

HOW TO EMPLOY MASSAGE.

We select the following from the chapter on Massage in Dr. S. Weir Mitchell's excellent little work on "Fat and Blood, and How to Make Them:—"

After a few days' milk diet, with which my treatment ordinarily begins, the masseur or masseuse is set to work. An hour is chosen midway between two meals, and, the patient lying in bed, the manipulator starts at the feet, and gently, but firmly, pinches up the skin, rolling it lightly between his fingers, and going carefully over the whole foot, then the toes are bent and moved about in every direction; and next, with the thumbs and fingers, the little muscles of the foot are kneaded and pinched more largely, and the inter-osseous groups worked at with the finger tips between the bones. At last the whole tissues of the foot are seized with both hands and somewhat firmly rolled about. Next the ankles are dealt with in like fashion, all the crevices between the articulating bones being sought out and kneaded, while the joint is put in every possible position. The leg is next treated, first by surface-pinching, and then by deeper grasping of the areolar tissue, and lastly by industrious and deeper pinching of the large muscular masses, which for this purpose are put in a position of the utmost relaxation. The grasp of the muscles is momentary, and for the large muscles of the calf and thigh both hands act, the one contracting as the other loosens its grip. In treating the firm muscles in front of the leg, the fingers are made to roll the muscle under the cushions of the finger-tips. At brief intervals the manipulator seizes the limb in both hands and lightly runs the grasp upwards, so as to favor the flow of venous blood-currents, and then returns to the kneading of the muscles.

The same process is carried on in every part of the body, and especial care is given to the muscles of the loins and spine, while usually the face is not touched. The belly is first treated by pinching the skin, then by deeply grasping and rolling the muscular walls in the hands, and at last the whole belly is kneaded with the heel of the hand in a succession of rapid deep movements, passing around in the direction of the colon.

It depends very much on the strength, endurance, and practice of the manipulator how much good is done by these manœuvres. At first or for a few sittings they are to be very gentle, but by degrees they may be made more rough, and if the masseur be a good one, it is astonishing how much strength may be used without hurting the patient.

The early treatments should last half an hour and should be increased by degrees to one hour, after which should follow an hour of absolute repose.

After the first few days I like the rubber to keep the part constantly lubricated with cocoa-oil, which is agreeable in odor, and which keeps well, even in warm weather, if a little lime-water be left standing on the top of it. Vaseline is also a good lubricant, and both of these agents make the skin smooth and soft and supple.

As soon as a part has been manipulated it should be at once wrapped up.

In men who are hairy it is often needful to have the limbs shaved, because the constant pull made on the hairs gives rise to very troublesome and painful boils.

The early use of massage is apt in some nervous women to cause increased nervousness, and even loss of sleep; but these symptoms may safely be disregarded, because they pass away in a few days, and very soon the patient begins to find the massage delightfully soothing, and to complain when it is omitted. Women who have a sensitive abdominal surface or ovarian tenderness, have, of course, to be handled with care, but in a few days a practised rubber will by degrees intrude upon the tender regions, and will end by kneading them with all desirable force. The same remarks apply to the spine when it is hurt by a touch, and it is very rare indeed to find persons whose irritable spots can not at last be rubbed and kneaded to their permanent profit.

The daily massage is kept up through at least six weeks, and then, if everything seems to me to be going along well, I direct the rubber to spend half of the hour in exercising the limbs as a preparation for walking. This is done after the Swedish plan, by making movements of flexion and extension, which the patient is taught to resist.

At the seventh week the treatment is used on alternate days, and is commonly laid aside when the patient gets up and begins to move about."
—*Clinic.*