

## Relation of Nurses to Massage.\*

By a Doctor on the Committee of *Sophiahemmet, Stockholm.*

The idea of massage, which is possessed at the present time, not only by the general public, but also by many doctors, does not signify much more than an easily learnt manual treatment for relieving various aches and pains. In opposition to this old-fashioned and superficial notion, it is important that it should be known, and that great stress be laid on the fact, that massage is *already a developed science*, and that it is becoming gradually more and more perfected and invaluable as an aid to the medical treatment of a multitude of internal and external ailments. This form of medical therapeutics demands not only a thorough technical skill in order to have full and entire effect, but also a certain amount of theoretical knowledge, especially in such subjects as anatomy, physiology, and pathology.

A specially-trained ability to discover by means of touch the pathological changes in a patient is also required from those who would practise massage, while physical strength, combined with extreme softness and lightness of touch, is most necessary. As massage is only a part of what is now often called "mechanical therapeutics" (cure of disease by mechanical means), and as a combination of massage and gymnastics is in many cases very necessary for the successful treatment of a patient, it will be easily understood that a thorough training in medical gymnastics ought to be taken by every would-be masseuse.

The question is now, Is the trained nurse qualified to give massage, and is it desirable that a nurse's education should include a full training in massage and the other subjects I have mentioned, which are so necessary to the successful practice of it?

It is true that many of the requisite characteristics of a good nurse and of a good masseuse-gymnast are the same, as, for instance, the love of nursing and healing the sick, the gift of observation, etc. Both need a certain grounding in medical knowledge, and the work of both, if it is to be of full value, must stand in subordination to the doctor's orders. But behind these general similarities are many important differences. The narrow and more mechanical sphere of work of the masseuse-gymnast would, perhaps, be a real trial to many women who are attracted by and filled with enthusiasm for the great, complex, and humane calling of nursing.

The groundwork of medical knowledge which

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is necessary to the masseuse has to be used in such a much more restricted area than that of a nurse, and yet has, within its limitations, to be so much more thorough than hers. The qualifications, the work, and the aim of the two professions are, in my opinion, so different from one another, that most women who would try to take up both would soon find that they were serving two masters. Therefore it is that to both parts of the aforementioned questions I answer, *No.*

What I wish to impress upon the audience emphatically is—that no one who has only been trained as an ordinary nurse ought to practise massage, except under the direction of the doctor who has explained to her and shown her the exact manner in which the particular case is to be handled, as in many cases, such as in tuberculosis and thrombosis, the result would be most disastrous.

However, I do not mean to say that previous training as a nurse would not be a gain to the would-be masseuse-gymnast. One word more. The education and social standing of a trained nurse are already defined, and for this we owe a great debt of gratitude to English women. But how different it is with the masseuse-gymnasts! How shall we define their position? Doctors must first understand fully the great importance of mechanical therapeutics for the treatment of sick people; then they must realise that it is their duty to possess the necessary theoretical knowledge of it; and lastly, they must know how needful it is to have properly trained assistants at their disposal to give the treatment. Then two obstacles will be overcome. First, in the doctors who, without any special study, think they understand mechanical therapeutics; and secondly, in the gymnasts, who, with but a half knowledge of medicine, believe themselves to be doctors!

May the time not be far distant when in every hospital, side by side with the doctors and the nurses, we shall see also the masseuse-gymnasts (or whatever they may be called)—all in the service of healing, each with their own special training and their own clearly-defined work.

Disinfection of school premises is profitable, it appears from an experiment made by the Bucks County Council. The floors of twenty-five schools under this authority were sprinkled nightly for a year with a solution of cyllin. The attendance at these schools improved so greatly that additional grants amounting to over £50 were earned, the non-disinfected schools showing no such improvement in attendance. The cost of the experiment was less than £30.

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