

# Contents

Introduction . . . . .	xiii
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## Portraits

<i>Aurum Metallicum: The Legacy of Homoeopathic Gold</i> . . . . .	3
The Regal Personality . . . . .	4
The Sunless State . . . . .	12
The Heart of the Remedy . . . . .	22
All That Glitters . . . . .	32
Forging of a Soul . . . . .	36
<i>The Psychic Dimension of Thuja</i> . . . . .	43
The Physical Dimension . . . . .	44
The Mental-Emotional Dimension and <i>Natrum Muriaticum</i> . . . . .	46
The Psychic Dimension . . . . .	65
Mental Confusion and “Delusions” . . . . .	65
Sleep, Dreams, and Inspiration . . . . .	74
Emotional Instability and Spiritual Dis-ease . . . . .	85
The Child and “Vaccinosis” . . . . .	107
Contra et Pro . . . . .	116
Appendix . . . . .	120
<i>Janus-Faced Causticum</i> . . . . .	127
The Balanced Individual . . . . .	127
Sympathy and Social Talent . . . . .	132
Aberrations, Competitiveness, and Adversarial Relationships . . . . .	141
Youth and Old Age . . . . .	156

<i>The Graphites Challenge</i> . . . . .	163
Scylla and Charybdis . . . . .	163
Thalia Versus Melpomene . . . . .	167
The Role of Graphite . . . . .	174
The Nature of Plumbago or Black Lead . . . . .	186

### **Comparative Materia Medica**

<i>Clairvoyance</i> . . . . .	193
<i>Suspicion</i> . . . . .	217
Overall Distrust . . . . .	217
Skepticism . . . . .	225
Jealousy . . . . .	235
Fearfulness . . . . .	238
Wariness . . . . .	247
The "Suspects" . . . . .	250
<i>Generosity</i> . . . . .	257
Expanding Views . . . . .	275

### **Supplement**

<i>Indifference</i> . . . . .	279
Genuine Indifference Resulting From Physical Ailments or Mental Shock . . . . .	281
The Masking Indifference . . . . .	284
Indifference to Everything in Life . . . . .	286
Indifference to Pleasure and Money . . . . .	292
Indifference to Business and Education . . . . .	300
Indifference to Social Conventions and Amenities . . . . .	307
Indifference to Affection and to Attachments . . . . .	314

<i>Contents</i>	ix
Bibliography of works cited . . . . .	323
Remedies mentioned in the text and their common names . .	325
Index . . . . .	327

# *Janus-Faced Causticum*

## *The Balanced Individual*

*Causticum* is one of the major constitutional remedies whose personality does not readily lend itself to homoeopathic typology.

The fault lies neither with homoeopathic physicians who, recognizing it as a “polychrest of the highest order” (Hering), have over the decades made valiant efforts to fathom its psyche, nor in an inadequacy of its mental-emotional provings—which are extensive. The fault lies squarely with the remedy itself. It partakes of the nature of an *hors d’oeuvre*—being one of those medicines, which, with every responding patient, holds forth promises of a fuller comprehension of its personality picture, yet never delivers. In this way the homoeopathic appetite is left unsatisfied, hungering for more.

To begin with, *Causticum*'s very derivation is obscure. With the possible exception of persons well-versed in chemistry, Hahnemann's *Tinctura acris sine Kali* conveys little to the homoeopathic imagination; while its further description as “of uncertain nature and strength, hence should be made in exact accordance with Hahnemann's directions” (*The Homoeopathic Pharmacopoeia of the United States*), followed by detailed instructions of how to prepare the burnt lime and mix it with bisulfide potash, is hardly more enlightening.

In addition, the substance from which this medicine is derived evokes no beautiful image with attendant associations to help the physician form a well-rounded portrait—as can be observed in the lead of *Graphites*. Nor can the *tinctura acris sine Kali* be pictured visually so as to lend itself to a “doctrine of signatures”—as does *Thuja* (“the resinous callosities of the stem and leaves of the *Thuja occidentalis* might seem an indication that the plant was the specific for sycosis and warts”: Teste, quoted in Clarke). And no wealth of symbolic associations throng the mind to illuminate the nature of the remedy—as with *Aurum metallicum*. Furthermore, no archetypal figures from Greek or Biblical mythology align themselves with features of the *Causticum* picture to give it depth—as does Persephone with *Pulsatilla* or Lot’s wife with *Natrum muriaticum* (P1). Finally, and above all, the patient, per se, presents a substantial typological challenge—being essentially of a balanced, reasonable, sociable disposition, and projecting an aura of eminent normality.

Normality, which, in its very nature, precludes forcefulness, flamboyance, or the vividness that arises from extremes, is not easily described. In literature, for example, it requires the genius of a Tolstoy (with his whole galleries of “normal” people: Natasha Rostova’s family in *War and Peace*, the Scherbatov family in *Anna Karenina*) or of a Jane Austen (the friendly Musgroves in *Persuasion*, most members of the indecorous but engaging Price family in *Mansfield Park*) to render such characters every bit as fascinating as any of those obsessed eccentrics (driven by wild impulses, greed, irrational fears, or love-hate complexes) that crowd the worlds of Dickens, Balzac, Dostoyevsky, and modern psychological novelists.

*Causticum* goes through the world reliable, emotionally stable, exhibiting “normality” in the loftiest sense of the word—in the way we like to think of humans as being and acting. That is, he exemplifies, as a rule, Jung’s four aspects of the personality (the sensorial, the intuitive, the intellectual, and the emotional) operating reasonably well together, with no one of the separate functions being overdeveloped at the expense of the others.

Thus, this constitutional type is encountered in the ranks of sup-