

*Henry Toakell Martin*

**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH  
of CONSTANTINE HERING.**

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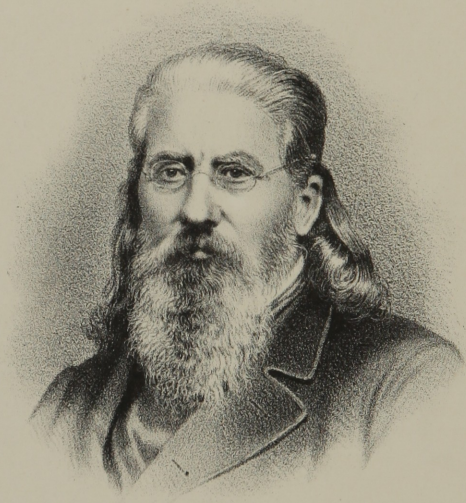
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*Newport News*

*Constantine Hering*

*(Engraved for the U.S. Medical and Surgical Journal)*

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## Biographical Sketch.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

CONSTANTINE HERING.

CONSTANTINE HERING was born on the morning of January 1st, 1800, at Oschatz, in Saxony. His father was one of the propagators of the new educational ideas which resulted in the "People's schools;" introduced first in Leipzig, afterwards in the whole kingdom of Saxony, and still later in Prussia. These schools received from the foreign emissaries and learned travelers the name of "the Prussian system." His father was promoted to such new schools in Zittau (1811,) and his oldest son frequented the classical school, while, following his inclinations, favored by the surrounding mountains and by his father's friends, he there commenced the study of natural sciences. A large collection of minerals, herbariums, skulls of animals, etc., were left behind, when he commenced his medical studies in the Surgical Academy in Dresden, and in the University at Leipzig.

His "preceptor" in the latter place, Dr. J. Henry Robbi — who had been Surgeon in the army of Napoleon, and had served in Larrey's ambulance — introduced him into practical Surgery, and, in 1820, made him one of his assistants.

C. Baumgärtner, the founder of a publishing house, where the oldest of all Homœopathic journals, the *Allgemeine Homœopathische Zeitung*, is published, wanted at that time a book written against Homœopathy; for, after Hahnemann was obliged to leave Leipzig, to escape the prosecutions of the doctors and apothecaries, it was expected that Homœopathy would die out, but, as it did not seem to be willing to do so, the book was intended to kill it forthwith. Dr. Robbi had good reasons for refusing, but he recommended his assistant, as "the very man to do the job." The contract was made, and the book was to be written during the winter season, 1821-2, so as to be printed and be ready for the spring sales. It was nearly completed when, for the sake of making quotations, the young author was provided with Hahnemann's works. In the third volume of the *Mat. Med.* he met with the "*Nota bene* for my critics." (See Dudgeon's *Lesser Writings of Hahnemann*, page 659.) This induced him, as a matter of course, to make experiments.

Surprised at the results, his book was discontinued. Still, supposing the new doctrine monstrous and chimerical, his object now was to separate the true from the false, for it seemed to him there was much of truth contained in it. He did this against the advice of all his patrons, teachers, and friends, and continued his critical examination, notwithstanding he was banished, on account of it, from all "good society!"

In the course of two years he became, step by step, more and more convinced of the truth of all the practical rules of Hahnemann. In the mean while he suffered persecutions, great want; even hunger. The worst was, he had to postpone his examination for his degree, on account of the heavy expenses connected with it in Germany.

In 1825 a younger brother offered to loan him the money, and while

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inquiring at which of the thirty universities this necessary title could be had the cheapest, he happened to see notes which had been taken by a student in *Wuerzburg*, while attending the clinical lectures of *Schoenlein*, the most renowned pathologist of the day. These notes inspired him with such enthusiasm, that he at once took up his bundle and walked into Franconia, to sit at the feet of *Schoenlein*. He remained there till spring, attending the hospitals, but he would not deny his adherence to *Hahnemann's* doctrines, and therefore had to undergo the most rigorous examinations.

According to an old custom of the German Universities, every one who has passed his examinations, has to invite the faculty and students, through the Dean, to a public debate (*disputatio inauguralis*.) This printed invitation contains a number of short propositions (*Theses*) which the candidate for the degree offers to defend against an attack of any one who may be present. The solemnity is opened with the reading of short treatises by the presiding professor and by the candidate (*Questiones inaugurales*.)

The subject of Constantine Hering's treatise was: *De medicina futura*, wherein he stated that there was no progress in the healing art, except in following the path which Hahnemann had opened; and among the propositions which he offered to defend, were several acknowledging the Homœopathic doctrines.\*

After a successful defence, he received the degree as Doctor of Medicine, Surgery, and Obstetrics, on the 22nd of March, 1826.

A few weeks after this he was offered a very acceptable situation, as teacher of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, at an Academy in *Dresden*, for educating, principally, young noblemen. He was a resident in the Institution all summer. The President of the Institution made him an offer, in the autumn, to go to South America, particularly to Surinam and Cayenne, to make zoological researches and collections, under the particular protection of the king. He accepted, and, in accordance with his suggestion, an old acquaintance of his, Christophe Weigel, was appointed botanist of the expedition.

Among his letters and reports, were some to the Editor of the *Homœopathic Archives*, Dr. *Ernst Staff*. They offended the physician of the king, an old adversary of Hahnemann; consequently the Minister of the Interior issued orders to the intermediary, *Blochmann*, who wrote a most polite letter, advising Constantine Hering to attend to zoological duties alone, and avoid, hereafter, publishing any thing of such an offensive nature. The day after receiving this letter, the first vessel which left the port conveyed an equally polite answer, containing a statement of accounts to date, and breaking off all further dependency.

\* For instance :

6. Quod Hippocrati pathologia, id Hahnemanno est Iamatologia.
10. Quisque morbus in quoque stadio tolli potest.
11. Hahnemanno nemo adhuc existit, qui eum refutaret.
12. Homœopathia est Heterosthenia, primaria ejus lex, contraria contrariis.
16. Non singulos homines ab singulis morbis, sed universum genus humanum ab aegrotandi materia liberare, scientiarum medicarum ultima meta.

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Commencing practice in *Paramaribo*, and continuing his researches and collections, he soon found that he had to give up one or the other. Learning through his friend George Bute, who was sent there as a Moravian missionary from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, that an Academy of Natural Sciences had been founded in Philadelphia, and that Rev. Schweinitz, the well-known Mycologist, was a prominent member, he concluded, in 1830, to send all his own botanical, principally cryptogamic, and zoological collections to this Academy. In consequence of this donation, he was made a corresponding member.

A few years later, he turned his face toward his fatherland, but stopped on the way in Philadelphia, to assist in introducing Homœopathy there. Arriving in January, 1833, he found that his friend G. Bute had, by his astonishingly successful treatment of the *Cholera asiatica*, during the summer of 1832, already opened the way. Dr. *Wm. Wesselhoeft*, in Bath, Pennsylvania, had also acted as an apostle of the new gospel, and spread its blessings all around him. Dr. *John F. Gray* told him of Dr. *Gram* and his school in New York. Dr. *Mattlack*, in Philadelphia, had also commenced the study of the new art. Dr. *Ihm*, from Frankfort, tried to practice Homœopathy, at the instigation of *Wm. Geisse*, a prominent merchant in Front street, and zealous advocate and personal friend of Hahnemann. About this time Dr. *Humphreys*, an old navy surgeon; Dr. *Green*, of Philadelphia, afterwards of Washington, and now in New Orleans; and Dr. *Richard Gardiner*, now living in Philadelphia, were beginning to make experiments.

Instead of leaving the country, he remained, and the Academy of Allentown was established, according to plans proposed by Dr. *Wm. Wesselhoeft*. Constantine Hering's intention was, to offer to the students of medicine an opportunity, during the summer months, to attend a course of lectures in Homœopathy, before, during, or after they had attended lectures in the allopathic colleges; also, to induce them to learn the German language. The main plan for sustaining the institution was, to have all the good Homœopathic works translated into English, and also to establish a central institution for the preparation and sale of Homœopathic drugs, at the same time giving ample opportunity for the employment of poor students, etc., etc.

A new revised edition of *Hahnemann's Organon* was printed at its expense, and *Fahr's Manual* was translated and published. This was the pioneer of all the translations of the *Materia Medica* into the English language, and was made principally by Dr. *A. Bauer*, now in Cincinnati.

Out of this Institution came the following pioneers of Homœopathy, viz.: Dr. *Bauer*; Dr. *Reichhelm*, later in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; the late Dr. *Gosewisch*, of Wilmington, Delaware; Dr. *Howard Okie*, now in Rhode Island; Dr. *Geist*, later practicing in Boston; Dr. *Wolford*, now in Ohio; Dr. *Becker*, going to Surinam; Dr. *Floto*, later in New England, and several others lost sight of. Dr. *Neidhard* and Dr. *Lippe* were at this time pupils of Dr. *W. Wesselhoeft*. Our most successful pioneer westward, Dr. *Pulte*, now in Cincinnati, was one of the founders of the Academy.

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All the money matters were in the hands of one person, and the Institution was intentionally undermined by him, for he was a secret enemy of Homœopathy, and a "hater of the Dutch." Constantine Hering, after discovering this, returned to Philadelphia, and worked several years to pay off his private debts. For a few years Dr. W. Wesselhoeft endeavored to save the Institution, but he found it impossible, and subsequently went to Boston, Massachusetts, where the remainder of his life was devoted to repairing his losses.

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In Homœopathy, Constantine Hering's intentions were, not only to spread the new art of healing, but also to bring our *Materia Medica* in the way of becoming a real natural science.

His provings were mostly undertaken with that view. After having proved *Iodine* as early as 1823, he added the other "Salt-formers" of Berzelius; in 1836, *Bromine*, and in later years *Fluor. ac.*, in which he was assisted by the Bureau of *Materia Medica*, consisting of Drs. *Feanes*, *Williamson*, *Kitchen*, of Philadelphia, and by other Homœopaths, viz.: Drs. *Campos*, in Norfolk; *Freitag*, in Bethlehem; *Geist*, *Gosewisch*, *Husmann*, *Lippe*, and *Pehrson*. Still later, *Chlorine*, and immediately after its discovery, in 1845, *Ozone* was proved.

As a chemical neighbor to *Sulphur*, he proved *Selenium*, and *Lithium* as standing chemically near *Kali* and *Natrum*; as next to *Antimon*, *Tellurium*, and as next to *Platina*, *Palladium*.

Having proved *Arum maculatum* in 1824, he added, in Surinam, *Caladium*; and in Philadelphia, *Pothos foetida*, — all belonging to the same family. These provings led him to introduce *Arum triphyllum* into our practice, for the worst forms of Scarlatina.

During forty years, he made provings on himself with fifty and more different drugs, and induced others to prove about twice that number; at the same time completing, as much as possible, the older provings of *Hahnemann*, *Stapf*, and others; for instance: *Sabadilla*, *Mezereum*, *Colchicum*, etc.

His most important experiments were with the snake-poison. In 1825 he tried to get the poison of the German viper; believing that the assertions of Physiologists and Toxicologists, that this poison could not influence animal life except as a ferment in the blood, were erroneous.

In 1828 he succeeded in getting — because, at that time, he thought a quantity was absolutely required — about ten drops of the saliva of the largest poisonous snake, *Trigonocephalus Lachesis*, while alive. With this he made a long series of experiments, beginning with the lowest triturations. The first provings were published in 1831, in *Stapf's Archives* X., 2, page 1 (three years later;) and not until 1835, *Archives* XV., 1, 1, *Lachesis* was introduced as a healing drug (seven years later.)

At the same time, Constantine Hering hastened to make known to the world, as soon as he discovered it, what had been placed in an appendix to *Redman Coxe's Dispensatory*, and overlooked, viz.: In 1824, Dr. *James*



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*Westwood Wallace*, of Fauquier, Virginia, took the bags, venom and all, from two teeth of a large and vigorous rattle-snake, which he mixed, by friction in a glass mortar, with some cheese, and then divided the mass into one hundred pills. Of these "I occasionally took some times one, at other times two, three, or four pills a day." (Compare *J. R. Coxe's American Dispensatory*. Philadelphia. 1831. Page 738.)

Was not that a real proving? Using cheese instead of sugar of milk!

Even two years before Gram arrived in New York, and C. Hering in Paramaribo, high up in the mountains of the Old Dominion, a proving was made of the snake-poison! And what is most remarkable, C. Hering could quote from the collected facts, corroborations of every thing mentioned by J. W. Wallace, notwithstanding his applications had been made without the light of our law.

After many experiments and researches, C. Hering had ascertained that the best and most practical and applicable antidote in case of a snake-bite was radiated heat. He applied the hot iron, near the wound, as hot as the patient could bear it; he found the spreading of the poison was at once arrested in this way, in men and animals, and that the most dangerous symptoms ceased. May not heat, analogously, also be applied in cases of other poisoned wounds, even after the bite of the mad dog?

Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, of Philadelphia, discovered (1861) that rattle-snake poison may be boiled without being destroyed as a poison. This apparently contradicts C. Hering's proposition to apply heat; but Dr. Mitchell found that the boiled poison, although it killed, did not cause any local symptoms, as inflammation, gangrene, etc., and thus proves C. Hering's assertion, that it ceases to act as a ferment. The fact that alcohol does not destroy the medicinal qualities of the poison, while taken inwardly in large quantities, but acts as an antidote to it, is also explained by these experiments.\*

C. Hering has been a contributor, editor, and co-editor of a great many journals. He has published several pamphlets, some of which have been translated into different languages. The latter was particularly the case with his *Domestic Physician*. Since 1837 it has appeared in English, French, Italian, Spanish, Russian, etc., besides thirteen editions in the German, and there have been nearly 100,000 sold.

He is now engaged as Professor of *Materia Medica* in the Hahnemann College in Philadelphia, and as co-editor of the *American Journal of Materia Medica*, wherein he has begun publishing, in monthly numbers, a complete collection of all the results, provings, and cures, obtained by the Homœopathic school, combined with all that may be useful from the old schools.

[Written in August, 1867.]

\* A treatise explaining this more fully will appear in the next number of this Journal.

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