

## FASHIONS AND FUNDAMENTALS

I have called my article "Fashions and Fundamentals" because I feel that we in the osteopathic profession are always in danger of losing our way both individually and as a profession when we do not separate these two things in our minds. We are, of course, a profession, which believes that in treating the sick it is very important to work on them with our hands and we have developed techniques for doing this. I am very sure that this is a sound belief and a sound method of proceeding in practice, for I do not believe that it is generally easy to do people much good unless one is prepared to take off one's coat and work on them; which is, perhaps, why so much conventional doctoring leaves much to be desired. However, the techniques, which we use, are very much a matter of individual taste and expertise and a matter of fashion; they are not, I would submit, really fundamental. The fundamental thing in Osteopathy is its principle or basic law which has been stated in many different ways but which amounts to the fact that the functioning of the body and its health depend on, or at least are conditioned by its structural, mechanical and postural state. This we believe to be a basic law of primary importance which can be demonstrated and which must be recognised as one at least of the foundations on which a Science of Healing or Medicine must be built.

If we keep this basic principle in mind I believe that we shall get on well, both as individuals and as a profession. We were taught at school that the essence of Science is that we live in a universe which is governed and proceeds according to law. The essence of being "scientific" in any particular department of knowledge or endeavour is that we seek to discover the laws which govern it, test them out by experiment and then develop techniques for using them or applying them for our own purposes. This has been tersely expressed by saying that we learn to rule Nature by first learning to obey her. It follows that there must be basic laws on which health depends and that it is only by the discovery, enunciation and application of these laws that a true Science of Medicine or Health can be built up. We are right in contending that the osteopathic principle enunciated above is one of these basic laws and is, perhaps, the most important of them all. When we grasp this idea we are no longer continually faced with the problem of deciding whether a given disease or a given case is amenable to osteopathic treatment or is an "osteopathic case". Since the osteopathic principle is a universal principle it is of universal application and every case can be considered in the light of the principle and treated in accordance with it even though osteopathic manipulative technique of a certain kind may not be the only

method of treatment to be used and may even be contra-indicated at certain times and in certain circumstances. For there are other basic and fundamental laws by which health and disease are conditioned some of which have been grasped and discovered and some of which, perhaps, have not. These laws or principles should not be regarded as being antagonistic or contrary to each other, but rather as complementary. For instance, to take a simple example. There is undoubtedly a chemical norm as well as a structural and mechanical norm by which the health of the body is conditioned. Much disease, as we meet with it in practice may be regarded as a vicious circle in which both the structure and the chemistry of the body are concerned and should often be approached from both these points of view simultaneously if the best results are to be obtained, because the two interact upon each other. The chemistry of the body can, as we all know from experience, be greatly improved by putting it into a good structural and mechanical condition, but it is also true that if the chemical condition of the body and its tissues is bad it is hard or impossible to bring them into a satisfactory structural and mechanical state and to maintain them therein.

It follows that our treatment of the individual cases with which we are confronted must be worked out in the light of our anatomical and physiological findings and the general symptom picture rather than on the basis of the name which the particular disease is called in the medical text books. This is in accordance with the sound old doctrine that we must treat patients and not diseases and the old osteopathic idea that treatment should be based on anatomy and physiology rather than on pathology. The treatment moreover, must as a rule be general to the whole body as well as local to a part of it, since the anatomical and physiological workings of the body are unities. It should here be noted that very little seems to have been done in recent times, either in print or by word of mouth to give guide lines to students and practitioners as to how to approach different kinds of clinical problems and symptom complexes in a truly osteopathic way. Yet, there was a very strong tradition in the British School of Osteopathy that this is a thing which needs to be done. Dr. Littlejohn in his lectures on Practice sought to discuss every kind of disease condition in the light of osteopathic principles and to indicate how to deal with it in an osteopathic way. The notes of his lectures which were taken down by the students are in existence but they are, as far as I know, little known and little studied today and are in some danger of being entirely forgotten, although a few fragments have been edited and printed in the Maidstone Year Book and possibly elsewhere. It is high time that they were systematically edited and printed and made available to the profession. When once we have grasped the essential importance of the basic principle of Osteopathy, I believe that we should be very flexible in our approach to the

whole subject of technique. Manual healing systems are very numerous and there are also systems of bodily reconstruction which do not involve manual manipulation in the usually accepted sense. I believe there is something to be learnt from all these different sources and to be incorporated into the individual methods of treatment, which we use and teach. I am convinced that manual treatment is a very individual thing and that it is an art rather than a science and that we learn to do it by experience and the development of an expertise rather than by any sort of rule of thumb.

It does appear, however, that there are two rather separate objectives, which we seek to obtain in the use of our hands in treatment. The first of these is the normalisation of the musculo-skeletal system of the body so that the structure, mechanics and posture of the body are rendered as perfect as possible. There are different ways of doing this or attempting to do it and different individuals and different schools have developed methods and theories, which differ somewhat from each other. We hear of osteopaths, chiropractors, naturopaths, neurotherapists and others who all have their particular approach and methods and go about things in different ways, and within these professions or groups developments and changes of fashion are going on all the time. One hopes that these developments and changes of fashion are on the whole the reflexion of more enlightenment, knowledge and skill, but one fears that sometimes they may not be; for change is not necessarily the same thing as progress. The real criteria of whether a particular technique or method is good or bad is how well it contributes to the normalisation of structure, mechanics and posture which we seek to achieve and maintain. Experience has led me to feel that osteopathic technique in the period during which I have been familiar with it has been going through a phase or fashion which is not entirely happy in spite of the very high degree of skill which has been developed by many of its exponents. This, I believe, is because too much attention has been concentrated on individual spinal and other joints and on techniques for mobilising or "correcting" these. There is no doubt that there are times and occasions in which it is wise or essential to move a particular joint by means of leverages and a certain amount of force, but concentration on individual bony lesions or groups of lesions, and on joints and bones rather than soft tissues, and on parts of the body rather than the whole, can very readily lead to osteopaths becoming little more than high-brow bonesetters. This very much curtails the sphere of their operations and reduces the effectiveness and permanence of their work. The truth of the matter seems to be that structural, mechanical and postural faults and abnormalities are produced and maintained almost entirely by there being something wrong with muscles, great and small, and fasciae. Except in exceptional cases there is nothing to prevent a joint moving freely and coming to rest in its proper position provided that the muscles and other structures by which is operated, supported and controlled are in proper balance and working order. Moreover, if these structures are put in proper balance and working order the joints will begin to move properly of themselves.

Speaking for myself it was not until I came into contact with the ideas and techniques of Dr. Ida Rolf and her system of Structural Integration and Release that I came to realise that most so called "osteopathic lesions" are secondary phenomena which, however they were caused, are maintained by muscle imbalances and deteriorations and by hardening and contracture of fasciae. Moreover the individual lesion, important as it may be in its effects, is part of a pattern of postural strain and imbalance against which the body is constantly struggling to maintain itself erect and function satisfactorily. When all is as it should be the muscles and fasciae maintain the body in the erect position and posture very much as guy ropes hold up the pole of a tent; there is no strain and the heavy masses of the body such as the limbs, thorax, head and pelvis are in a proper relationship to the gravity line from the head to the ground. On the other hand when there is imbalance in these supporting tissues, trouble begins and tends to be cumulative as more and more compensations and strains are initiated and confirmed. A technique which corrects the imbalances both between the front and the back of the body and between its two sides and restores the gravity line will automatically eliminate individual lesions and groups of lesions or at the very least render them ready and easy to be corrected and unlikely to recur. In addition, the elimination of the waste of vitality and energy occasioned by postural strain in the body, as a whole is something, which has to be seen and experienced to be realised.

The second objective of manual treatment is closely bound up with the first but is also to some extent distinct from it. We can by the use of our hands in one way or another seek to exercise an influence on and through the central nervous system by making use of the reflex connections of the system to produce effects which are beneficial both in the body as a whole and in particular organs or parts. This is the basis of much of the old osteopathic approach to the treatment of acute diseases and it is interesting to note that it forms a link between osteopathy and other forms of reflex therapy such as spondylotherapy and acupuncture.