

working farm labourer in the country, who eats an enormous quantity of meat, but scarcely ever becomes gouty until he gives up work (but continues to satisfy his appetite with meat), when retribution comes in the form of granular kidney. Heredity plays an important part, so that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children, and the son comes into the world with a lessened capacity for eliminating any uric acid that he may form from his food. Alcohol, too, is an important factor, and has been shown to be at the bottom of most of the cases of so-called "poor man's gout," or rather it is the almost irresistible tendency which such a man has to purchase the cheapest form of anæsthetic and so escape, even momentarily, from the duress of his environment. The over-fed company promoter, however, has no such excuse.

What are we to do for our gouty patient? Obviously we must not only relieve him of his pain, if he has an acute attack, or from the discomfort of the particular symptoms of goutiness for which he has consulted us, but we must endeavour to go to the root of the trouble and stop either the over-production or the deficient elimination of uric acid, or both.

Let us take the latter first. We have to recognise to begin with that, inasmuch as we do not know exactly why some people manufacture uric acid on the slightest provocation and others do not, we have to find out largely by experiment what diet and what mode of life will best suit the particular patient. And that is why so many different things have been written and said about the treatment of gout. We must, in fact, treat the man and not the disease in any given case.

But there are certain broad lines on which we can proceed, and the first axiom is that all gouty people eat too much; they are apt to assume, because they have been told that some particular thing will not hurt them, that they can eat as much of it as they like. So we generally begin by cutting down the quantity of all food, and especially of nitrogenous food. Then there can be no doubt that their nitrogenous food can best be obtained from vegetables rather than from meat. It is possible to make the mistake of going too far in this direction, and advising the man to be a vegetarian, forgetting that this will tax his digestion severely, for vegetables are not so digestible as meat. He should have then a varied diet, food should be taken in small quantities, and frequently, and he should never be allowed to have a heavy meal, especially at night.

Then he must be a teetotaller. There can be no worse fallacy than substituting a com-

paratively large quantity of whisky for a smaller one of port or beer. All alcohol is injurious to gouty people, and we only allow it when we have to, that is to say, when the man has got so accustomed to stimulants that his heart will not stand the sudden deprivation. In such a case we reduce the quantity by degrees. The next point is to considerably increase the amount of fluid in his diet, with the idea of washing out the accumulated uric acid through the kidneys and thus preventing its accumulation. We usually advise the patient to drink freely of some special mineral water, simply because we know that if we advise water alone—which is the essential part of all these preparations—he will not thank us for the advice or take it. Or we can adapt ourselves still further to his tastes and send him to some place—the more expensive the better—where he can have the satisfaction of drinking waters to the accompaniment of scandal and an orchestra, but certainly to somewhere where he will have to do as he is told. We make him take exercise if we can, and keep his bowels open. But it is better still to persuade, or frighten, the patient into leading a regularly abstemious life, with daily exercise, for it is in the muscles that uric acid is normally broken up, so that it can be easily eliminated by the kidneys, than to allow him to do as he pleases in the intervals between his visits to a spa. For the sufferer from poor-man's gout it is not much use descanting on the evils of too much beer and too little food unless we can alter the environment which drives him to seek anæsthesia. Otherwise we are talking pure and simple cant.

In the acute attack of gout colchicum is a very useful drug and is given freely until the pain has ceased. With this we prescribe drinks of large quantities of weak barley water or potash water, to assist in washing out the poison, and confine the patient to a milk diet.

The treatment of the joints in chronic gout is much more difficult and often unsatisfactory. After repeated attacks a joint becomes stiff and deformed, and it is no easy matter to restore its flexibility. Here the various kinds of baths come in. Perhaps the most generally useful are the radiant heat baths, which can be obtained at most spas and in some cities. The joint is enclosed in a kind of box and exposed to the heat and light emanating from electric lamps. Profuse perspiration is induced in the skin round the joint, and pain is lessened and the joint becomes more supple. Massage is also very useful, and relief may sometimes be obtained by the passage of an electric current through the joint. But in gout prevention is very much better than cure.

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