught him that homoeopathy did not suffice in every case. Hahnemann was so incensed at this that he never forgave Gross or restored him fully to favour.

From his seclusion in Köthen Hahnemann continued to cause confusion in Leipzig. He dissolved the newly formed Homoeopathic Society on the grounds that some of its members were not fully committed to the new doctrine, and his intolerance for deviation eventually became so extreme that he used to say: 'He who does not walk exactly the same line with me, who diverges, if it be but the breadth of a straw, to the right or to the left, is an apostate and a traitor, and I will have nothing to do with him.'

Soon after Hahnemann's departure a homoeopathic hospital was established at Leipzig by private subscription, and a Dr Muller was put in charge and gave his services for nothing. But Hahnemann took exception to Muller for his independence, and had him replaced by a salaried director. This man in turn was replaced by a bogus homoeopath appropriately named Fickel, and the consequent fiasco led in 1842 to the closure of the hospital.

As the years went by and Hahnemann aged he grew more and more out of touch with general medical thought, but this did not prevent him from engaging in acrimonious disputes with the most eminent medical authorities, whom he treated with undisguised contempt. It has to be admitted that his answers to criticisms were by this time almost invariably superficial and irrelevant, for he was so utterly

convinced of his own rightness that any attack, however well reasoned, seemed to him an expression of pure prejudice and ignorance.

In 1830, when he was 75, his wife died. They had been married for nearly 48 years and had had eleven children. Now, surely, Hahnemann's long life and career were all but over? But the last, and in some ways most remarkable, episode was still to come.

In October 1834 a mysterious visitor arrived at Köthen: a smart young Frenchman, whom the customary visit of the barber next morning unmasked as a beautiful girl. Mademoiselle Marie Melanie d'Hervilly, as the young lady was named, gave out that she had come to consult Dr Hahnemann about her health. However, a good deal of mystification attends both Melanie and the circumstances of her visit. She was about 32 to 35 years old at the time (she kept her exact age a secret). She had had a happy childhood in Paris but – according to her own account – her mother became jealous of her as she grew up and so she was adopted by a Monsieur and Madame le Thière. Later she became well known as a portraitist and this gained her the entrée to the best social and intellectual circles, in which she had many influential friends. She seems to have been something of a feminist and to have felt strongly about the limitations imposed on women by society; she had always had a leaning towards medicine, but of course at that time it was out of the question for her to study it.

In explanation of her visit to Köthen she said that her health had suffered owing to grief caused by the loss of several friends. She read Hahnemann's *The Organon* and resolved there and then to visit its author.

Not much is known about what happened next. What is certain, however, is that within three months of her arrival in Köthen – in January 1835 – Melanie and Hahnemann were married.

This event caused widespread astonishment. Not surprisingly Hahnemann's numerous enemies used the

occasion to mock him, and his unmarried daughters who kept house for him were understandably less than enthusiastic; but Hahnemann himself found the experience reinvigorating and rejuvenating. Six years earlier he had declined an invitation from Stapf to visit Naumberg, on the grounds that travel had become impossible for him so that he could not even visit his married children. Three months after his marriage, however, in June 1835, Melanie took her husband off to Paris, leaving Hahnemann's two unmarried daughters to live out their lives virtually in seclusion.

Homoeopathy was already established in Paris and Hahnemann was made welcome there. It was expected that the Master would restrict his activities to writing, but instead he took up medical practice and soon became very successful. In the vigour of his Indian summer he even went so far as to reverse his long-established custom of not making home visits and would drive out to patients and pay house calls even up to midnight. Melanie assisted him, studied homoeopathy under his tuition, and became a practitioner herself. The prosperous couple acquired a large house in the Rue de Milan, and Hahnemann, who had always been accustomed to living simply and frugally, now found himself in circumstances that were comfortable, even luxurious. There seems no doubt that his final years with Melanie were very happy, and though many of his followers, both during his lifetime and later, attacked her bitterly, Hahnemann himself apparently found peace and fulfilment with her.

Hahnemann died on 2 July 1843. Melanie kept the funeral private, and his biographer Haehl implies that she forgot him as soon as he was buried; but this seems at variance with the fact that when Hahnemann's body was disinterred in 1896 a lock of Melanie's hair was found round his neck.

Dissension among Hahnemann's followers by no means ceased at his death. Much of this concerned the Master's literary relics, including the sixth edition of *The Organon*, on which he had been working until shortly before his death.

This material remained in the possession of his widow, who continued to practise homoeopathy. At her death it passed to her adopted daughter, who had married the son of Von Boenninghausen, one of Hahnemann's most devoted disciples. After many difficulties Haehl succeeded in obtaining the manuscript, which was finally published in 1922.

SUMMARY OF HAHNEMANN'S LIFE AND MAIN PUBLICATIONS

1755 Born at Meissen.
1779 Qualifies in medicine at Erlangen.
1782 First marriage.
1782–1805 Years of wandering.
1790 Cinchona experiment.
1806 Publishes 'Medicine of Experience'.
1810 Publishes first edition of *The Organon*.
1811 Settles in Leipzig. Carries out provings which result in publication of *Materia Medica Pura*.
1821 Moves to Köthen; period of semi-retirement. Publication of *The Chronic Diseases*.
1830 Death of first wife.
1835 Marriage to Melanie. Moves to Paris, where he writes final (sixth) edition of *The Organon*.
1843 Dies in Paris.