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REVIEW ARTICLE

BOENNINGHAUSEN- A MESSIAH FOR HOMOEOPATHIC LITERATURE JOURNEY OF HIS LIFE, A TRUE HOMOEOPATH AND FOLLOWER OF HIS MASTER, HAHNEMANN

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Abstract

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This article is a summarized life history of one of the stalwarts of Homoeopathy, Boenninghausen. From being a civil servant and an avid reader and lover of botany, to almost losing his life to Tuberculosis and how his past life helped him attain the stature he has in homoeopathy. Now his work has started to become side-lined, but his concepts and his doctrine can never be forgotten.

INTRODUCTION

Boenninghausen was born in The Netherlands on a family estate of his father. His early life was spent in the open and he started with his education late, but after starting his progress was rapid. He graduated from Dutch University at Groningen with degree of Doctor of Civil and criminal law, and thereafter he filled

increasingly influential and arduous positions at the court of Louis Napoleon, King of Holland, until the king resigned in 1810, when Boenninghausen too retired from civil services.

In 1812 he married and shifted to one of his family estates that later became Western Prussia. He became more and more interested in developing his estate

agriculturally and became greatly interested in agriculture and Botany. With his mutual interest in agriculture, he formulated the first agricultural society in western part of the Germany.

At the reorganization of Prussian provinces of Rhineland and Westphalia in 1816 he was offered the position of President of the Provincial court of Justice for the Westphalia district. This work made him travel a lot, and later his appointment as one of the General Commissioner made him travel throughout the provinces.

Boenninghausen made use of these opportunities to study the flora of the provinces and published a book covering abundant flora in these districts which called to him attention of some of the best botanist of Europe and these botanists came into close touch with him when he was appointed as The Director of the Botanical Gardens at Münster.

His agricultural and botanical knowledge brought him honor of diplomas in many learned societies and two prominent botanists of that rime named a genus of plants after him. In 1827 his health took a toll which till now has been perfect. Two of the most celebrated physicians obtainable declared his illness to be Purulent Tuberculosis. His health continued to decline until the spring of 1828. When all the hopes of him getting

better faded, he wrote farewell letter to one of his close botanical friend, A. Weihe, M.D., Who was the first homoeopathic physician of the province of Rhineland and Westphalia, of which Boenninghausen was ignorant of as all these past conversation were about botany and not medicine. Weihe was deeply moved by the letter and wrote Boenninghausen immediately, requesting a detailed account of his symptoms and told him about the newly found curative method with which he might be able to safe his dear friend. In response, Boenninghausen replied and Weihe sent him Pulsatilla which he took according to the instructions and also instructions regarding the hygienic measures. Boenninghausen's recovery was gradual but constant, so that by the end of the summer he was considered to be cured.

With this Boenninghausen became firm believer in the results of the homoeopathic treatment, and he took to this new found art with interest. With time he became thoroughly interested in the principles of the new method of the healing and also tried to create the same interest in other physicians with whom he came in touch with, as he himself was one of founders of the medical society at Münster but all were deaf to his arguments. Thus, he himself set out to master the subject through any book he could procure.

Boenninghausen in his university days was interested in medicine a little and had some knowledge but he was not an approved physician. Through his diligent efforts two of the most senior physicians eventually became interested in homeopathy seeing cure of some of their stubborn cases, and they remained faithful to homoeopathy till their end. By this time Boenninghausen's fame had spread all over France, Holland and America, and he had convinced many physicians to follow Homoeopathic principles. During this time, because of not being an approved physician, he practiced but little but devoted himself to furthering the cause by his literary efforts, which were emphasized in making the practicing of homoeopathy a lot easier. During that time, there were not any short ways of approaching the study of homoeopathy. There were no repertories except one in Latin by Samuel Hahnemann himself.

Jahr too did not publish his first repertory until 1834, and in his fourth edition he writes a preface in which he gives Boenninghausen credit for the system for evaluating the remedies to which Jahr had only then begun to use; this fourth edition was published in 1851.

King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, under the date of July 11, 1843, issued Boenninghausen a document which

empowered him to practice medicine without any restraint which in turn hindered his literary work as after that he was not able to publish his work as regularly as before. From 1830, Boenninghausen was in constant touch with Hahnemann until the end, and as long as Boenninghausen lived he kept in close touch with everyone who was practicing homoeopathy.

Works of Boenninghausen in order of their appearance-

- 1831- The Cure of Cholera and its preventatives (According to Hahnemann's latest communication to the author)
- 1832- Repertory of the Antipsoric medicines, with a preface by Hahnemann
- 1833- Summary view of the chief sphere of operation of the Antipsoric remedies and of their characteristic peculiarities, as an appendix to their repertory. An attempt at a homoeopathic therapy of intermittent fever Contribution to knowledge of the peculiarities of homoeopathic remedies. Homoeopathic diet and a complete image of a disease (for a non-professional public).
- 1834- Homoeopathy, a manual for the non-medical public.
- 1835- Repertory of the medicines that are not Antipsoric.

- 1836- Attempt at showing the relative kinship of homoeopathic medicines.
- 1846- Therapeutic manual for homoeopathic physicians, for use at the sickbed and in the study of the materia medica pura.
- 1849- Brief instructions for non-physicians as to the prevention and cure of cholera.
- 1853- The two sides of the human body and relationships. Homoeopathic studies. The homoeopathic domestic physician in brief therapeutic diagnosis, An attempt.
- 1860- The homeopathic treatment of whooping cough in its various forms.
- 1863- The aphorisms of Hippocrates, with notes by a Homoeopath.
- 1864- Attempts at a homoeopathic therapy of intermittent and other fevers, especially for would-be homoeopaths. Second augmented and revised edition. Part 1. The pyrexia.

After the proclamation to practice freely, Boenninghausen founded the society for homoeopathic physicians in Westphalia, which flourished for many years under the interest of homoeopathy which Boenninghausen aroused in them. Boenninghausen's close friends included Adolph Lippe and Carroll Dunham. Both of them expressed great appreciation of the

work of Boenninghausen in Vol. 4 of the American Homoeopathic Review.

Lippe mentioned in great praise his reportorial works and its accuracy and according to many it was this that made him work so exponentially on his own reportorial work which his son brought forth in a completed form. Boenninghausen's birth year as per Lippe is mentioned as 1777. It is not a matter of controversy as Boenninghausen devoted all the time he had to promulgation of the work which he held most dear.

Of his seven sons, two of the eldest chose homoeopathy as profession, which was a great joy to him. His elder son practiced for a time in the neighborhood of his boyhood home and later going to Paris where he married the adopted daughter of Hahnemann's widow. He lived with Madame Hahnemann and her daughter, and had access to Hahnemann's library and manuscripts.

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