

## NOTE ON UNSKILLED MASSAGE AND QUACK RUBBING.

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I HAVE noticed in the course of my practice, which is mainly surgical and gynæcological, a goodly number of cases which have been seriously affected or materially made worse by the now almost universal practice of rubbing as a so-called curative agent. Medical rubbers now swarm in our city under various guises. A patient wishing to undergo one of these rubbing-treatments makes a payment of a lump-sum down, and of course then is desirous of having her (it is generally a woman) money's worth.

I once thought the treatment, at any rate, would not do any harm, but I was sadly mistaken, and I write this short note to show a few of the dangers—real dangers—that are likely to and do arise from the rubbing-treatment.

The following cases speak for themselves:-

A young man had an appendicitis which became chronic. He had many attacks, and an operation was advised. He funked the knife, but allowed a quack to "massage"—that magic word—his abdomen with a cannon-ball. This was deliberately rolled round his abdomen each morning for so many minutes while he lay on a special couch. He stood it as long as he could, but at last I saw him. He was then suffering from general peritonitis. A laparotomy revealed a general agglutinative peritonitis. The lymph had been forced among the coils of intestine; it looked exactly as if thin plaster-of-paris had been introduced and squeezed in. He died.

A second case was one of general disseminated cancer of peritoneum, which was ushered in with ascites, and a small two-finger incision was made in the middle line for diagnosis. This old lady was persuaded to have the abdomen massaged; she had it done. The way that malignant disease spread after the rubbing commenced was appalling.

A third case was a fine strong farmer. A prize ram knocked him down, and he fell on his great trochanter. He had a bursitis;—evidently his bursa filled with blood. Some time after he went to a famous thermal district, and came under the treatment of a rubber. He rubbed him for some months—in fact, he rubbed him till he had an enormous abscess over and round his trochanter. It looked like malignancy, but an exploring needle showed how well he had been rubbed.

One more case, the one that impelled me to write this note: A woman aged 52, nullipara, had an abdominal tumour, and put herself under two female rubbers. She went through the course, and then came to tell me she was ready for the operation. She could not go on with the treatment any longer. The rubbing had prepared her, she told me, and now the operation would be much simpler. She was wrong. The case proved to be a large hydro-salpinx, densely adherent, a large intraligamentary fibroid and a fibroid uterus. The adhesions were appalling. Two years ago the whole abdominal and pelvic masses were freely movable, and were more abdominal than pelvic. However, she said she had decreased in size, and so she had. The masseusses had rubbed and pushed these various tumours down into the pelvis, and had anchored them there with adhesions that took me two hours to undo. In fact, I pin-holed the rectum in removing some of them. The rubbers had in this case converted a simple operation into one of the greatest difficulty and danger.

I do not for one moment wish to cast any reflection on massage and skilled rubbing when properly applied, but I want to sound a note of warning as regards this quack rubbing.