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ABDOMINAL MASSAGE IN CONSTIPATION AND ALLIED CONDITIONS.

BY T. GERALD GARRY, M.D.

During the past few years I have seen a large number of cases of constipation successfully treated by massage (many in conjunction with that eminent authority on the subject, Dr. J. F. Little of Welbeck street), and believe it to be the most reliable remedy yet brought before the notice of the profession for this obstinate condition. In the majority of cases it will be found a specific, if the manipulations are carried out with due regard to the cause of the constipation. Unless this is done, failure is quite possible, and it is even conceivable that harm may result; for massage is not simply a therapeutic agent with localised effects, but a combination of several factors having far-reaching results. This will appear evident from consideration of the physiological effects, which are very important, and may be classified under the following heads:—

Mechanical.—This is of the greatest importance, and not only exercises its influence on the gastro-intestinal canal, but also on the large ducts opening into the intestine, as well as the ducts of the abdominal glands. It also causes an emptying of the veins of the portal system, and I think there can be little doubt that it stimulates the bile-secreting functions of the liver. In its action it thus resembles both the hydragogue and cholagogue purgatives, particularly the latter. There is a class of cases of greater frequency perhaps than is generally supposed, and almost

confined to persons who live freely and suffer from sluggish livers, where there is retention of bile in the gall-bladder and within the ducts. It is in conditions of this sort that massage finds one of its most useful applications, and the remedy need only be tried to command entire satisfaction. Even when the obstruction in the ducts is more serious, massage will be found extremely useful, as was well exemplified by a case that came under my observation some time ago. The patient, a middle-aged man, suffered from jaundice, in all probability due to obstruction in hepatic ducts. Treatment by massage was commenced; the obstacle—very likely inspissated mucus—was removed after a half-a-dozen manipulations, with entire and remarkable disappearance of all the symptoms. It is scarcely necessary to remark that where calculi are suspected, extreme care is necessary in manipulating, else serious injuries may result. The mechanical effects are best carried out by kneadings and strokings. The former acts directly by the fingers of the operator laying hold of and loosening the impacted feces through the abdominal walls, and indirectly by increasing the secretions passed into the intestines, thus facilitating the progress of the loosened mass. The strokings act directly, and, when conducted with due regard to the situation of the colon, give a natural direction to the loosened feces. The strokings are also extremely useful in the various obstructive conditions already alluded to.

About the next effect—the *reflex*—there can be no doubt concerning the well known physiological fact that even slight tapping on the surface of the abdomen causes contraction of the intestinal walls. It is best carried out by slappings (*tapotement*) done with the palmar surface of the fingers, or, better still with the half-closed fist. *Tapotement* acts principally on the intestinal walls, to which it imparts tone.

The *thermic* action is not so hypothetical as it may appear to some. Dr. Eccles, in his paper read before the last meeting of the Association at Glasgow, conclusively proved this, and I have myself lately conducted some experiments which mainly coincided with the facts adduced by him. In all the cases experimented on the tem-