

catarrh of the intestinal tract. Errors of diet are another cause. They can certainly cause acute colitis, and, since a subacute or chronic catarrh may be kept up or increased by an injudicious dietary, we have reason to believe that irritation by food may play some considerable part in the causation also of the less acute forms of the complaint. Among the more subtle forms of irritation may be mentioned the effects of chill, as is the case with catarrhs in general, and also certain specific febrile conditions, such as influenza. The latter may certainly be the cause of acute colitis, and I have seen cases which seemed to be undoubtedly due to this cause.

With regard to the etiology of the subacute and chronic forms (including the condition usually known as muco-membranous or membranous colitis) I believe that a most important part is played by gout and the arthritic diathesis. With regard to catarrh of the cecum, this fact cannot, I think, be called in question, in view of Dr. Haig's personal experience, and also in view of the value of salicylates in many cases of acute and subacute typhlitis (as distinct from appendicitis). From my own experience I feel sure that we must recognize gout and the uric acid diathesis as prime factors in the causation of colon catarrh. I am convinced that there is good reason for accepting Dr. Haig's theory that, under the influence of certain states of the system or certain drugs, such as calomel, there is an accumulation of "uric acid" in (or excretion of "uric acid" by) the cecum to such an extent as to lead to the catarrhal inflammation of its mucus membrane.

The observations of several Continental writers show the close relation which what they call "arthritism" bears to the occurrence of membranous colitis. They find it present in the majority of cases, and M. Langenhagen, of Plombieres, states that out of five hundred and sixty cases of this complaint which he carefully examined, he found distinct arthritic signs in five hundred and thirty-five instances.⁵

Much stress is laid by most writers upon the neurotic element in the causation of the chronic form known as muco-membranous colitis. This nervous element is so marked a feature in these cases, that not a few writers consider it a prime factor, and that the disease is simply a secretory neurosis, and that the catarrhal symptoms which exist are secondary.

But, as we shall see when we discuss the symptoms, irritation of the colon exercises such a depressing effect upon the nervous system that I believe it probable that the neurotic element is only an early symptom of the complaint, and not its cause.