

OSTEOPATHY
and the TECHNIQUES of
Mr. L. E. EEMAN

by

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Those of us who have become familiar to any extent with the techniques and ideas of Mr. L. E. Eeman are aware that he has for many years been doing pioneering work of a very interesting and important kind in the field of therapeutics. A critical appraisal of this work and its correlation to other sciences, techniques, ideas, and lines of thought is long overdue. Such an appraisal is, however, a task of peculiar difficulty because his techniques and ideas have a relationship to so many different specialities that it would be hard for any one critic to cover all the questions which they raise with authority or even in an intelligent and adequate manner. For among the diverse sciences or branches of knowledge on which Mr. Eeman's ideas impinge are such different specialities as physiology, anatomy, magnetism and magnetic healing, homœopathic medicine, bacteriology, psychology, philosophy, religion or at least the techniques associated with religion, as well as certain sciences which are at present regarded as occult. In this age of excessive specialism there must be very few people qualified to look at " Eemanism " as a whole and the very fact that this is so has been one of the reasons why it has not received as much attention as it deserves.

I certainly do not feel myself to be one of those who are qualified to undertake such a complete appraisal and I have no intention of making the attempt, but, having been trained as an osteopath, I have come to the conclusion that some of Mr. Eeman's techniques have a very important bearing on osteopathic theory and practice and may in fact be said to be a necessary complement to them. I wish, therefore, in this article to discuss the relationship of some of Mr. Eeman's ideas and methods to osteopathic theory and practice in the hope that such a discussion will be helpful to osteopathic students and practitioners and to the public which they seek to serve as well as, possibly, to Mr. Eeman himself.

I would like to begin by approaching the matter from a practical point of view. All osteopathic practitioners meet a number of cases, but which do not respond very well to osteopathic treatment, or, if they do respond for a time, tend to slip back into the old rut as soon as treatment is discontinued, so that no complete or permanent cure is effected. These people either drift away to other forms of therapy or else come to accept a sort of chronic invalidism which they attempt to hold at bay by more or less frequent bouts of osteopathic treatment. I am convinced that Mr. Eeman's methods

are capable of providing the key to the successful treatment of a very considerable proportion of these cases. Conversely, there must be a very large number of cases in which the application of Mr. Eeman's methods will have slow or incomplete results without the assistance of the specific work which osteopaths are trained to perform.

Osteopathy as a system of therapeutics is, as we all know, based on the idea that, other factors being equal, health is conditioned by proper body structure and mechanics. Abnormalities of structure and mechanics, particularly in the bony framework of the body, are capable of influencing not only the actual joint or parts which are structurally and mechanically deranged but also more distant parts and internal organs. This they do mainly upsetting the normal distribution of nervous energy and the normal circulation and drainage of the parts and organs in question. The name of "osteopathic lesions" has been given to these abnormalities and in favourable cases it can be a quick and easy matter to correct them so that in a longer or shorter time the troubles in the organs or parts which are being affected by them disappear. Moreover, as the result of doing this work, there may be a great general improvement in the posture and mechanical efficiency of the patient's body as well as the removal of a lot of tension and an increase in vitality and general well-being. There are cases however, in which the bad structural and mechanical conditions seem constantly to reassert themselves as fast as they are corrected and in which indeed it may be said that the patient is creating or re-creating the conditions which are the cause of his troubles. Mr. Eeman has shown that nearly all of us are in fact using up a great deal of energy all the time by maintaining large of our musculature in constant tension, and that this tension can continue when we believe ourselves to be perfectly passive and even when we are asleep. He has also shown that when we do use our bodies in the performance of movements or work of any kind we frequently do so in a most inefficient manner by reason of false notions which we have acquired as to how those movements should be performed. We are often quite unconscious of what those notions are or of how they have become implanted in our minds; they are, in fact, part of our subconscious make-up or postural pattern. Frequently the tensions and bad "habits of use" of our bodies with which we are saddled are associated with more or less psychological tensions or unresolved complexes.

The aim of Mr. Eeman's techniques of energy conservation and relaxation is to bring about a condition in which energy is not squandered either by unnecessary tension or by the performance of movement and work in an inefficient and wasteful way. He lays great stress on teaching the patient the art of what he aptly called "myognosis" by which the latter is enabled to come to conscious realization of the tensions existing in his own musculature and of the psychological causes behind them. This process becomes increasingly easy with practice until eventually it is automatic and unconscious and only those muscles are used at any given time which are required for the efficient performance of the work which it is desired to do. Moreover, the patient can, once he has learnt the art of relaxation and myognosis, very much assist the process of rest, repair and development of any part of his body which may require them by concentrating his thought on that part in a constructive manner and so improving the flow of vital energy and blood through it.

It seems very clear that there is a close parallel or rather overlapping between what we hope to achieve by osteopathy and what Mr. Eeman seeks to achieve by his technique. For instance, it is undoubtedly possible sometimes by Mr. Eeman's technique alone to relieve tension sufficiently to bring about the elimination of definite osteopathic lesions in which there is more or less restriction of movement or even fixation in a joint or groups of joints. On the other hand, some of the results which are obtained by osteopathic technique, especially of the soft tissue and relaxing variety, must in reality be due to something very closely related to Mr. Eeman's "myognosis"; for by putting the patient through passive movements and by stretching and relaxing his muscles one is not only restoring the proper mechanics of the part or preparing the ground for specific adjustments or mobilizations but one is also causing him to become more or less consciously aware of his tensions and to acquire a realization of what it is like to be without them. But though there is a certain overlapping of the two types of technique and ways of approach I am convinced that they are essentially complementary and that the best results will be obtained in the shortest time by thinking of them and using them as complementary. There are some joint conditions which cannot be corrected easily or at all without specific adjustments and mobilization such as osteopathic technique can supply and there are some tensions, bad habits of use, and postural defects which are so firmly tied up with the patient's subconscious and psychological make-up that it is tedious or impossible to get rid of them by ordinary osteopathic procedures or exercises alone. In this connection it may be noted that the extraordinarily quick and satisfactory results which sometimes obtain by osteopathic treatment of children may be explained by the fact that they have not yet had time to build up complicated tensions of the basis of the mechanical and structural defects which we correct.

It would not, here, be out of place to mention that some of the observations and practical demonstrations on which Mr. Eeman's ideas are partly founded provide a very striking confirmation of the old osteopathic saying "the rule of the artery is supreme." This saying which has commonly been attributed to Dr. Still, the founder of Osteopathy, is a way of expressing the idea that every cell or group of cells in the body depend for their health and proper functioning on having a proper blood supply, a term which must be taken to include quality as well as quantity and good drainage as well as good supply. It was Still's contention that "osteopathic lesions" exercised their ill effects largely by interfering with the normal flow of vital fluids. From the day and hour that this interference begins there is a potential cause of weakness and disease in the parts affected and from the moment that the interference is removed the natural healing forces of the body can begin to operate. The special importance of the spinal lesion is due to the close association of the spine with the central nervous system and with the circulatory system which is largely under nervous control, and our knowledge of anatomy can give us a guide as to the parts and organs which are being affected or are likely to be affected by the spinal lesions which are present. Mr. Eeman has, it seems to me, very much developed and confirmed this idea by showing convincingly how tension can interfere with circulation, how relaxation can improve it and how a person can with knowledge and practice, consciously influence the flow of blood and energy to a particular part of the body and so promote its development, health, efficiency or cure. It would also appear that Mr. Eeman has thrown valuable

light on the mechanism by which psychological states and negative emotions exercise influence on the organs and chemistry of the body.

Another point which is of great interest to osteopaths lays on the importance of the freedom and proper functioning of the diaphragm. It has long been realized by physiologists that the movements of the diaphragm have very important effects on a number of vital functions in addition to its primary action as a muscle of respiration. For instance, the great blood vessels pass through the diaphragm in such a way that circulation is materially assisted by free diaphragmatic movements, and many of the abdominal organs such as the intestines, stomach, liver, etc., are so placed as to be influenced by the movements of the diaphragm. It would indeed be difficult to make an exhaustive list of the organs and parts of the body which are or may be influenced by the functioning of this important muscle. Orthodox physiology has generally regarded breathing as being of two kinds, diaphragmatic and costal, but it has not generally expressed any preference for one type rather than the other. Mr. Eeman is very emphatic that the natural and primary form of respiration is diaphragmatic and that the other muscles of respiration are or should be called into play only when special exertion demands a fuller and more vigorous use of the lungs. It is his contention that rigidity of the diaphragm is one of the commonest physical dysfunctions of civilized western man, and that it is frequently tied up with psychological repressions and a rigid carriage of the body. He points out that the natural emotional outlets of laughter and tears, which are often excessively repressed in our civilization, are both powerful activators of the diaphragm, and he contrasts the erect but relaxed carriage of the Greeks and Romans, as revealed by their statuary, with the unnatural stiffness of the thorax and shoulders which is still the ideal of drill sergeants, particularly perhaps in Britain.* Almost the first step in his relaxation technique is to bring about relaxation and rhythmic movements of the diaphragm, a procedure which often produces the most striking physical and psychological effects.

While we are considering the use of the diaphragm and the function of respiration it should be noted that Mr. Eeman apparently subscribes to the view that the important thing in respiration is to let the weight of the body empty the lungs properly and that if this is done filling of the lungs will occur automatically as often as is necessary and to the necessary extent. This idea would seem to be based on sound physiology. Inspiratory movements, though they can be controlled by the will to some extent, are normally regulated by the respiration centre which is activated more or less in accordance with the concentration of carbon dioxide in the blood stream. Expiration is due to a relaxation of the diaphragm and other muscles of respiration. When something goes wrong with the function of respiration, as in asthma,

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Mr. Eeman has pointed out that the number of soldiers who faint on ceremonial occasions such as the Trooping of the Colour is much higher in proportion than the number of civilians, although the former are less crowded and might be expected to be more robust than the latter. This he attributes to the rigid carriage of the soldiers which has an inhibitory effect on their circulation when they stand still for any length of time.

the start of the trouble is usually some tension which prevents proper relaxation and consequently a proper emptying of the lungs. This has an important bearing on the treatment of asthma because the patient can be very greatly helped if he can be made to concentrate his thought on emptying his lungs rather than on struggling to get his breath, and also to realize that the way to empty the lungs is merely to relax and do nothing so as to allow the weight of the body to do the emptying.

A very important part of Mr. Eeman's work is concerned with the prevention and cure of insomnia, and his theory and practice in this connection lead us to the consideration of some very difficult questions, because orthodox physiology has so far done very little to throw light either on the causes of sleep or on the functions which it performs. All we know is that sleep is a form of unconsciousness and that it appears to be necessary for the carrying out of some kind of repair work and readjustment in the body which cannot be carried out by simple resting or cessation of activity. Mr. Eeman's ideas about sleep are based on the contention that sleep, at least from the physical point of view, should be regarded less as something desirable in itself than as a condition in which necessary repair work is carried out. Unless the conditions are right for the carrying out of this work sleep will either fail to come or, if it does come, will be largely useless by reason of being of poor quality. Sufferers from insomnia usually concentrate all their efforts and thoughts on obtaining unconsciousness either with or without the use of drugs, whereas if they could be taught to put themselves in the proper condition for repair and maintenance work to be carried out in their bodies natural sleep of sufficient quantity and good quality would automatically follow.

From this point he goes on to develop the argument that tension is the great enemy of sleep and that if it does not actually prevent it causes it to be of poor quality by using up energy and by restricting circulation, both of which are required for proper repair work during sleep. The aim of his techniques is to teach the patient to prepare himself for sleep by getting rid of his subconscious physical tensions and storing up enough nervous energy in his body to enable the work which has to be done during sleep to be efficiently performed. The very performance of this preparation will be far more restful and recreative than sleep of poor quality, but it will in fact be followed by actual sleep in proportion as the patient acquires proficiency in carrying out the techniques. Mr. Eeman goes on to contend that once his technique has been learnt it is possible, by concentrating thought on any part of the body while in a state of perfect relaxation, especially before going to sleep, to promote in that part healing or development by increasing the flow of blood and energy to it during sleep.

These ideas and techniques would seem to be of very great interest to osteopaths and to fit in very well with osteopathic theory and methods. We have all found some cases of insomnia yield very well to osteopathic treatment. When they do so it is doubtless because tension is relieved and restrictions to the flow of blood and energy removed. Again we are struck with Mr. Eeman's confirmation of the saying that "the rule of the artery is supreme" and it may very well be that the healing which osteopaths seek to promote in the various arts and organs of the body could be very powerfully aided by teaching the patient to relax the parts of his body which are weak or diseased and to promote the flow of blood and energy to them by constructive thought. For there is no doubt that as a person thinks of any part of his body he

promotes the flow and energy to it. Unfortunately however, when a part of a person's body is weak or diseased or in pain, though he tends to think of it a good deal, he generally does so in a negative way and with the accompaniment of tension. Especially does he tend to react to pain by tension in the hope to reducing the pain. Such negative thought and tension tend to aggravate the weak and diseased condition, to prolong the pain and to slow down the process of healing and repair. Mr. Eeman would appear to have suggested a means whereby healing can be promoted by intelligent and conscious thought on the part of the patient and to have pointed out the possibility of relieving pain by relaxing against it instead of tensing against it. It would be outside the scope of this article to enter into a discussion of the meaning, causes and functions of pain in disease but it must not be forgotten that pain is very generally the result of a natural process of a constructive kind. It may be that pain is sometimes so intense that it has for a time to be controlled by drugs but it is a symptom of the disease and not the disease itself and to get rid of the pain is not to cure the disease. There is a wise old medical saying that " we should not mask any symptom until we have evaluated it " and this surely implies that we should as far as possible control pain by means which will not interfere with healing processes, lower the vitality of the patient or worsen the quality of the blood flow to the part. The present tendency of the public and of the medical profession immediately to banish the slightest pain by means of drugs regardless of the meaning of that pain or the function which it may be performing is very much to be deplored, especially as it is often accompanied with an entire failure to deal with the basic pathology which is behind the pain and may actually be aggravating that pathology or rendering it more chronic. Hydrotherapy, wisely applied, is one useful way of controlling pain and inflammation without resort to drugs, but Mr. Eeman's relaxation technique is another method which has great possibilities and appears to be based on sound physiology. Nature seeks to bring about an increased flow of blood to any part of the body which is diseased and this is apt to cause pain by reason of the swelling and pressure which are induced. This pain will obviously be worse if the pressure is increased by tension, whereas a lowering of the tension will both aid the healing process and reduce the pain.

I have sought in this article to point out at least some of the ways in which Mr. Eeman's ideas and methods may be used in conjunction with osteopathy for the benefit of patients who cannot easily or quickly be relieved by osteopathy alone. I am convinced that there are many of these cases and I hope that what I have said may encourage osteopaths to give further thought and study to these ideas and methods and to seek to obtain some proficiency in applying them.

LIST OF MR. L. E. EEMAN'S PRINCIPAL WORKS

CO-OPERATIVE HEALING (OR, THE CURATIVE PROPERTIES OF
HUMAN RADIATIONS):

SELF AND SUPERMAN (2ND EDITION).

THE PREDICTION OF THE FUTURE.

HOW DO YOU SLEEP ?