

43

The Editor, "The British Journal of Physical Medicine." Nov.-Dec., 1948.

Ends and means in treatment

Sir,—In your issue of May-June, 1948, I have read with considerable interest the articles, "Some Efficacious Efforts in Physical Medicine" by K. M. Lloyd, Esq., M.B., B.S., M.R.C.P., and "Remedial Exercises in Postural Defects of the Feet" by Miss Doris Baker, M.D., M.R.C.P.

Both writers advocate specific exercises for the cure of specific troubles, and have named certain conditions which, in these articles, are taken to be the causes of the specific troubles mentioned. As one who, over fifty years ago, evolved a technique for preventing and changing a manner of use of the self such as could have a harmful effect upon the general functioning which could lead to the development of such specific troubles, and who has spent a lifetime in teaching the application of this technique, I venture to write you in order to draw attention to certain fundamental points, which the writers of the articles mentioned may conclude to be worthy of their attention.

When I consider the nature of the conditions named as causes in these articles, my reaction is to ask: "What is the cause of these conditions?" In this connexion my first point is that the fundamental cause of any specific trouble in the human organism will be found to be associated with a harmful use of the self as a unified whole, and that the conditions which the writers of these articles cite as the cause of specific troubles are symptoms of a harmful use of the self, revealed in the very symptoms which the writers are endeavouring to cure.

In my experience in my own field, and in work done with medical men interested in my technique, I have observed the results of exercises used with the aim of removing certain specific symptoms, and have noted that the more successful these have been considered to be as means of gaining an end—namely the disappearance of certain symptoms—the more harmful became the manner of use of the self associated with the performance of these exercises—a manner of use which was basically responsible for the harmful influence upon the general functioning of the organism and therefore for the specific symptoms which the writers attempted to cure by the use of exercises. Consequently, although from the narrow standpoint of specific improvement the result may be considered satisfactory, in the longer view, when improvement of general functioning is taken into account, this very specific improvement can be looked upon only as leaving the door open for the seven devils to enter in and take charge. To go into this matter fully would take up more of your space than you could grant me for a letter, but a detailed exposition of specific versus general and of end-gaining versus "means-whereby" can be found in my books, and attention has been drawn to these contrasts by Dr. Wilfred Barlow in his article, "The Mind-Body Relationship," printed in the May-June number of the *Journal*.

I am, etc.,

Penhill, Kent.

F. MATTHIAS ALEXANDER.

At 16, Ashley Place, London, S.W.1, and The F. Matthias Alexander Trust Fund School, Penhill, near Bexley, Kent, private pupils are taken and also a Training Course for Teachers is conducted by MR. F. MATTHIAS ALEXANDER personally and his specially selected Assistant Teachers, most of whom have worked with him for over 14 years.

Interviews can be arranged with Mr. F. Matthias Alexander and applications should be addressed to:

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