

Early American Manual Therapy The Art of Massage

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ITS HISTORY.

MASSAGE, or systematic rubbing and manipulation of the tissues of the body, is probably one of the oldest of all means used for the relief of bodily infirmities. There is evidence that massage was employed by the Chinese as early as 3000 years ago. Their literature contains treatises upon the subject written some thousands of years ago. An ancient Chinese book entitled, "The Cong-Fou of the Tao-Tse, " of which a French translation appeared about a century ago, was probably the foundation both of our modern massage and of the manual Swedish movements so admirably elaborated and systematized by Ling. Massage is still very extensively employed by the Chinese, and also by the Japanese, who doubtless learned the art from the Chinese.

Among the Japanese, massage is employed almost exclusively by blind men, who go about the streets soliciting patronage by shouting in a loud voice the words *Amma ! amma !* (shampooing, or massage).

Fig. 1 represents one of these blind masseurs crying his vocation upon the streets of Mito, Japan. Fig. 2

shows one of them administering massage to a lady patient. These engravings are photo-reproductions

from photographs kindly sent to the writer by a friend in Japan. The same friend also sent the following

description of his personal experience with Japanese massage, which was administered to him by a firstclass

manipulator, for the relief of a severe cold accompanied with fever: -

"The shampooer sat in Japanese fashion at the side of the patient, as the latter lay on a *futon* (thick

comforter or quilt) on the floor, and began operations on the arm; then took the back and the back of the

neck, afterward the head (top and forehead), and ended with the legs. On the arms, back, back of the

neck, and legs, he used sometimes the tips of his fingers, sometimes the palms or the backs of his hands,

sometimes his knuckles, sometimes his fists. The movements consisted of pinching, slapping, stroking,

rubbing, knuckling, kneading, thumping, drawing in the hand, and snapping the knuckles. The rubbing in the vicinity of the ribs was slightly ticklish, and the knuckling on the back of the neck, and at the side of the collarbone, a little painful. On the head he used gentle tapping, a little pounding with his knuckles, stroking with both hands, holding the head tight for a moment, grasping it with one hand and stroking with the other. The operator seemed to have a good practical knowledge of physiology and anatomy, and certainly succeeded in driving away the headache and languor, in producing a pleasant tingling throughout the body, and in restoring the normal circulation of the blood. He is to be criticised, however, for one serious fault in his operations, - that of shampooing down, instead of up. A portion of the good done is thus neutralized, one object of scientific massage being to help back toward the center the blood which is lingering in the superficial veins."

I do not agree with my friend's criticism of the mode of manipulation employed by the Japanese masseur, who seems to have been more skilled than most of our own manipulators, since he was apparently aware of the fact that the limbs should be rubbed down, rather than up, for the relief of the condition of feverishness and irritation from which his patient was suffering.

Massage has been employed from the most ancient times by the Hindoos and Persians, who still practice it, some of their native masseurs being possessed of remarkable skill. The ancient Greeks and Romans also employed massage constantly in connection with their famous baths. Hippocrates, the renowned Greek physician, made extensive use of this mode of treatment, designating it *anatripsis*. He evidently appreciated the principles of the art very well, as he directed that friction should be applied centripetally, or in the direction of the veins. That he understood the effects of different modes of application is shown by the following quotation from his works: "Friction can relax, brace, incarnate (fleshen), attenuate; hard, braces; soft, relaxes; much, attenuates; and moderate, thickens." [*Genuine*

Works of Hippocrates, Vol. 11, page 16.] Hippocrates learned massage, as well as gymnastics, from his teacher Herodicus, the founder of medical gymnastics. Asclepiades, another eminent Greek physician, held the practice of this art in such esteem that he abandoned the use of medicines of all sorts, relying exclusively upon massage, which he claimed effects a cure by restoring to the nutritive fluids their natural, free movement. It was this physician who made the discovery that sleep might be induced by gentle stroking.

Plutarch tells us that Julius Caesar, a century before the Christian era, had himself pinched all over daily for neuralgia. It is well known that Julius Caesar was subject to a severe nervous disorder (epilepsy), and it is more than probable that his prodigious labors were only rendered possible by the aid derived from massage. Pliny, the great Roman naturalist, had himself rubbed for the relief of chronic asthma. Arrian recommended massage for horses and dogs, asserting that it would strengthen the limbs, render the hair soft and glossy, and cleanse the skin. After giving directions for massage of the legs, abdomen, and back, he directed that the treatment should be terminated in the following peculiar manner, which indicates that he understood the value of nerve-stretching, at least for dogs: "Lift her up by the tail, and give her a good stretching; let her go, and she will shake herself and show that she liked the treatment."

Celsus, the most eminent of all Roman physicians, who lived at the beginning of the present era, was very familiar with massage, and used great discretion in its application. He recommended manipulations of the head for the relief of headache, and general manipulations to restore the surface circulation in fever, making this wise remark: "A patient is in a bad state when the exterior of the body is cold, the interior hot with thirst; but, indeed, also, the only safeguard lies in rubbing." Galen, the greatest physician of his time, in the second century recommended massage in many diseases. He seems to have had a good understanding of the various forms of friction and kneading.

A sort of percussion, called whipping, was employed by the ancient Roman physicians in various diseases, and is still used by the Laplanders and the Finns, who beat the body with bundles of birch twigs.

The natives of the Sandwich Islands have, from the most ancient times, employed massage, which they term *lomi-lomi*. They frequently administer *lomi-lomi* to an exhausted swimmer while in the water, supporting him with their hands until his forces are rallied by the manipulations. The Maoris of New Zealand practice massage under the name of *romi-romi*. The accompanying cut (Fig. 3) shows a Polynesian, a son of a chief, administering the treatment. The natives of Tonga Island employ massage under the name of *toogi-toogi*, the literal meaning of which is "to beat," for the relief of sleeplessness, fatigue, etc. *Melee* denotes rubbing with the palm, and *fota* kneading with the thumb and fingers.

Paracelsus, the prince of charlatans, who flourished at Basle, Switzerland, four hundred years ago, made great use of massage, and taught it to his pupils in the medical school of that city. Massage has been used in France for two hundred years. It was much employed in the early part of the present century by eminent English surgeons, especially in the treatment of sprains and other injuries of the joints. Its use in modern times, however, is chiefly due to its systematic development and employment by Mezger, of Amsterdam.