

# HEALING THE SOUL

*Volume one*

The lives of Samuel Hahnemann  
and William Lilley

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## PARIS – REJUVENATION AND DEPARTURE

### Mélanie

After an arduous journey by coach, which in those days, traversing many difficult roads, must have taken all of fifteen days, the elegant young lady, whom we saw depart from Paris, finally arrived in Köthen on October 7th 1834. From the outset, her appearance, manner and dress caused a great stir in this small provincial German town, far removed from the salons of fashionable Paris. She was French, an aristocrat, her manner self-assured and assertive; she was young and beautiful, tall, lithe and graceful; but what most set the tongues wagging was the fact that she was dressed like a young man.

The town's folk were accustomed to seeing the constant parade of the noble and eminent, who came to seek a cure at the hands of Köthen's most famous inhabitant – the reclusive hermit, Dr Samuel Hahnemann – but the initial curiosity and gossip that this visitor's first appearance evoked were soon to be further titillated by rapidly unfolding events, of such a nature that memory of her would persist in the community long after her departure.

According to Haehl, the German homeopath Dr Gustav Puhlmann narrated many years later, in 1891:

The older inhabitants of Köthen told me, many years ago, veritable shocking stories about the emancipated appearance of the young French girl who had come to Hahnemann as a patient, and who walked about the streets in man's attire. She was a keen horsewoman and swimmer and practised pistol shooting and hunted; she painted . . .

In the eyes of the prudish villagers, these masculine pursuits coupled to her manner of dress were indicative of an unrestrained temperament and moral laxity, and she was suspected of being a sexual siren set to prey on the vulnerability of respectable men.

Puhlmann added a tart observation of his own:

Elderly vigorous men are easily inflamed with women of that temperament, especially if the latter are kindly disposed towards them.<sup>1</sup>

The young lady in question, Marie Mélanie d'Hervilly, had indeed come to consult Hahnemann about her health, but more pertinently to meet and converse with the writer of the *Organon*: the founder of homeopathy: the gentle art of healing. Her ailment, which she claimed had prevented her for the past two years from practising her profession, portrait painting and writing poetry, was diagnosed by Hahnemann, in the terminology of the time, as a type of *tic-dououreux* or neuralgic pain, which recurrently afflicted her in the right lower abdomen: in modern understanding probably an irritable bowel or spastic colon. Writing many years later when wishing to highlight her scientific bent, Mélanie downplayed the importance of the problem and emphasised that her primary motive in consulting Hahnemann was her interest in medical science. She gave him her age as thirty-two, but in fact she never admitted her true age, her good looks always permitting her to pass herself off as far younger than she was, and it is quite possible that she was already thirty-four or thirty-five when they met. In this we are given a small instance of her vanity and willingness to bend the truth to her own advantage. This willingness must be born in mind when considering the short history of her life entitled *Confidential notes on the life of Madame Hahnemann*, which she wrote in 1846 as part of her defence when accused of illegally practising homeopathy. One gains the impression that on a foundation of truth, Mélanie would, when the need arose, elaborate an exaggerated scenario to suit her ends. She was very conscious of her intellectual, artistic and physical assets and never too shy to blow her own trumpet.

I was born with an extraordinary character which manifested itself in early childhood; I never played but was always thinking and, therefore, appeared sad without actually feeling so.<sup>2</sup>

Her father, Monsieur d'Hervilly, was descended from a noble French family. She informs us that he possessed a great intellect and provided her with an excellent education, stimulating in her a love of science and encouraging her innate flare for art and music. Their relationship was tender and loving and she respected him, but judged him weak and subordinate to her mother, who dominated their home. Her mother was a beautiful, flirtatious woman who loved to be courted and admired, and needed to be the centre of attraction. As Mélanie grew into the beauty of her own womanhood, her mother became jealous of her. Mélanie describes the unfolding of her charms:

Meanwhile the child was growing into girlhood, the comeliness of youth was developing in a body which had been fairly well equipped by nature.<sup>2</sup>

Conscious of her mother's jealousy, Mélanie avoided the limelight and conducted herself in a scrupulously modest manner.

All my efforts to appease my mother were useless; she would take me to dances against my wish, because I had been invited and she did not dare refuse, but the next morning she would punish me for the success I had achieved, being a good dancer; briefly, she conceived such animosity against me that it almost amounted to insanity.<sup>2</sup>

The situation in the home became intolerable and eventually dangerous when the mother in a frenzy of jealous hatred attacked the fifteen-year-old Mélanie with a knife. Her father at last stepped in and arranged that Mélanie should be placed in the care of her art teacher, Monsieur Guillion Lethière, and his wife.

In these happy circumstances, her artistic aptitude continued to be nurtured and she resolved to pursue art as a profession. She became a very successful portrait painter, the equivalent of a modern day photographer, and through her work gained entry to high society and the artistic world of Paris.

I worked with pleasure, and the fruits of my talent soon became considerable; I was much in demand, and my other social talents enabled me to achieve success everywhere. Illustrious friends surrounded and protected me.<sup>3</sup>

These protectors were often older men with whom she found far greater affinity than with the many shallow-minded, young admirers who must have been drawn to the flame of such an attractive, talented woman.

The serious nature of my character made me seek always the company of superior men who were almost all friends of my father, and who encouraged the studious young girl.<sup>3</sup>

One of the influential people with whom she formed a close friendship was M. Louis Gohier, who had briefly been President of the Executive Directory of the French Republic in 1799, whom Mélanie, in her characteristic desire for reflected glory and eminence, described as "the last President of the French Republic."

Probably a good example of Mélanie's carefully orchestrated presentation of her past is a document furnished by her purporting to be an extract from Gohier's will, but lacking both signature and date:

Two women have inspired me with feelings bordering on adoration through their excellence, the one, my life-long companion, to whom I can only bring an offering of tears; the other is Mademoiselle Mélanie d'Hervilly. I should have been

proud had I been able to adopt her, but as I was so fortunate as to be a father, it was not admissible. I would have offered her my hand, if her inclination to art, the only passion which so happily dominated her, would have allowed her to accept it.

The document continues:

As I wish to leave to Mademoiselle d’Hervilly a special token of the great esteem which her extraordinary merits and talents inspired in me, I beg of her . . . that after my death she would unite my name to hers . . . so that through the tie of mutual esteem my name shall be associated with her whom the rarest of talents will render celebrated.<sup>4</sup>

One cannot doubt that Mélanie’s hand is implicit in this declaration of admiration and high esteem, but this self-promotive ruse, highlighting her chaste dedication to the arts and her moral and professional excellence, should not place in question their close relationship or the very real affection and regard that the old man felt for her, nor should it diminish our estimation of her true ability, gifts and charm, which were considerable. Whatever the truth of the matter, Mélanie henceforth styled herself: Mademoiselle d’Hervilly-Gohier.

She asserts that she developed an early interest in biology and when eight-years-old dissected birds to satisfy her curiosity:

I constantly tormented my father with questions that he might explain to me the functions of the organs.<sup>5</sup>

This soon expanded into an attraction towards medicine and healing.

I had extraordinary inspirations when I was near patients. At twelve years of age I saved the life of one of my father’s friends who had been involuntarily poisoned by opium.<sup>5</sup>

This she says she achieved by ministering a “decoction of lettuce.” She quite correctly declares that she had “unconsciously employed” homeopathy; the narcotic power of wild lettuce, *Lactuca virosa*, was known to the ancient Greeks, and the administration of a remedy capable of inducing an opiate-like drugged state to a patient suffering from opium intoxication was the application of the like-cures-like principle. By observation, she soon apprehended that allopathic medicine more often caused mischief than cure.

Very frequently I noticed that the doctors did more harm than good to the patients. I used to question the physicians who treated my mother, and their answers were so ambiguous and absurd that my analytical mind was not unreasonably scandalised.<sup>5</sup>

Despite her considerable success as a society portrait painter, the distractions of life amongst the rich and famous and her many physical pursuits,

her interest in medicine steadily grew and her exasperation, at not having the means or education to help those in distress, grew apace. At heart she was a committed feminist, an outspoken opponent of the restrictions and exclusions imposed on women by the patriarchal dominance that prevailed in Europe. She was particularly incensed by the limited opportunities available for women to develop and express their intellectual prowess, and that men had arrogated the professions for themselves. At that time, women were denied admission to medical schools. Through experience, she had come to the conclusion that a gifted woman, especially if virtuous, either became an object of envy and aversion to men, or was regarded as a toy, which they were proud to own. With these sentiments dominant in her, it is not surprising to find her in her early thirties, highly eligible in every sense of the word, yet still unmarried, 'celibate' and seeking the more accommodating company of older men.

Her own health had begun to decline because of frustration, stress and "grief caused by the loss of several of my friends"<sup>5</sup> and she could find no one capable of helping her. It was at this point that her need was answered. A French translation of the *Organon* found its way into her hands and a new perspective opened before her.

She writes:

The *Organon* of Hahnemann's doctrine suddenly opened my eyes and the first glance showed that it contained the whole truth about medicine; the sun of true medical science had at last risen for me.<sup>5</sup>

With characteristic decisiveness, she resolved to travel to the very source of this wisdom, to meet Hahnemann face to face, sit at his feet as a student and find an answer to her pains. The friends with whom she shared this decision thought she was crazy and tried to dissuade her. But to no avail; it had become the entire focus of her being and propelled her towards distant Köthen.

At the destined meeting of these two singular individuals, we enter the rarefied dimension of high romance. It is certain that the strikingly beautiful, tall, young woman, who was ushered into the elderly physician's consulting room by one of his two daughters, had set aside her masculine attire for all the feminine finery of Parisian fashion. Neither her bearing nor her glamour would have daunted the seasoned veteran who bade her welcome. He was well versed in the niceties of sophisticated exchange and had long tended to the health of the nobility. She, however, would have been unprepared for the youthful vigour and vitality of the old man who rose to greet her.



We owe to Dr Philip Wilhelm Ludwig Griesselich a marvellously clear impression of the master in his late seventies. He wrote the following soon after visiting Hahnemann in Köthen:

Hahnemann, now at the age of 77 years, showed in every action all the vigour of a young man. No trace of old age could be detected in his physical appearance except the white locks surrounding his temples, and the bald crown covered by a velvet cap. Small and sturdy of form, Hahnemann is lively and brisk; every movement is full of life. His eyes reveal his inquiring spirit; they flash with the fire of youth. His features are sharp and animated. Old age seems foreign to body and mind. His language is fiery and fluent. . . . His memory seems excellent; after long interludes he continues where he left of. . . . In earlier years Hahnemann had not been so communicative as he is now.<sup>6</sup>

His visitor relates that even at that advanced age, Hahnemann could easily be moved to heated outburst against those who persecuted homeopathy:

. . . his words flow forth uninterruptedly, his manner becomes extremely animated, and an expression appears on his countenance, which the visitor admires in silence. Perspiration covers his brow; his cap has to come off and his head cooled with a handkerchief; the long pipe, his trusty companion, has gone out in the meanwhile and must be relighted by the taper that is at hand and kept burning all day. The white beer must not be forgotten!<sup>6</sup>

Mélanie's description of that first meeting is brief:

Dr Hahnemann was living with his two youngest daughters, who were unmarried, in a small and unpretentious house. His remarkable face inspired me with respect and astonishment. He talked for a long time and immediately conceived a great friendship for me.<sup>5</sup>

One can only imagine the intense chemistry that arose between them during this coming together of like minds. Here was the attraction of extreme opposites, both of age and gender, and the affinity of two individuals who shared intense passion for their convictions, felt persecuted by authority and were driven to bring about change. On the one hand, an old, but brilliant, highly articulate man, still possessed of unusual mental and physical vigour, without a companion for four years and only linked to the outer world, other than through his patients, by correspondence with a few colleagues – an existence fulfilling, yet essentially professional, and devoid of the warmth of a close relationship. On the other, a beautiful, intelligent, vivacious and ardent young woman, brimming over with curiosity and enthusiasm, hanging on his every word, who despite being a socialite has never found a man to meet her high ideals and who now finds herself in the presence of an exceptional being who emanates the determination and drive that her dear father lacked.

During that initial consultation, a spark jumped across the divide between circumstance and age and kindled a fire that rapidly engulfed them, overcoming any barriers that either might have initially felt. Whereas it is easy to understand the attraction that a man, even when advanced in years, may feel for a comely, young woman, it is less easy to grasp what can move a young woman to become emotionally and physically attracted to a very old man. Partly because of this, posterity has generally judged Mélanie harshly, denouncing her as a manipulative, seductive adventuress who captivated the heart of homeopathy's founder by stealth in order to gratify her own selfish ambitions. The observer, however, must allow for the complexity of two remarkable individuals, for the unerring, universal law of synchronicity and cosmic purpose and for an irresistible appeal, which was mutual, and, though undoubtedly having a physical component, rested primarily on a far deeper emotional, intellectual and spiritual foundation. In the magic of that first meeting they were caught in an autonomous, creative field moving them with compelling intent towards an unseen goal.

Within a matter of days they had decided to marry. Mélanie affirms that Hahnemann proposed to her:

Hahnemann wished to marry me, and his friends who had learned to estimate my character at its true worth, did all they could to persuade me to accept his offer.<sup>7</sup>

In saying this, she is being rather disingenuous as there were no friends who could possibly have had the time or opportunity of assessing her, one way or another.

She avers that she hesitated before accepting the proposal:

It was not the outlook of having to nurse a noble old man that frightened me, but the fear of losing him too soon and missing him so much that I might die of grief.<sup>7</sup>

Haehl, Hahnemann's biographer, when considering the proposal of marriage, grows hot under the collar, as have many generations of homeopaths:

Is it likely that the old man will have courage and resolution enough seriously to propose marriage to so young a lady – unless she approaches him fairly obviously, unless, in the French phrase, 'she makes advances to him?'

It was not Hahnemann who married her, the foreigner, but she who married him, the young woman marrying the old man. This is, in short, a confession of a clever woman's skilful calculation, and of her attainment of the goal she had set herself – namely the possession of this man.<sup>8</sup>

In his indignation, he invokes the perennial, patriarchal myth of innocent Adam and duplicitous Eve tempting her man towards his downfall. After repeatedly emphasising the ongoing clarity of Hahnemann's mind and his physical robustness, he still concludes that in the matter of Mélanie, Hahnemann was suddenly in his dotage, a helpless and hapless pawn in the hands of a conniving female. While it is true that the seductive power of a beautiful woman can never be underestimated and history records how many a wise man has had his brain addled by a *femme fatale*, was Mélanie such a woman? In the eyes of Hahnemann's two daughters, she most certainly was.

From the outset, they were suspicious of Mélanie's motives and hostile to her – and small wonder, given the circumstances. They had devoted themselves to caring for their father and supporting him in his life's work, both before and after their mother's death. They loved and venerated him and now, to their shock and utter disbelief, witnessed this man of immense stature and wisdom being beguiled by a scheming, dazzling dilettante, falling from the lofty pedestal on which they had placed him and becoming an infatuated, old fool. So it must have seemed to their anxious, filial eyes. Along with Rima Handley – who, in her well-researched book *A Homeopathic Love Story – The Story of Samuel and Mélanie Hahnemann*, consistently presents Mélanie in a sympathetic light – we can imagine the jealous sisters trying to eavesdrop on the conversations of the absorbed couple and at every opportunity walking in upon them under some or other pretext. By one ruse or another they must have tried to insinuate themselves between the pair in an attempt to disrupt and obstruct the alarming turn of events and hold their father to them. To this end, the younger daughter, Louise, played upon her uncertain health. Both she and Charlotte denigrated Mélanie to him, pointing to her free and easy ways as indicative of moral permissiveness. Their neediness and their fears for his and their future, together with his love for them, must have caused him great anguish.

Handley has translated from French the eighteen letters written by Mélanie to Hahnemann between October 1834 and January 1835. In these letters Mélanie professes her undying love for him:

I can no longer live now without your good opinion and love.

... you will always be my husband in my thoughts; no other man will ever lay a profane hand on me, no mouth other than yours will kiss my mouth. I give you my faith, and I swear to you eternal love and fidelity.

Hahnemann responds by making a passionate avowal of love written at the bottom of one of her letters:

I love you eternally, more than I have ever loved anyone in my life.<sup>9</sup>

In other letters Mélanie draws the attention of the concerned father to what she sees as the possessive and controlling behaviour of his daughters.

Your daughters are foolish, the whole world knows it. You are not obliged to pay attention to the desires of fools. Louise has been ill for a long time and through this has established absolute domination over the affairs of the household, but she is well at present.<sup>10</sup>

I forgive them [their antipathy] because it is an illness, but neither I nor your friends want you to be the victim of their madness any longer. Oh God, what would Europe say, which so admires Hahnemann, if she knew that the great doctor cannot have a consultation without the presence of his daughters?<sup>11</sup>

The daughters' influence, which had long held domestic sway over the 'great doctor,' was soon demolished by the combination of compelling pressure and warm coaxing exerted by Mélanie. Once Hahnemann's initial paternal concern and misgivings were overcome, she took firm control of affairs and the old man was swept along in the wake of her unswerving drive and determination. They were married on 18 January 1835 in the front room of Hahnemann's house in Köthen, less than four months after their first meeting. With remarkable expedition, Mélanie had overcome the not inconsiderable difficulties attached to marriage between a French Catholic and a German Lutheran. Once married, her driving aim was undoubtedly to return to Paris with her husband, but she realised that his uprooting would have to be achieved by degrees, particularly in view of the distraught condition of Charlotte and Louise, and his attachment to them. She therefore disclosed nothing of her intentions to Hahnemann, leading him to believe that they would remain in Köthen and that the time had now come for him to rest from his labours and enjoy his remaining years in her company. The emotionally fraught atmosphere and their open animosity to Mélanie meant that the sisters could no longer continue to live under the same roof as their new step-mother, therefore Mélanie arranged for Hahnemann to buy a neighbouring house for them.

Mélanie's next step in disentangling Samuel from his family was to have him draw up a new will in which it was stated that Mélanie would receive no portion whatever of Hahnemann's estate, either during his lifetime or at his death and that he would immediately assign all his property to his children and grandchildren. This was made public in an article published by Hahnemann's lawyer, Insensee, on 11 March 1835, in defence of slanderous gossip that was being circulated accusing the new Frau Hahnemann of being a fortune hunter. The promptings of Mélanie are visible in the lavish praise the lawyer heaps upon her in his affidavit, while asserting her

independent wealth and drawing attention to how great a sacrifice she had made in dedicating her young, promising life to the comfort and happiness of an old man. But this first will was only the initial part of Mélanie's strategy, intended to ease Hahnemann's conscience regarding his family and to place her in a better light. On 2 June 1835, Hahnemann executed a second and final will. It confirmed the public declaration made three months earlier regarding the division of his property and possessions between his heirs:

I declare that I have divided nearly the whole of my property among my children solely on the particular wish and desire of my wife, which is proof of her noble disinterestedness; to her, my children owe it, that they have received nearly all my own fortune, which I have acquired with so much labour and exertion, but which I could never quietly enjoy.<sup>12</sup>

But Hahnemann now emphasised that this disposition was not irrevocable; he annulled the clause barring his wife from all inheritance, and excluded from his general estate all the possessions that he would be taking to Paris. On his death, none of his heirs would have any claim upon the properties or possessions accrued during his future life with Mélanie; she would be the sole beneficiary of his future estate. A stern warning was included:

But should any of my family, contrary to all expectations, not be satisfied with this my last will, and begin an action of law about it, he is to lose at once one-half of his whole inheritance.<sup>12</sup>

He further warned that should any of his children "in the least way annoy my beloved wife" they would forfeit their inheritance, which would be given to charity.

In the light of future developments, Hahnemann includes a curious and significant clause regarding his funeral and this injunction also contains an attendant threat of reprisal:

My mortal remains shall be left to my dearly beloved wife, who is to have free choice of the place of interment and of the funeral arrangements, unfettered by anyone; but should one of my children or grandchildren dare to interfere with her directions, he is forthwith to be punished by losing one-half of his inheritance.<sup>12</sup>

At this point, it is apparent that Hahnemann was definitely contemplating retirement from practice, for he states in the will:

I am now in my eighty-first year, and naturally desire to rest, and to give up my medical practice, which has become too burdensome to me.

Also by this time, Mélanie had persuaded him of the necessity of distancing himself from his past life, with all its tribulations, and to retire with her to Paris:

... where, far away from the country in which I have endured so much, I shall probably remain, and where I hope to find with my beloved wife that peace and happiness for which my desired marriage will be sufficient guarantee.<sup>12</sup>

It is notable that after meeting Mélanie, the first letter that Hahnemann wrote to his closest friend, Clemens von Bönninghausen, with whom he was usually in constant communication, was on 8 February 1835, when he had already been married for three weeks. Perhaps he felt somewhat shy about the considerable age difference between himself and his bride and wondered what Bönninghausen would think of his mentor, or possibly the rapid passage and intensity of events had so commanded his attention that he neglected to inform his friend of what was transpiring in his life. Whatever the reason for the delay, when he did at last write, he was at great pains to first explain how he intended to provide for his heirs and only after having done so, does he mention his recent marriage to

... a distinguished and excellent lady from Paris, who is held in great esteem there, of the purist morality, great learning, clear intelligence, and the best of hearts, who inspired me first with the most perfect love which she reciprocated in the fullest measure; she is handsome, tall and is 32 years of age.<sup>13</sup>

When news of the marriage of the famous octogenarian became general knowledge, it was a topic for gossip, ridicule and ribald comment. While mocking Hahnemann, his adversaries often at the same time took the opportunity to mock homeopathy. A particularly scurrilous article appeared in *Dorfzeitung von Saxe-Menigen*, which down the years has become well known and now raises a smile rather than an outcry:

The renowned father of Homœopathy, Dr Hahnemann of Köthen, was married again on the 18th of January in his 80th year, to prove to the world how his system has been glorified in him. He married a young Catholic, the daughter of a Parisian nobleman. The young man is still vigorous and strong, and challenges all Allopaths: imitate me if you can! It is rumoured that several allopaths are inclined to consider homœopathy.<sup>14</sup>

This and similar snide attacks and derisory comments must have helped Mélanie move a usually obstinate, but highly sensitive, Hahnemann to make the decision to leave Köthen and Germany for good.

Even today, this marriage of a very elderly man to a lovely young woman raises many an eyebrow and the, often unspoken, question of whether they could have had a sexual relationship. Apart from Hahnemann's advanced age, there should be no reason to suspect otherwise – his health was excellent, he was physically active and sturdy of build, his faculties were unimpaired and his beautiful handwriting retained all the firmness and flourish of a young hand; besides, he was a passionate man and very aware of her

beauty and her fine figure, which he frequently comments on. The speed with which their relationship quickened and ripened surely suggests more than just a consummation of cerebral ardour. Besides, Mélanie was a woman of the world and she knew that her beauty and sexual allure would give her power over him. Handley provides evidence of their physical intimacy in the second of Mélanie's letters to Hahnemann in which she teasingly expresses concern for his safety in the heat of her embrace:

... an angel whom in my violent love I dare not even press too strongly on my burning heart for fear of inspiring him to transports too lively and funereal.<sup>15</sup>

Even Hahnemann's will leads us to the same conclusion – that this was a marriage in every sense of the word:

Should my present wife bear me any children, then this child or children, as a matter of course, have the same claims on my property as the children of my first marriage.<sup>12</sup>

## Paris

With the finalising of the will, Mélanie had succeeded in cutting all ties with the family. Hahnemann was hers and hers alone, and she took the reins of his life firmly in her capable hands. When they departed from Köthen in the early morning of 7 June 1835, it was never to return. While Mélanie had no doubt whatsoever about what lay ahead for her husband and herself, Hahnemann was still uncertain about future events, but happily willing to place himself under her direction. Despite his noting in his will that he might not return from Paris, we find him writing in a letter to his neighbour shortly before his departure:

On this occasion I wish you and your family good health and well-being, and would ask you at the same time to remember my daughters who live opposite you, until I return.<sup>16</sup>

Writing to Bönninghausen, soon after his arrival in Paris, he gives the impression that he was merely accompanying Mélanie, who had affairs to attend to in the city, and would be returning to Köthen when these were concluded:

I cannot avoid accompanying my dear Mélanie (without whom I cannot exist even for two hours) who has to settle her own financial affairs there. The most excellent French pupils also eagerly await me (particularly those belonging to the Soc. Hom. De Paris, who insist more upon purity than the large number of those belonging to the Soc. Hom. Gallicane who are distributed all over France), and I shall not withhold my good advice from them. Apart from that I intend to rest chiefly, and see very few patients.<sup>16</sup>



Hahnemann had a close professional friendship with Princess Louise Auguste, the daughter of King Frederick Wilhelm 111 and Queen Louise of Prussia. In February of that year, the princess had written to him from Düsseldorf:

... my surprise was not small when I read in the local paper the announcement of your marriage as I had not any idea of it and I send all good wishes for your welfare ...

In March, she wrote again asking him to let her know when he had returned from Paris, so that she could forward her 'journal' (progress report) to him, at a time when he would be in Köthen to receive it.

These communications indicate that Hahnemann had not yet made a firm decision about his future and was relying entirely on his "beloved wife" to plan the way forward. In this she did not fail him, or herself. She brought to the task her youthful vitality, her passionate enthusiasm, her burning, personal ambition and above all her nurturing care and love for homeopathy and its founder. It was as if her energy suffused him and so buoyed up his entire being that he was able to set aside the limitations of age and once again preside over the profession he had brought to life, but now at last in circumstances both harmonious and supportive, and with an adored companion beside him who cherished him with tender devotion and attended to his every need. With prudent foresight, Mélanie realised that their first need must be to obtain official authorisation for Hahnemann to practise medicine in France. In February, almost four months before their departure from Köthen, she persuaded him to apply to the Minister of Education and Public Health, Guizot, for a licence to practise. Through Mélanie's influence in high places this was granted on 12 August, but not without the opposition of the members of the French Academy of Medicine. With a broadness of vision and lack of prejudice rarely shown by Health Departments even to this day, Minister Guizot responded to their protestations with a telling admonishment:

Hahnemann is a scholar of considerable merit. Science must be free for all. If Homœopathy is a chimera or a system without inward application, it will fall of itself. If, on the other hand, it is a measure of progress it will extend in spite of our preventive measures and that is just what the Academy should pre-eminently desire. For the Academy has the mission of furthering science and encouraging her discoveries.<sup>17</sup>

On 15 July, after a short stay at Mélanie's Paris apartment, they moved to more spacious accommodation at Number 7, Rue Madame, close to the Luxembourg Gardens. Hahnemann expressed his delight at the situation in a letter to Bönninghausen thus:



We are living here in the purest air as if we were in the country; we are like a couple of doves and our love for one another daily increases (which seems almost impossible) for no husband could be happier on earth than I am . . .<sup>18</sup>

As much as he must have come to relish the thought of retirement and of at last relaxing into his last years without the pressures of practice and the responsibility of furthering the homeopathic cause, especially after so many years of unremitting industry and heroic effort against continuous opposition, these seductive murmurs were soon pushed aside. Beside him he now had a young, influential woman of immense energy and an enthusiasm for homeopathy that matched his own; his fame had preceded him and Parisian society waited eagerly for the ministrations of the great healer; French homeopathy embraced him with reverence and awe; and he now lived at the very centre of culture, enlightenment and the romantic movement. Every facet of his being was flattered and gratified by the attention, respect and adulation he received, and he was stimulated and motivated by his changed circumstances. There was a newfound spring in his step, a resurgence of his mental and physical powers, and in his correspondence, as if in wonderment, he repeatedly comments on his sense of energy and wellbeing.

In his address to the members of the Gallic Homœopathic Society, who had enthusiastically arranged a festival to celebrate his residence in France, and on the occasion made him their Honorary President for life, he responded to their homage with these words:

I am deeply touched by the expressions of affection which I have received from all its members. I combine my zeal with theirs, and will support their endeavours for the furtherance of our divine science, because old age, which has never diminished its march, has not chilled my heart nor weakened my thoughts and homoeopathy will always remain the object of my heart.<sup>19</sup>

Writing to Bönninghausen in January 1836, he states:

. . . many friends who saw me before assure me unasked that I never looked more sprightly and fresh than I am now; and I do feel well, thank God!<sup>18</sup>

Mélanie, writing in August 1837, tells Dr Paul von Balogh, a member of the Society of Medicine of Lyon:

Rest assured that the most thoughtful and tender cares are bestowed incessantly upon him. He is fresh and ruddy as a rose and as blithesome as a young bird; indeed, one might truthfully say that since he has been with me he becomes every year one year younger. May God give him health here with us!<sup>20</sup>

Although we obviously do not have a photograph to confirm these observations, we do have a portrait of Hahnemann painted by Mélanie in 1835,

which bears testimony to her artistic competence, and shows the Master wearing an amiable, benevolent expression on a countenance denoting sharp intelligence, remarkably unworn by the passage of time and events.

Given all these intoxicating excitements and his innate love of celebrity, which the French were so adept at glorifying (even striking a medal in his honour, wrought by the famed sculptor Pierre Jean David, and bearing his portrait), and his sense of rejuvenation, it must have taken very little cajoling on the part of Mélanie for Hahnemann to reconsider the matter of his retirement and agree to see patients again. So, after an interlude of only a few months, which could be considered somewhat of a honeymoon for the couple, Mélanie opened Hahnemann's Paris practice. What began in a small, modest way soon gathered impetus. The combination of his reputation and her wide circle of contacts among the wealthy and influential of Parisian high society ensured the success of the practice, which soon became extensive. With their finances augmented from this source, they were able to create a free, outpatient clinic for the poor. It was in serving these underprivileged people that Mélanie was able to at last fulfil her ambition of practising homeopathy.

At first, this was under the tutelage of her husband, but with her eager and receptive mind, her brilliant intellect, which Hahnemann never tired of praising, her intense application to the homeopathic materia medica, and her ongoing exposure to clinical conditions through sitting in with Hahnemann during his consultations with the wealthier patients, she soon became a confident prescriber in her own right. The poor were generally easier to treat than the affluent because they had not been exposed to the deleterious and expensive 'pernicious methods' of therapy applied by the French allopaths. Once she commenced treating patients independently, without the direct supervision of Hahnemann, she stepped outside the law, but while Hahnemann was alive, officialdom seemed to tolerate her activities and Mélanie built up a considerable practice of her own.

Writing to his intimate friend Baron von Gerdsdorff, to whose two sons he was godfather, Hahnemann describes his circumstances in June 1836:

We live as if we were in the country, surrounded by most beautiful scenery, and are away from all the noise . . . (yet) the patients from Paris have easy access to me (also by carriage), as they are chiefly from the higher and highest classes, but I also give my help with pleasure to the poorest, as my excellent wife lends me a most helping hand, as she is a warm friend to our science. To sum up, I am so happy in my present position as I never was before during the whole of my life. I have a highly educated wife who loves me dearly. She is endowed with knowledge of the most varied kind, and has a kind disposition, great intelligence and refinement; I also love her as the most precious jewel of my earthly existence. Her incessant care is only for me, even to the most trifling details, so

that every wish of mine is fulfilled, no matter what it may be. I feel myself as strong and vigorous and free from infirmity as I was in my thirtieth and fortieth years.<sup>21</sup>

So vigorous indeed, that after a busy day in practice, this man of eighty and more years, accompanied by his wife or one of his students, took to doing something which he had never done while practising in Köthen, other than for the Duke and Duchess: when occasion demanded, he would now visit bedridden patients in the evening. For this purpose he had to purchase his own carriage – a considerable expense.

However, Mélanie's care for Hahnemann ensured that all was not work and that there was time for pleasure, socialising and entertainment. She introduced Hahnemann to the cultural delights of Paris, which had always been close to her heart. They regularly attended the opera, concerts and the theatre, often accompanied by Mélanie's father, a man of similar age to Samuel. Monday evenings between eight and half past ten were set-aside for homeopathic get-togethers in the tradition of his Leipzig years. In his spacious apartments, he would host an enthusiastic group of ardent colleagues with whom he would devote the time to informal homeopathic discussion. We can be sure that both the velvet cap and the smoking gown would be in place and that, as of old, his erudite discourse would be interrupted by intermittent puffs from his beloved long-pipe.

Reputation and high connections cannot sustain a medical practice, results are essential for its growth and survival, and these came in abundance. Homeopathy worked its magic for them. Soon the somewhat remote Luxembourg situation and the premises, as grand as they were in comparison to the simplicity of Köthen, proved inadequate to deal with the pressure of patients that threatened to inundate them. More space and a more central position in the city were required if the practice was to keep pace with the demands made upon it. In the spring of 1837, they removed to the busy and fashionable Rue de Milan, north of the Seine. In these major decisions one recognises the drive and ambition of the young woman. A man of Hahnemann's age and temperament would surely have been satisfied with far more modest and quieter working conditions.

No 1, Rue de Malan was palatial and its furnishings sumptuous. Mélanie spared no expense in setting up the practice, which was soon to become the most celebrated in Europe. Her personal finances were certainly not as prosperous as she would have had everyone believe, and Hahnemann's estate had already been allotted to his family, therefore considerable debt must have been incurred in creating this elegant establishment, on such a grand scale, designed to cater for the discerning taste of the French elite. A well-known American actress, Anna Cora Mowatt, visited the practice in