TWO EAR CASES AND THEIR LESSON.

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Each of the following cases has its special lesson; but they unite to enforce a common, broader lesson, and hence are grouped. That general lesson pertains to the all-importance of details and gradations in medicine. Both this general truth and the specific therapeutic points are kept in mind in this report.

Case I. *Showing the value of energy as compared with easy-going methods in massage of the drum for adhesive cases, and suggesting the ground of frequent failures of massage as applied for this affection.*

This history sharply illustrates what we, as physicians, are too prone to forget. That point is that difference in degree of treatment is often of equal importance with difference in kind. After we have settled the matter of *genus*—of broad class of treatment—there comes a still more exacting selection and adaptation of gradations and of particulars.

It is this wise selectiveness and keen-minded adaptation, when we can attain it, which makes our profession an art. It is this which makes the difference between the routinist and machine man—the dangerous holder of an indiscriminated secret—on the one hand, and the successful practitioner in the sense of accomplishing scientific ends, on the other.

We strike a central truth with important bearings when we say that in its proper pursuit and needs there is no calling or business which is so plastic, so adaptive, as medicine.

Fortunate, concrete illustrations (the subject is worth illustrating) are found in the local use of antipyrine or cocaine as an adjunct to inhalations in obstinate laryngeal coughs, in order to hold the parts until we get the effect of the nebulized treatment, the whole outcome of the handling turning upon this single point; or in the cutting of suitable slots in the delivery tube for formaldehyde gas in using the same, fresh generated, for the cure of a long-standing ear suppuration which has resisted ordinary methods, the slots admitting the requisite amount of fresh air to dilute the gas and bring down the temperature to usable state; or, lastly, in making the use of resorcine sweeping and heroic against fermentation in digestive tract, if ordinary and standard use of it has not attained our ends. The alert, adaptive general practitioner—the man who uses his agents as a fencer uses his

sword—would that his number were greater!—of course, illustrates our point in a multitude of ways.

Miss R. came for treatment July, 1896, with the following ear record on test: Right ear, watch, no hearing; fork, one inch. Left ear, watch, one inch; fork, two inches. Combined ears, medium conversation, two feet.

The history was one of progressive neglected middle-ear catarrh of dry and adhesive variety and of two years' standing. Patient was put upon routine treatment of resolvent inhalations and moderate inflations; also, counterstimulation behind ear. General health likewise cared for and improved.

This handling resulted in bringing hearing up in about two months to practically double its first record; fork, for left ear, being made four and one-half; watch, two; fork, for right ear, three, but watch still *nil*. For vocal tones, a somewhat greater gain.

Here we stuck fast. Persistent attention for months (patient was near office, and case was financially adjusted for a long campaign) gave no further advance, though improvement already gained was held successfully. The whole gamut of ordinary devices (including somewhat active dilatation of Eustachian tubes and average massage) was run with no better results.

At this stage, some eight months from beginning of treatment, decision was reached to give the lady a wide range of liberty in treating herself as regards amount of massage, and to watch the outcome. It is a pity that this decision had not been reached six months sooner. Patient being at this time an adept in use of apparatus for herself, soon ran the number of massage impulses per day up to seventy-five, and sometimes double this number, and then a change came. The repeated ærial hammer-strokes from within outward, from the condensing chamber of a Globe multi-nebulizer, had prompt effect in giving us what moderate, and we may call standard, treatment had not accomplished. In less than two months the record rose to: Right ear, watch, four inches; fork, five inches. Left ear, watch, twenty-six inches; fork, fourteen inches. Combined ears, forced whisper, fifteen feet.

Any symptoms of reaction were watched for, and on the few occasions when tenderness developed, the activity of treatment was lessened for a day or two. Evidently the radical massage had done for the ear just what manipulation does for the stiffened and partly ankylosed elbow joint. The effects in each case are both mechanical and absorptive; and as the procedure is rational for the elbow, it is rational and physiological for the ear. The results were so permanent in our patient's case that she went successfully into a

mercantile clerkship, and sustains herself there after months of trial.

If we survey the otological field, it is beyond question that systematic massage marks the greatest advance in these lines for the past ten years, its best achievements being within the last five years. And certainly restoration of the function of an organ is, *pro tanto*, as compared with any other work we can do for it, the highest and most brilliant result we can achieve. Jankau has reported some striking results. The elaborateness of treatment, number of massage—impulses, recommended by him, corresponds in a broad way with the experience and teaching of our case—and other similar ones not cited. The force of Jankau's apparatus, however, is evident by less than that used and demanded in the case of Miss R. Just here let us say, with reference to the use of considerable force in the ear (for selected cases and after milder methods have been excluded by trial or previous experience), that the consensus of opinion and up-to-day practice is toward greater boldness in this direction. This is in entire keeping with the nature of the onward movement of general surgery. A summary of the history in both the general and the special fields is greater freedom with more careful methods. Overthrow of the idols of fear in many directions, coupled with greater confidence in natural methods in yet other quarters, is the characteristic of the time. Both positive truths are growing upon us.

As to methods of procedure for such cases as that of Miss R. here cited, experience has emphasized the following points for the writer:

First—Propulsion massage—massage from within—is much preferable to external or suction massage, because (a) it avoids soreness and the frequent furuncles of external canal caused by pressure of suction apparatus tightly adjusted; (b) it opens the Eustachian tubes much better than the rarefaction of so small an amount of air as found in the tympanic cavity; (c) the impulses from, for example, a Globe nebulizer, furnished with its stop-valve, and giving rapid, shot-like discharges, are much more efficient than the pulls produced by a suction apparatus; also more effective than the impulses from any hand-bag apparatus for internal massage; and (d) with such apparatus for internal massage as that placed in hands of Miss R., whether Eustachian catheter be called for or not, majority of intelligent patients may be taught to administer their own treatments under the physician's supervision. This is a very practical point for the saving of time when seventy-five to one hundred and fifty applications are made per day, rendering possible for a busy practitioner what could not otherwise well be reached.

Second—Comparing the use of active (it may be forcible) internal massage with the process of incision of drum-head and employ-

ment of hook for loosening adhesions, massage is in the rule decidedly to be preferred, since it looks to progressive tissue metamorphosis along with mechanical alteration, while the use of the hook, limited usually to a single application, brings results which are almost exclusively mechanical. In extreme cases a combination of the processes may be called for, and has been found useful by the writer.

The second case, possessing, as we think, some intrinsic interest for itself and contributing to enforce the great importance of details—how that small things are often the turning point—is as follows:

Case II. *Showing the serious effects of a very small patch of mould in the tympanum, and relief following its detection, identification by microscope, and easy extermination when its character was determined.*

Mrs. H., living in another State, had for years been troubled with deafening *tinnitus* of left ear. Was attacked from time to time with serious dizziness. Felt deplorably nervous. Life had become a burden. Various washes had been tried without success. Consultations in which the unusual and minute cause had not been detected, had been fruitlessly held, until the party had wholly lost her courage and hope. Inspection showed as follows: External canal normal, its epithelial cells being quite intact; anterior lower third of drum-head gone, from some early suppuration, now forgotten by patient; drum-cavity dry; on its inner wall, partly covered by remaining part of membrane, a small, white, velvet-like area, suggestive of the vegetable mold *aspergillus glaucus*. A small bit having been removed, the microscope confirmed the diagnosis; and a lotion of hyposulphite of soda, followed by a germicidal powder, relieved the case permanently in a few days.

Here was a small grain-field, as it were, of this vegetable parasite hidden away in the drum-cavity, the tiny plant lifting its stalks and showering down its spores from their heads, the processes of growth and reproduction in the mucous membrane giving the series of distressing experiences from which the patient suffered.

Can there be a better illustration of the minute things which are constantly facing the medical practitioner with very serious and often crucial importance attached to them? It is not too much to say that for scientific success (we are not speaking of commercial success or of gulling the people) no other profession calls for such incessant vigilance and such painstaking, delicate, carefully made discriminations.

This is the demand which is made upon us, and before which all of us fall down too often.